
PENN VET WINS SAVMA BID FOR 2018 ANNUAL CONVENTION

BY ASHLEY BERKE

For the first time in the 46-year history of the Student American Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA) annual convention, Penn Vet has won the bid to host the storied event in 2018.

But the bid presentation almost didn't happen.

A MISSED CONNECTION

Colleen Barrett, V'18, Penn Vet's senior SAVMA delegate, had just completed a clinical pathology midterm in mid-March. She and three fellow students immediately headed to the Philadelphia airport to catch their flight to the 2016 SAVMA Symposium in Ames, Iowa. Upon arrival at PHL, they were met with the unfortunate news that their flight was delayed two hours.

"We had a layover at Chicago O'Hare, so we were concerned we'd miss our connecting flight," said Barrett.

A sense of momentary relief when the plane finally headed for the tarmac was short-lived. "Just when we thought we were about to take off, the pilot announced that we had to head back to the gate," Barrett recalled.

By the time they finally took flight and landed in Chicago, the group had missed their connection by 10 minutes.

They were stranded.

"We considered renting a car and driving the five hours through the night to Iowa," Barrett said. Instead, the students devised a plan and divided responsibilities. "It was a great team-building exercise," she added.

Despite feeling like they were "never going to make it," the group found hotel rooms in Chicago and a flight out the next morning.



Colleen Barrett, V'18



Barrett and Steve Hanes, V'19, were photographed after winning the bid at the 2016 SAVMA Symposium in Ames, Iowa.

Because of the delay, Barrett was unable to attend the house of delegates meeting in Iowa, during which students nominate their schools for bid presentations. Students from the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine placed a nomination for their bid.

Thankfully, Barrett was in touch with a friend who was present at the meeting and willing to nominate Penn Vet. Barrett accepted the nomination by phone.

“We were official,” she said with relief.

INTENSE PREPARATION

Penn Vet’s bid presentation was over two years in the making. Last year’s senior SAVMA delegate, Meghana Pendurthi, V’17, led the tremendous effort for the school’s first bid. Despite the fantastic presentation, Penn Vet lost to Texas A&M’s College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

“We are very excited for them and can’t wait to visit College Station next year,” said Barrett.

Last year’s presentation provided the perfect foundation for the team’s bid this year. “There was so much hard work put into it,” said Barrett. “We decided to take what we learned from the experience and go for it again.”

Among the lessons learned: have fun!

Barrett and junior delegate Steve Hanes, V’19, launched into the preparations with gusto, forming a planning committee, reaching out to hotels, brainstorming wet labs and lectures, and more.

The first step was to submit a bid package, which Barrett says was heavily influenced by Pendurthi’s fine work.

Next, she and Hanes collaborated on the presentation. Taking to heart the advice to have fun, they opted to use Prezi, a visual storytelling tool, rather than PowerPoint, in order to have more freedom with the narrative. It paid off.

A WINNING PRESENTATION

It took 24 hours, but the Penn Vet team finally arrived in Ames. After mingling with their fellow delegates, they went back to work, putting the final touches on their presentation. The bid was the next day.

Georgia presented first. Barrett and Hanes waited anxiously in the audience until it was their turn.

“We had rehearsed so much, and we were so in sync,” said Barrett. “Everything went smoothly, and the audience seemed engaged.” But the results wouldn’t come for another three hours.

After the 100-plus delegates in attendance cast their votes, the results were in. Penn Vet would host the 2018 convention.

According to Barrett, attendees seemed most excited about Penn Vet’s rich history and new innovations.

“They were impressed by the robotics-controlled imaging system at New Bolton Center and our facilities, caseloads, and specialties,” she said. “They were also excited to visit Philadelphia.”

Barrett and Hanes made it a point to highlight Penn Vet’s unique standing as the country’s only urban veterinary school. “As an urban school, we have a unique perspective,” said Barrett. “We get to help our community in a really distinctive way.”

Back at Penn Vet, everyone was ecstatic to hear the news. “We got a wonderful reception when we returned,” Barrett noted.

“I could not be more pleased, proud, and excited that our wonderful student leaders put together a winning bid to host the national SAVMA convention,” said Penn Vet Dean Joan

SAVMA Symposium: Get the Scoop and Get Involved March 15-17, 2018

For more information about the SAVMA Symposium 2018, what we have planned at Penn Vet, and how you can help, visit www.pennvetsavma.wix.com/pennvetsavmasymp2018

To view Penn Vet's winning presentation, visit www.bit.ly/1RWAwLh.

Hendricks. “We look forward to showing off our programs and campuses, as well as the historic city and beautiful farmlands that surround us.”

“Through very coordinated and purposeful efforts, our student leaders figured out what they needed to ensure success for this year’s bid,” said Dr. Mary Bryant, Executive Director of the Office for Students. “Through their sheer grit and determination, they succeeded. To me, the best part of this story is how they coordinated with last year’s leaders, learned from any mistakes made, and together made it all happen. I am immensely proud of them.”

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

From March 15 to 17, 2018, more than 1,000 veterinary school representatives will descend on Philadelphia as Penn Vet hosts the SAVMA annual convention.

Delegates from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), Student Chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association (SCAVMA), and SAVMA will participate in official meetings throughout the three-day event. Veterinary students will have the opportunity to hear lectures, take tours, and participate in wet labs. Lecture topics may range from equine orthopedic therapy and herd breeding management to canine cancer immunotherapy and the role of veterinary medicine in One Health.

Barrett is confident that Penn Vet will shine. “From the Minimally Invasive Surgery Suite to our emergency services to the robots at New Bolton Center, Penn Vet will be in the spotlight,” she said.

And, of course, there will be plenty of opportunities for attendees to explore Philadelphia, which was named the number one U.S. travel destination for 2016 by *Lonely Planet* and recently designated the nation’s first World Heritage City. Plans are still in the works, but outings will include tours of historic Philadelphia and the region’s renowned breweries, as well as hikes through Fairmount Park and a visit to the famed Reading Terminal Market.

Barrett hopes that attendees will leave with a new appreciation of all that makes Penn Vet unique. “I hope people realize how incredible an urban vet school can be, and that we’ve been here for well over 100 years and we continue to lead the way,” she said.

Four student chairs—including a fundraiser, treasurer, and two co-managers—are hard at work pulling together all of the convention plans. Despite passing on the torch, Barrett will remain involved.

“I’m looking forward to seeing it all come to fruition in my final year of vet school,” Barrett said. She has plenty of reasons to be proud. “We tried before. We came back even stronger. We won. Now we’re incredibly excited to show it all off.”