



Next Generation is more than just a ‘buzz word’

**By Cheryl Stroud, DVM, PhD, Executive Director,
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I’ve seen it happen again and again. A student runs across the One Health concept and gets excited to discover the movement. They tell me that they could literally feel themselves relaxing to learn that there is a ‘term’ for something they had been thinking and feeling, searching for, for a long time but could not put their finger on or articulate what was disturbing them. They had been observing and realizing, as they studied and became proficient in their selected fields, that we humans are too stuck in systems-imposed disciplinary silos, unable to easily share information across disciplines or come together to address many of our most ‘wicked’ global challenges that they ‘know’ will require collaborative actions. No matter what field they are studying, they immediately get it about One Health because they ‘see’ what is happening and what is needed.

Students from all walks contact me, as Executive Director of the One Health Commission, wanting to talk, to learn more about One Health and about the global One Health movement. They want to know why, in years of college, graduate or professional school, has ‘no-one’ mentioned One Health or made them aware of the concept. They want to know how to get involved, how to help lead the world toward making One Health the default way of doing business.

Once discovered, they don’t want to wait till they graduate to start making a difference. They start Student One Health groups at their colleges and across their universities and begin leading initiatives to educate other students, faculty, the public, about One Health and One Health topics, right where they are. One medical student led a survey of faculty and students at her med school to find out if they knew anything about One Health. They didn’t. So she taught her med school faculty about One Health and convinced them to let her put together her own One Health elective.

Many students have asked me “how do I develop a career in One Health?” We chat about my own experiences and varied career path, how important it is to pick a discipline that they are passionate about, to hone their skills and deep knowledge base, then to go out into the world into whatever job they end up in and practice their skills in a One Health way, as One Health practitioners, always gently educating about the concept, pushing the boundaries of their disciplinary silos, thinking outside of the imposed boxes, reaching to professionals outside their own arenas to create relationships and collaborations.

I've seen this also. If a student experienced a local One Health community while in school, then graduated and moved to take a job, they often contact me saying that they really miss the One Health community, wanting to know if there are any One Health groups that I am aware of in their new locale. They miss the transformational conversations that happen when people of diverse training, background and expertise, all sit in a room and discuss One Health topics. We brainstorm what it would look like for them to ‘start’ a local One Health group, to start having brown bag lunches or zoom meetings to discuss local or regional One Health topics. How it only takes a few colleagues who deeply understand One Health. I point out that by taking on that leadership role that they will often become known as a local One Health champion and it can open doors to jobs or lead them to other leadership opportunities.

I've seen students start One Health Discussion groups, introduce One Health to lawmakers, get their states to declare One Health and One Health Awareness months, bring their college deans into One Health coalitions, create One Health courses because there were none where they were, start One Health clinics, go into local children's schools to teach about One Health topics, lead [One Health Day events](#), lead Student One Health webinars, lead ‘exploring One Health’ initiatives for college students. The list goes on.

But one of the most fulfilling things I have experienced as Executive Director of the One Health Commission is facilitating and nurturing the creation of ISOHA and working with ISOHA students. Why? Because you students have unbounded energy, enthusiasm, ideas, technical and people skills and passion. Students have not yet climbed into their professional silos and are not intimidated to go talk to someone in a totally different discipline, to form working relationships and collaborative projects. In short, students who have discovered and embraced One Health exhibit the qualities that will be needed to fully implement One Health thinking.

And there is ‘so’ much work to do to reframe our societal attitudes and actions. Paraphrasing something Einstein said in several writings goes like this; “We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

One Health may feel to today's professionals, steeped in the systems that have evolved over the past 200 years, like a new way of thinking. But One Health is not a new concept. It is a resurrection of an ancient wisdom of how interconnected the planet's health is with all life upon it. It is a way of thinking that values every living creature, from the smallest amoeba to the largest mammal. It calls for economies based on maintaining biodiversity and [value of nature and ecosystems](#). It is, in fact, a ['new professional imperative'](#).

We hear a lot today about training the next generation of scientists and global citizens. It's become almost a 'buzz' word. But for me, seeing students all over the world embracing and working to further One Health, seeing young people develop their career paths with One Health thinking, gives me a peek into the future. I see a growing critical mass of young professionals who will, quite literally, change the world as they implement One Health.

Many of you have heard me refer to One Health as a ['Ray of Hope for the Future'](#). You students intensify that ray of light and hope. Congratulations to each of you for your leadership for One Health. As you bring all professions to One Health thinking, you are, in fact, the next generation of HOPE.

