LETTER FROM OUR DEAN

When I first came to LSU from Cornell, I was aware that LSU had a live mascot but not how important he is to the LSU community. I quickly learned that, for Tiger fans, Mike the Tiger embodies the spirit of LSU. This was never more apparent than when Mike VI was diagnosed with spindle cell sarcoma in May 2016.

I am so proud of the faculty and staff who worked together to examine and diagnose Mike VI under the direction of Dr. David Baker, Mike’s veterinarian and the director of our Division of Laboratory Medicine. Dr. Baker took over the care of Mike V in 1996 and selected Mike VI in 2007.

Mike VI’s diagnosis was just the first step. The next was to determine if Mike could be treated, and, if so, how and where. Dr. Baker consulted with veterinary specialists both within and outside of the LSU community, and we partnered with the Mary Bird Perkins - Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center (Cancer Center) to give Mike stereotactic radiotherapy, or SRT—to our knowledge the first time this treatment has been done on a live tiger. With fingers crossed, the treatment appears to have been successful, and we hope to have Mike VI with us for many more months. This positive outcome would not have been possible without the collaboration of the LSU SVM, the faculty and staff at the Cancer Center (including their facilities and security staff) and the LSU Police Department.

Because the linear accelerator we are installing in 2017 will have SRT capability, the LSU SVM’s Oncology Service will be able to provide any future treatments if they are deemed necessary. For Mike VI’s 2016 treatment, our veterinary oncology service worked directly with the faculty and staff at the Cancer Center. We have a long-standing relationship with the Cancer Center in that Daniel Neck, clinical medical physicist there, is also an adjunct assistant professor at the LSU SVM and reviews all of the radiation protocols for our radiation oncology patients.

The LSU SVM has also researched different cancers and cancer cells for several years and continues to do so. It is our hope that both LSU and the Cancer Center can learn from Mike’s diagnosis and treatment for the ultimate benefit of both people and animals.

Sincerely,

Joel D. Baines, VMD, PhD
Dean
Dr. Kenneth F. Burns Chair in Veterinary Medicine

Joel D. Baines, VMD, PhD, became dean of the LSU SVM on September 1, 2014. He came to LSU from the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, where he was the associate dean for research and graduate education and the James Law Professor of Virology. In addition to serving as dean, Dr. Baines also serves as the Dr. Kenneth F. Burns Chair in Veterinary Medicine. He received a bachelor’s degree in microbiology from Kansas State University in 1979 and received a VMD degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1983. He then received his PhD from Cornell University in 1988, studying the molecular virology of feline coronaviruses. He obtained postdoctoral training at the University of Chicago, studying the molecular virology of herpes simplex virus replication. Dr. Baines has been funded by the National Institutes of Health since January 1, 1995, to study herpes simplex virus assembly. His research focuses on how capsids are assembled and exit the nuclei of infected cells. These key parts of the viral replication cycle are prime targets for new antiviral drugs.
Mike VI treated for cancer

In May 2016, LSU’s live tiger mascot, Mike VI, was diagnosed with spindle cell sarcoma and was subsequently treated at Mary Bird Perkins - Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center in Baton Rouge, La.

Story on page 2.

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MIKE VI, LSU’S LIVE TIGER MASCOT IS DOING WELL

following stereotactic radiotherapy, or SRT, which took place on June 1 at Mary Bird Perkins – Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center (Cancer Center). Mike’s veterinarian and professor at the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine (LSU SVM), David Baker, DVM, PhD, and his veterinary student caretakers previously noticed swelling on the right side of Mike VI’s face. On Thursday, May 12, Mike VI was sedated in his night house and then brought to the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine for a physical examination and diagnostic tests.

Once at the LSU SVM, Mike VI was put under general anesthesia and given a CT (computed tomography) scan to determine the cause of the swelling. All diagnostic findings were reviewed by multiple specialists, both at LSU and at other institutions, and it was determined that Mike has a tumor in his face near his nose. Biopsy analysis led to a diagnosis of spindle cell sarcoma, which is a malignant tumor derived from fibrous connective tissues of the bone. This is an extremely rare form of cancer, but this type of cancer is unlikely to spread to other areas of the body.

The team on Mike VI’s case at the LSU SVM was composed of Dr. Baker, Mike’s veterinary student caretakers, and veterinarians and veterinary technicians in the anesthesia, dermatology, laboratory animal medicine, ophthalmology, oncology, surgery, diagnostic imaging and anatomic and clinical pathology services, as well as local veterinarian Alfred Stevens, DVM (LSU SVM 1979) and veterinarian for BREC’s Baton Rouge Zoo Gordon Pirie, DVM.

Dr. Baker consulted with specialists at LSU and around the country to put together Mike’VI’s treatment plan, which was formally announced at a press conference at the LSU SVM on Monday, May 23. Mike’s treatment plan consisted of a new and highly sophisticated form of radiation therapy called “Stereotactic radiotherapy” or SRT. SRT delivers radiation to the tumor in a highly focused manner, sparing surrounding, normal tissues so complications are reduced. Treatment may be given as a single, high dose or as fractionated doses given daily for up to three days. This treatment is not curative but should extend Mike’s life and allow him to live comfortably for some time. SRT was performed by experts at Mary Bird Perkins – Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center in Baton Rouge, in conjunction with Mike’s veterinary team.

On Saturday, May 28, Mike VI was anesthetized and taken to the Cancer Center for a radiation treatment simulation, the first step in his treatment. During the simulation process, the Cancer Center team created the devices that were used to help position Mike and acquired multiple CT images that were used to map the tumor in Mike’s face during treatment planning. These images were also used to very precisely target the tumor using SRT.
On Wednesday, June 1, Mike VI was anesthetized and taken to the Cancer Center for SRT. The radiation dose was delivered in a single treatment and optimized to avoid normal tissues surrounding Mike’s cancer in order to reduce the risk complications. The Elekta Versa HD was used for Mike’s treatment and is one of the most advanced radiation therapy systems available today for delivering the type of treatment Mike needed.

According to Dr. Baker, the swelling on the right side of Mike VI’s face has completely subsided, his face is once again symmetrical, and his right eye is no longer partially closed. All of this suggests that the tumor responded to the radiation treatment and has shrunk in size. His attitude, weight and appetite are all normal.

While Mike VI has not lost hair as a direct result of his radiation treatment, he did develop a radiation burn (similar to a sunburn) 16 days post-treatment, and it caused irritation. He rubbed on his face because it itched and did rub some hair off; there is also a purple area on his face. This is not unusual following radiation treatment. The area has been treated, and Mike does not appear to be in any pain. The melanin in his skin (dark patch) will probably remain; that’s one way the body protects normally haired areas from excessive sunlight. The hair has started to regrow but is thin and lightly colored.

Eventually, the radiation-resistant cells remaining in the tumor will resume growth. The decision to administer another treatment or not will depend on Mike VI’s condition and the rate and character of the tumor as it resumes growth.

As for time frames, it is estimated that without treatment Mike VI would have lived for just 1-2 months; with treatment, perhaps 1-2 years.

The Cancer Center was selected to provide radiation therapy due to its long-standing relationship with LSU and the LSU SVM. For years, the Cancer Center’s medical physicists have provided consultation and approval for animals receiving radiation treatment at LSU. Additionally, the Cancer Center offered the advanced technology and facilities necessary for Mike’s SRT treatments, which occurred outside of normal business hours.

To get updates on Mike VI’s condition, please go to www.lsu.edu/miketiger or visit his social media pages (facebook.com/MikeTigerVI and @MikeTigerVI).
Mike VI’s Care Team

Patrick Adams, MBP PET/CT Technologist
Mark Acierno, DVM, LSU SVM Professor of Companion Animal Medicine
Elizabeth Arnold, Veterinary Technician
Yolanda Augustus, BS, RT (T), MBP Clinic Lead of Radiation Therapy
David Baker, DVM, PhD, LSU’s attending veterinarian and LSU SVM professor
Rebecca Baumruck, DVM, LSU SVM diagnostic imaging resident

Caitlin Herbet Bell, LSU SVM Class of 2018 student and veterinary student caretaker for Mike VI
Shay Bordelon, LSU SVM veterinary technician (oncology)
Bonnie Boudreaux, DVM, LSU SVM veterinary oncologist
Mary Beth Broussard, LSU SVM veterinary technician (intensive care)
Matt Bryant, MBP radiation therapist
Leigh Ann Burton, LSU SVM veterinary technician (ophthalmology)
Renee Carter, DVM (LSU SVM 2000), LSU SVM veterinary ophthalmologist
Betsy Charles, DVM, visiting veterinary radiologist
Lindsey Clemones, DVM (LSU SVM 2016), LSU SVM veterinary student caretaker for Mike VI (2014-2016)
Roxxanne Coffey, LSU SVM veterinary technician (anesthesiology)

Cassandra Coulter, DVM, LSU SVM diagnostic imaging resident
Anderson da Cunha, DVM, LSU SVM associate professor of veterinary anesthesiology
Trevor Davis, DVM, LSU SVM veterinary student caretaker for Mike VI (2014-2016)
Nicole Fitzgerald, LSU SVM veterinary technician (anesthesiology)
Christian Folk, LSU SVM Class of 2018 student and veterinary student caretaker for Mike VI
Jonas Fontenot, PhD, MBP Chief of Medical Physics
Corie Gagliano, RT (R)(T), MBP Radiation Therapist
Shawn Geraci, LSU SVM veterinary technician (oncology)
Rachel Greaber, LSU SVM veterinary technician (community practice)
Jessica Hartman, LSU SVM veterinary technician (anesthesiology)
Angie Lagos, DVM, LSU SVM anesthesiology resident

Sue LaRue, DVM, PhD, DACVS, DACVIM, Professor of Radiation Oncology, Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biological Sciences

Caitlin Lawson, DVM, LSU SVM diagnostic imaging resident
Crissy Leblanc, BS, CNMT, RT (R), MBP PET/CT Technologist
Raphael Malbrue, DVM, LSU SVM laboratory animal medicine resident
Charles McCauley, DVM, LSU SVM assistant professor of equine surgery
Meghan Meche, LSU SVM veterinary technician (anesthesia)
Grant Middleton, DVM (LSU SVM 2011), LSU SVM instructor of diagnostic imaging
Katie Montgomery, LSU SVM veterinary technician (oncology)
Joe Navarre, LSU SVM assistant director of laboratory animal medicine
Daniel Neck, MBP clinical medical physicist and LSU SVM adjust assistant professor of veterinary oncology
Gordon Pirie, DVM, veterinarian for BREC’s Baton Rouge Zoo
Cherie Pucheu-Haston, DVM (LSU SVM 1992), PhD, LSU SVM veterinary dermatologist
Patricia Queiroz, DVM, LSU SVM associate professor of veterinary anesthesiology
Nathalie Rademacher, DVM, LSU SVM associate professor of diagnostic imaging
Lisa Roundtree, LSU SVM veterinary technician (dermatology)
Amanda Shelby, LSU SVM veterinary technician (anesthesiology)
Hamlet Spears, CMD, MBP Dosimetrist
Matthew Stewart, DVM, LSU SVM diagnostic imaging resident
Rhett Stout, DVM (LSU SVM 1994), PhD, LSU SVM associate professor
Alfred Stevens, DVM (LSU SVM 1979), owner of Sherwood South Animal Hospital
Rachel Tankersley, LSU SVM veterinary technician
Marian Walsworth, RTT, CMD, MBP Dosimetrist

Grant Middleton, DVM (LSU SVM 2011), LSU SVM instructor of diagnostic imaging
Katie Montgomery, LSU SVM veterinary technician (oncology)
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Alfred Stevens, DVM (LSU SVM 1979), owner of Sherwood South Animal Hospital
Rachel Tankersley, LSU SVM veterinary technician
Marian Walsworth, RTT, CMD, MBP Director of Radiation Therapy Operations
Nancy Welborn, DVM (LSU SVM 1990), LSU SVM assistant professor of community practice
Stephen Withrow, DVM, DACVS, DACVIM, Professor of Surgical Oncology, Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biological Sciences
Charles Wood, MD, MBP radiation oncologist

LSU SVM: LSU School of Veterinary Medicine
MBP: Mary Bird Perkins - Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center

Special thanks also to the members of the LSU Police Department for safely escorting Mike VI and members of his care team from the LSU campus to Mary Bird Perkins - Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center; to the Cancer Center’s facilities and securities teams for their assistance; and to the communications and public relations staff at the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine, the LSU Division of Strategic Communications and the Cancer Center for coordinating messaging and media relations.
Mary Bird Perkins – Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center Demonstrates Innovation and Compassion for All

More than 3,000 new cancer patients are treated at Mary Bird Perkins – Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center each year, but in June 2016 one of those patients was different than most. He was of the four-legged variety, a Bengal-Siberian tiger named Mike VI.

Mike’s journey to the Cancer Center began when one of his caretakers noticed swelling around his eye that led to a diagnosis of spindle cell sarcoma, a rare form of cancer. Mike’s veterinary team determined the best option for Mike was Stereotactic Radiotherapy (SRT), which delivers a precise, concentrated dose of radiation to the tumor. In Mike’s case, the treatment would not be a cure, but it would extend his life. It was then that his veterinarian Dr. David Baker contacted the Cancer Center to request he be treated at the facility.

“The LSU Vet School will soon have SRT available, but Mike needed it immediately,” said Dr. Baker. “The University and Vet School have a collaborative, long-standing relationship with the Cancer Center, so they were my first call.”
For years, Cancer Center medical physics staff have provided technical consultation for animals receiving radiation treatments at the LSU Vet School. Additionally, through Mary Bird Perkins – LSU Medical Physics partnership there is a multi-layered joint academic and research program between the two organizations.

“The request to treat Mike was unusual, but we had the technology he required for treatment so we wanted to help him if at all possible,” said Jonas Fontenot, PhD, chief of medical physics at the Cancer Center. “After some discussion, we concluded that we could effectively treat Mike while keeping our human patients safe.”

Dr. Fontenot said they ensured patient safety by treating Mike on weekends and after hours. It had also been determined early on that no animal disease could be passed to human patients. The main considerations were Mike’s size and the speed in which imaging and treatment would need to occur once he arrived at the Cancer Center, keeping the amount of time he was under anesthesia minimal.

The Cancer Center’s medical physics team addresses challenges for human patients each and every day. They are employed by the Cancer Center to work in conjunction with radiation oncologists to ensure patients receive a safe and accurate dose of radiation that will positively impact the outcome. In Mike’s case, they figured out how to position and immobilize his body with devices typically used for human patients. Multiple imaging studies were used to map Mike’s tumor and normal tissues and sophisticated computer models were used to create a customized radiation treatment plan. In terms of making Mike’s visits as short as possible, the Cancer Center team devised a plan and rehearsed it so that he could be taken in and out of the facility quickly.
“Most people don’t realize that most of the steps we took for Mike’s care are not dissimilar to how we plan and deliver treatments for human patients,” said Daniel Neck, MS, director of clinical physics at the Cancer Center and adjunct faculty member at the LSU Vet School. “While a patient may see only one or two caregivers during a visit, behind the scenes there is a tremendous effort underway to ensure treatment plans are tailored for every individual, depending on their cancer. It’s really a massive effort, and I’m so proud to be a part of the team.”

According to Neck, 10 or more people can be involved in a single patient’s care to ensure their cancer is comprehensively addressed. This can include physicians, nurses, medical physicists, radiation therapists, imaging technologists, patient navigators, dieticians and other clinical professionals.

“We are here to lessen the burden of cancer for every patient who comes through our doors, and we were pleased LSU entrusted us to care for their beloved mascot,” said Dr. Fontenot. “It was a unique opportunity, and we learned a lot. I am confident the work we did with Mike VI will impact the future of veterinary and human medicine in a very meaningful way.”

About Mary Bird Perkins – Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center

As a premier destination for cancer care, Mary Bird Perkins – Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center offers the most advanced technology and services provided by a dedicated team of nationally recognized oncology experts. The Cancer Center provides best-practice, comprehensive care at every stage of the cancer journey, including disease site-specific multidisciplinary care teams, a robust clinical research program and extensive supportive care services. As a nonprofit organization, donor generosity is essential to sustaining the mission of improving survivorship and lessening the burden of cancer for so many throughout Southeast Louisiana and beyond. For more information on the Cancer Center and how you can become involved, please visit mbpolol.org.

A multidisciplinary care team surrounds each Cancer Center patient to ensure they receive the most comprehensive care. Some of Mike VI’s care team included: CT/PET Technicians Patrick Adams and Crissy Massey; Radiation Therapists Matt Bryant, Corrie Gagliano and Yolanda Augustus; Director of Radiation Therapy Marian Walsworth; Radiation Oncologist Charles Wood, MD, and Dosimetrist Hamlet Spears.
Symptom
MAY 1
Mike’s veterinary student caretakers notice a slight swelling in Mike’s face.

Exam
MAY 12
Mike is brought to the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine in his trailer for a full exam.

Diagnosis
MAY 12 - 22
Dr. Baker consults with experts both inside and outside the LSU SVM about Mike’s diagnosis and treatment options.

Press
MAY 23
LSU holds a press conference to announce the diagnosis and treatment plan.

Simulation
MAY 28
Mike is taken to Mary Bird Perkins – Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center for radiation simulation to map the tumor in his face.

Treatment
JUNE 1
Mike undergoes single treatment of stereotactic radiotherapy at the Cancer Center.
History of Mike the Tiger

Mike I (1936-56)

In 1934, Athletic Department trainer Chellis “Mike” Chambers, Athletic Director T. P. Heard, Swimming Pool Manager and Intramural Swimming Coach William G. “Hickey” Higginbotham, and LSU law student Ed Laborde decided to bring a real tiger to LSU, then known as the “Ole War Skule.” They raised $750, collecting 25 cents from each student, and purchased a two-hundred pound, one-year-old tiger from the Little Rock Zoo. The cub was born on October 10, 1935, and was originally named Sheik. His name was changed in honor of Chambers, the man most responsible for bringing him to LSU. Mike I arrived on campus on October 21, 1936. Mike died on June 29, 1956, of complications associated with kidney disease. Following Mike’s death, a fund was established to perpetuate his memory by mounting his pelt in a lifelike manner and displaying him at the university’s Louisiana Museum of Natural History, where it remains to this day.

Mike II (1956-58)

A few days after the death of Mike I, Representative Kenneth Deshotel of St. Landry introduced a resolution in the Louisiana legislature endorsing the purchase of another tiger. On campus, the Mike the Tiger Fund was launched by Student Body President Enos Parker and fellow students Vic Koepp and John Nunn. On August 4, 1956, the LSU Board of Supervisors passed a resolution stating that caretaker salaries and maintenance costs for the new tiger would come equally from student fees and the Athletic Department. Mike II was born on February 28, 1956, at the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans. He arrived secretly on campus on September 28, 1956. Mike’s unveiling occurred the next day, September 29, opening day of football season. A ceremony was held, during which Enos Parker presented a check for $1,500 to George Douglas, superintendent of the Audubon Zoo. Legend has it that less than a month after his arrival at LSU, Mike II died of pneumonia at only eight months of age. Reportedly, Mike II was then secretly buried under a willow tree along the Mississippi River by newly appointed athletic director Jim Corbett, campus police chief C. R. “Dick” Anderson, and LSU Athletic Department business manager Jack Gilmore. To explain Mike’s absence, a statement was issued in the LSU Daily Reveille on October 23 saying that Mike was having trouble adjusting to his enclosure and was there being kept inside “until he becomes more accustomed
to the excitement of being a mascot." Another cub of the right age was located at the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, according to Gilmore. In addition to Gilmore's testimony, several pieces of evidence support the legend that the original Mike II died and was replaced by another young tiger. Photographs of Mike II taken before and after his convalescence are clearly of two different tigers (facial markings of tigers are as unique as fingerprints), and he seemed to have grown at a tremendous rate. All rumors of the death and replacement of Mike II were denied. The second Mike II reigned at LSU for only one season. He died at the Audubon Zoo on May 15, 1958, of complications associated with multiple fractures to his left rear leg (it was not known exactly how or when the leg was injured). In 1955, Mike's care was taken over by Dr. Joe Dixon of the LSU Department of Veterinary Science. Thereafter, while the Athletic Department retained authority over the tiger's day-to-day life, Mike I and subsequent tigers would have a veterinarian to attend to their medical needs.

**Mike III (1958-76)**

In 1958, Jim Corbett and Jack Gilmore located and purchased Mike III from the Seattle zoo. Mike III was born on November 26, 1957, and arrived at LSU in late August 1958. The LSU student body raised $1,500 for his purchase and transportation (though the final purchase price was only $950, with an additional $100 for transportation). A five-cent "tradition fee" was assessed each student for the tiger's care. Mike III was introduced to the general public at the first home game of the 1958 season, on October 4 against Hardin-Simmons University (LSU won 20-6). In 1976 (three years after the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine accepted its first class), Dr. Sheldon Bivin of the LSU SVM was asked to take over as veterinarian for Mike III. Dr. Bivin was head of both the Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine and the exotic animal medicine service in the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine (LSU SVM), so he was the natural choice. This marked the formal transfer of responsibility for the tiger from the Athletic Department to the LSU SVM. Mike died of pneumonia on August 12, 1976, after the only losing football season of his lifetime.
**Mike IV (1976-90)**

Mike IV was born at Busch Gardens in Tampa, Fla., on May 15, 1974. He was donated to LSU on August 27, 1976, by August A. Busch, III of Busch Gardens. He arrived at LSU on August 29, 1976. Mike spent the summer of 1981 at the Little Rock Zoo while his enclosure was being expanded from 400 to 1,100 square feet. Money for the expansion was raised from the LSU Student Government Association, the Athletic Department, LSU fans, and a fee of $2 per student. In 1981, pranksters cut the chain to the outer door and the lock to the inner cage door of the enclosure, releasing Mike. LSU police called Dr. Bivin around 1 a.m. to tell him that Mike was in the middle of North Stadium Drive. He wandered into the Bernie Moore Track Stadium, where Dr. Bivin shot him with a tranquilizer pistol (it took three shots to sedate him). He was safely returned to his enclosure. In April 1990, Mike developed a neurologic problem that resulted in mild lameness. In addition, he was getting on in years and was beginning to slow down. The Baton Rouge Zoo offered to take in the aging mascot. There he lived until his condition worsened, and he became severely disabled. Mike IV was put to sleep on March 3, 1995. Mike IV was cremated, and his ashes are located in the Andonie Museum next to the LSU Alumni Association on LSU’s campus.

**Mike V (1990-2007)**

Mike V was born October 19, 1989, and came to LSU when he was four months old. Mike V was donated to LSU by Dr. Thomas and Caroline Atchison of the Animal Zoological Park in Moulton, Ala. He was introduced to LSU fans at the LSU-Alabama basketball game in February 1990, and he was moved into his home, north of Tiger Stadium, on April 30, 1990. When Mike V first came to LSU, his night house was part of the original habitat constructed in 1937. Mike V underwent three medical procedures: two root canals and one benign tumor removal.
All procedures were done at the LSU SVM. Mike V passed away at 2:23 a.m. on May 18, 2007, of renal failure. He had been anesthetized and brought to the LSU SVM on May 16 so that Dr. David Baker could determine the cause of recent weight loss and respiratory difficulty. During the examination, it was determined that Mike had a large amount of fluid around his lungs. Emergency surgery was performed, and the fluid successfully removed. Unfortunately, Mike’s aged kidneys could not tolerate the anesthesia and failed. Mike V was cremated, and his ashes are located in the Andonie Museum next to the LSU Alumni Association on LSU’s campus.

**Mike VI (2007-present)**

Mike VI was born July 23, 2005, and came to LSU when he was two years old. At the time of his arrival at LSU, he weighed 320 pounds. Mike VI was donated to LSU by Great Cats of Indiana, a nonprofit sanctuary and rescue facility for big cats and other large carnivores, located in Idaville, Ind. He was moved into his new home on August 25, 2007, and was introduced to the LSU community on September 1, 2007. He was officially declared Mike VI at a ceremony held on September 14, 2007. He debuted in Tiger Stadium on the evening of the Florida vs. LSU football game on Saturday, October 6, 2007. LSU won 28-24.
Mike’s Habitat

There have been two habitats for tiger mascots on LSU’s campus. The first tiger habitat was built in 1937. Mike I resided at the City Park Zoo until his home on campus was completed. The first tiger habitat cost about $3,500. In 1981, Mike’s outdoor enclosure had a $175,000 renovation, making it three times larger. The renovation added a grassy area, pool, climbing platforms and a tiger-sized wooden scratching post. The grassy area was covered with a soft rubber material in the early 1990s. Mike IV and Mike V lived in the expanded enclosure.

A capital fundraising campaign for a new habitat kicked off in 2001; donations were made for Mike’s habitat to the Tiger Athletic Foundation. Construction on the second enclosure began in November 2004 and was completed in August 2005. The first tiger to live in the new habitat was Mike V, who moved in on August 27, 2005.

The current habitat incorporates natural substrates, including grass, and also includes elements of LSU’s Renaissance architecture and facts educating Mike’s visitors on the five living subspecies of tigers. The current enclosure encompasses 15,000 square feet (approximately 14,000 square feet of yard and another 1,000 square feet in his night house).

In 2004, the old habitat was torn down and construction began on a new habitat. Mike V resided at BREC’s Baton Rouge Zoo while construction took place.
Construction was completed in 2005, and Mike V moved into the new habitat on August 27, 2005, two days before Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the Gulf Coast. Mike V rode out the storm in his night house with no problem.

ABOVE: Mike V arrives at his new home.
RIGHT: Mike V in his new night house on the first day he gets to explore it.
The current habitat includes oak trees that serve as scratching posts, a stream, a waterfall and two pools.
ABOVE RIGHT: The LSU Alumni Association gave out paw-shaped cards for fans to leave at the habitat in support of Mike VI.

ABOVE LEFT: Dozens of people sent cards and gifts or left them at Mike’s habitat to express their love and concern for Mike VI.

BELOW: Other college mascots sent cards or flowers, as did the tigers at BREC’s Baton Rouge Zoo.

On July 21, 2016, fifty campers from Camp Care visited Mike VI to give him a get well card. The Athletic Department gave them a tour of Tiger Stadium, and the LSU Division of Strategic Communications treated them to ice cream and popsicles from the LSU Dairy Store. Camp Care was founded by Cancer Services of Baton Rouge over 20 years ago to give children with cancer and their siblings a great week of summer camp activities surrounded by other children who can truly understand the challenges of a cancer diagnosis and the side effects of treatment.
On October 21, 1936, Mike I arrived on the LSU campus. For 80 years, LSU has had the privilege of having a live tiger mascot on its campus, and Mike VI, LSU’s current live mascot, is the only live tiger living on a college campus in the United States. He is a symbol of the pride, strength and majesty that is LSU. Caring for Mike is a huge responsibility, and 60 students and three veterinarians have provided care for our live mascot since 1936.

From 1936 to 1976, care for the tiger was provided by the Athletic Department. In 1976, the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine began providing the tiger’s care. You can learn about all of the Mikes in Mike the Tiger: The Roar of LSU, the book written by Mike’s current veterinarian, Dr. David Baker.

Caretakers for Mike VI on What Mike Means to Them

Wendy Day, DVM (LSU SVM 2008): Caretaker from 2006-08

“One of the many blessings in my life is working with animals. Having had the chance to care for Mike V in his last year and welcoming Mike VI to LSU his first year was amazing. Nothing can replace the bond I developed with either Mike, especially the chance to be Mike VI’s ‘LSU girlfriend’. I still remember his reaction and how I could never sneak up on him. When I would drive up, he knew the sound of my car engine, the sound of my door shutting, the jingle of my keys and the smell of my perfume. He still remembers me when I go by and visit today. He will always have a piece of my heart.” Dr. Day works at White Oak Animal Hospital and ER in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Wesley Lee, DVM (LSU SVM 2008): Caretaker from 2006-08

“Word of Mike VI’s cancer hit like a sucker punch to the gut. Mike VI came along as such a bright spot in a dark time after we lost Mike V. His youth and enthusiasm were such contrasts to the wisdom and composure of the veteran old Mike V. There is something special in the experience of having any animal recognize you as an individual and truly be excited to see you...and when that animal is Mike the Tiger, ‘special’ falls woefully short as an adequate description. It was such a privilege to share part of my days with these two amazing tigers. It has been wonderful to see Mike VI grow and mature into the beautiful tiger that he is today. Sending a heartfelt chuff your way, old buddy.” Dr. Lee works at Red River Equine Hospital in Benton, La.

Adam Caro, DVM (LSU SVM 2010): Caretaker from 2008-10

“I was lucky enough to be a caretaker for Mike VI for two years during my veterinary training. It was an incredible experience that I will always look back on fondly. The news of Mike’s diagnosis was a sad day for me, but I am very happy that it was caught in time. He has an excellent and diverse team of medical professionals at his aide.” Dr. Caro is assistant director of IACUC management at the University of Pennsylvania.

Daniel Cutler, DVM (LSU SVM 2014): Caretaker from 2012-14

“To me, the best part of being Mike VI’s caretaker wasn’t getting to go to football games or people being impressed by your job. The best part was getting to know Mike on a personal level where I knew him and he knew me. Everyone knows and loves him as the Heart of LSU. I got to know him as a stubborn, but goofy cat.” Dr. Cutler is a zoological medicine resident at the University of Georgia.

Macy Trosclair, DVM (LSU SVM 2014): Caretaker from 2012-14

“There are so many moments throughout my two years as caretaker that I will cherish for the rest of my life. One in particular stands out. During my fourth year of veterinary school, I was working very long days while on the internal medicine rotation. I would get up at 4:30 a.m. each morning to get Mike VI ready for the day before heading into the clinic and then see him again in the evening to bring him into his
nighthouse, usually having to return to the clinic afterwards to finish up paperwork. During the last days of that rotation, one of my long-term patients was doing poorly and had to be euthanized. It was my first time losing a patient that I had worked so closely with, and at that stage in my career, I was still learning how to deal with the weight of that emotionally. I went to the nighthouse to feed Mike that evening, emotionally and physically drained from the events of the day, and sat on the floor waiting for Mike to come inside. He snuck up behind me, rubbed his head against the bars, chuffed loudly in my ear, and licked my hand as if to say, ‘I know this is hard, but it will get better. You got this.’ He sat on the floor at my side for almost 30 minutes, completely ignoring his dinner until I was ready to get up and move on with
my night. It was a simple gesture; one most pet owners might overlook if their dog or cat had done the same, but it was what I needed in that moment, and I’ll never forget it. Being one of Mike’s caretaker’s was a dream come true for me. It’s the reason why I chose to attend LSU for veterinary school and part of the reason why I wanted to become a veterinarian in the first place. As a child, my family would attend most home football and baseball games, and no trip was complete without a visit to Mike's enclosure. He has always been the anchor of that campus, keeping a firm tether on the rich traditions and unwavering spirit of LSU. Even now, Mike represents the best of what it means to be an LSU alumnus. He's empathetic but strong, playful but fierce, and intensely loyal. He is the heart and soul of this university, and I am immensely grateful to have been a part of his life.”

Dr. Trosclair just finished an zoological medicine internship at North Carolina State University and is currently looking for jobs in the zoo/aquarium field.

Lindsey Clemones, DVM (LSU SVM 2016): Caretaker from 2014-16

"Caring for Mike VI will always be the highlight of my veterinary career. He is so much more than just a tiger or just a mascot. He is the heart and soul of LSU and an important part of campus history. I was so lucky to be a part of that.”

Dr. Clemones currently works at Riverlands Animal Hospital in LaPlace, La.

Trevor Davis, DVM (LSU SVM 2016): Caretaker from 2014-16

"My favorite memory of Mike VI was when we returned Mike to the habitat after his radiation therapy planning. He was still sleepy from the anesthesia and laying on his bed. I walked up to the door and crouched down to his level and said in a soft voice, “Hey buddy.” And he gave me the cutest, sleepiest chuff, and that is when I knew he was all right.”

Dr. Davis is working at Randolph County Veterinary Clinic, a mixed animal practice doing general medicine and surgery on dogs, cats, horses and food animals; the practice is owned by his father, Michael Davis, DVM (LSU SVM 1981).

Caitlin Bell (LSU SVM Class of 2018): Caretaker from 2016-18

"I knew this position was a once-in-a-lifetime chance I would never have again. I also knew what an honor it would be to care for a college mascot. One of my favorite things about working with Mike VI is that Mike knows me! I love the special bond I have with Mike! There is nothing like being up close and personal with such a large and exotic animal daily. Mike is not only the face of LSU; he is the spirit behind the fans and the students of LSU. Mike is a special piece of LSU’s history.”

Following graduation, Caitlin hopes to practice mixed animal medicine in northeast Louisiana.

Christian Folk (LSU SVM Class of 2018): Caretaker from 2016-18

"Living in Baton Rouge for most of my life, visiting Mike V was a staple of my childhood. My mom used to bring my older sister and me to visit him pretty frequently, so I guess the desire to be his caretaker began there. I didn’t realize until right before I started veterinary school that our class would be offered the position, but once I found out I’ve wanted the position ever since. Within the first week of our very first semester, Caitlin and I talked about wanting the position and decided to apply as a team that day. My favorite thing about getting to know Mike VI is his personality. In reality, he’s a pretty big goof ball. He doesn’t like being woken up early in the morning. He will play possum if he wants you to ‘think’ he’s asleep and just be left alone. Taking care of him is just like getting to know any new animal. It's an amazing experience to watch him slowly over time trust you and respond to you. Seeing 20 to 30 people around him at the habitat and he's not paying anyone any individual attention, then you come by and say, ‘Hey, buddy,’ and he instantly pops his head up and stares right at you. It's an incredible feeling. Mike is the face of LSU, but even more recently with his cancer diagnosis, I think he's also a new face for hope. Watching him recover from his radiation therapy and go about his days like nothing is wrong has meant a lot to me and several others. The love and support that was shown to Mike VI after his diagnosis was made public was overwhelming in the best way. He means a great deal to many people near and far. Being able to care for such a loved and admired animal makes this job extremely rewarding.”

Following graduation, Christian plans to pursue a small animal surgical residency and become a board-certified surgeon.
As part of LSU’s homecoming festivities in 2013, past and present student caretakers (representing five of the six Mikes) were honored on the field in Tiger Stadium between the first and second quarters of the Furman vs. LSU football game on October 26.

Attending the recognition on the field were (from left) Dr. Daniel Cutler (LSU SVM 2014), Mike VI caretaker (2012-2014); Dr. Macy Trosclair (LSU SVM 2014), Mike VI caretaker (2012-2014); Dr. Randee Monceaux (LSU SVM 2012), Mike VI caretaker (2010-12); Dr. Rollie Norris (LSU SVM 1992), Mike V caretaker (1990-92); Dr. Adam Caro (LSU SVM 2010), Mike VI caretaker (2008-10); Dr. Kelly Folsé (LSU SVM 2010), Mike VI caretaker (2008-10); Dr. Wendy Day (LSU SVM 2008), Mike V and Mike VI caretaker (2006-08); Philip Amon, Mike III caretaker (1972); Dr. Leeth Harper (LSU SVM 2000), Mike V caretaker (1998-2000); Dr. David Webre (LSU SVM 1998), Mike V caretaker (1996-98); Dr. John Allender (LSU SVM 1984), Mike IV caretaker (1983-84); Dr. W. Byron Garrity, Jr. (LSU SVM 1982), Mike IV caretaker (1980-82); Dr. John DeVun (LSU SVM 1986), Mike IV caretaker (1985-86); Dr. Donald J. Harris, Jr. (LSU SVM 1980), Mike IV caretaker (1978-80); Paul Marks, Jr. (LSU 1965), Mike III caretaker (1963-65); Robert Lank Jr. (LSU 1970), Mike III caretaker (1968-72) and son of LSU SVM founding faculty member, Dr. Robert Lank, Sr.; Dr. Jeffrey Perret (LSU SVM 1990), Mike IV caretaker (1989-90); Dr. James “Sonny” Corley (LSU SVM 1980), Mike IV caretaker (1976-80); and Dr. David Baker, LSU’s attending veterinarian and LSU SVM professor of laboratory animal medicine. Sidney Miller (LSU 1958), Mike II caretaker from 1957-58, was in attendance at the game but was not pictured on the field.

Mike VI turned 11 years old on July 23, 2016. A fan placed a Happy Birthday banner on the fence of his habitat, and his veterinary student caretakers made a special birthday dinner for him.
History of the Cancer Treatment Unit

The Cancer Treatment Unit (CTU) at the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine (LSU SVM) was formed in 1998 to aid in the diagnosis, care, and treatment of veterinary patients with cancer. The facility has two major service units—medical oncology and radiation oncology. On average the CTU sees 750 new patients each year and has been visited by patients from all over the country, including Alaska, Hawaii, and even a patient from Canada.

When the CTU was first opened in the late 90s, the clinic only offered medical oncology (chemotherapy) on-site, due to the absence of state-of-the-art radiation therapy equipment.

Even though the LSU Teaching Hospital did not offer radiation therapy in the clinic when it first opened, every Wednesday technicians would take up to four patients to Mary Bird Perkins - Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center after hours so those patients could receive the radiation treatment they so desperately needed. Even so, the CTU was still limited in the amount of patients they could see and types of treatment they could provide.

“When I first started working in the Oncology department in 1999, the construction for the current Cancer Treatment Unit was not finished yet. Chemotherapy treatment was done wherever we could find the space to do it, which usually meant sharing the small animal treatment room with other departments,” said Tammy Moreau, medical oncology nurse in the CTU. “We also did not have equipment for CT scanning; therefore any CT scan or MRI we needed had to be conducted at an off-site imaging facility.

On January 31, 2003, the CTU expanded by opening a 2,000-square-foot facility that would house new radiation therapy equipment, as well as a dedicated chemotherapy suite, a radioactive iodine room and a 3-D radiation therapy planning area. The construction for the CTU took one year to build after a two-year long capital campaign to raise funds.

By the time the CTU was opened, the LSU SVM was only the second veterinary school in the United States to offer the most advanced radiation therapy for cancer patients, and the second facility in the Baton Rouge area. The other facility is Mary Bird Perkins - Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center, which offers the same treatment for human cancer patients.

The Cancer Treatment Unit is designed to diagnose and treat veterinary cancer patients with the most advanced and cutting-edge technology available. The oncology service works from a team approach, so a patient requiring chemotherapy and radiation therapy has the benefit of being evaluated by specialists in each of these fields, who then design a treatment protocol tailored to their individual needs.

Expanding Once Again

In 2017 the Cancer Treatment Unit plans to expand once again by building a larger vault in order to house new equipment that will offer the most advanced form of radiation treatment. This expansion will be a part of the new Companion Animal Clinic, expected to be finished by next summer.

“The new linear accelerator will allow us to do different types of cancer treatment that the current machine cannot do, including electron therapy,” said Bonnie Boudreaux, DVM, MS, DACVIM (Oncology), associate professor in Veterinary Clinical Sciences. “This new equipment also comes with on board imaging so we can conduct more advanced imaging at the time of therapy and more precisely target tumors.”

About Radiation Oncology

Radiation oncologists use radiation to kill cancer cells locally. This allows cancers that cannot be cured with surgery alone to be treated effectively. With the incorporation of radiation, it is often possible to perform less aggressive surgery than would otherwise be necessary. The CTU currently uses a linear accelerator to deliver a high-energy beam of radiation to the tumor and is one of the only veterinary schools in
the country that uses a multileaf collimator to perform intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT), which allows the radiation beam to be tightly conformed to the tumor contour, sparing normal tissues in the radiation area. IMRT permits precise delivery of a high dose of radiation to the tumor, while sparing critical normal tissues. In 2017, we will be able to offer more types of cancer treatment. The new linear accelerator and construction of the new vault to house it is the result of both state and private funds.

**About Medical Oncology (Chemotherapy)**

Medical oncologists treat patients that have cancers requiring chemotherapy. There are many different types of chemotherapy agents for use in veterinary cancer patients. The protocol chosen will depend on the cancer type, as well as how advanced the cancer is when evaluated by the CTU oncologists. Most veterinary patients tolerate chemotherapy much better than their human counterparts, and advances in the control of chemotherapy-induced side effects has greatly decreased the incidence of common toxicities like nausea and vomiting. Most owners of pets undergoing chemotherapy for cancer will describe their pet’s quality of life as excellent (normal) during therapy.

The Cancer Treatment Unit is staffed by Bonnie Boudreaux, DVM, MS, DACVIM (Oncology), associate professor in Veterinary Clinical Sciences (joined LSU SVM in 2009); Jayme S. Looper, DVM (LSU SVM 1997), DACVR (Radiation Oncology) (joined LSU SVM in 2016); Andrea Dedeaux, DVM (LSU SVM 2011), medical oncology resident since 2015; Shay Bordelon, radiation oncology technician since 2004; Shawn Geraci, medical oncology technician since 2015; Katie Montgomery, oncology technician since 2013; and Tammy Moreau, medical oncology nurse since 1997.
An Amazing Spirit

Stephen and Carolyn Stewart of Jackson, Miss., brought 9-month-old Jasper, an Italian Greyhound, into their home to serve as a pleasant distraction from Stephen’s ongoing chemotherapy treatments for non-Hodgkins lymphoma. After a month of trembling hesitance, Jasper learned to trust and love his new parents, keeping them laughing as Stephen entered remission.

“He is an integral part of our family, an amazing spirit, and a very brave puppy,” Stephen shared.

Eight years later, when Jasper developed hemangiosarcoma, an aggressive, malignant tumor, the Stewarts knew that they would go the extra mile to ensure that he was given the best care.

“When you have cancer yourself, you take that on, you deal with it, and you do what the doctors tell you to do. But your little dog doesn’t know what the doctor is saying. Really, it’s on you,” Stephen explained.

Through conversations with friends and their local veterinarian about their best options, the Stewarts chose the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine (LSU SVM) to treat Jasper. Every three weeks, they drove nearly three hours for his assessments and infusions. Each visit, the bond among the Stewarts, Jasper and the staff grew tremendously.

“My first trip there alone, I got a call from one of the vets midway through Jasper’s treatment, telling me that he was doing fine. They couldn’t have been more solicitous of our feelings, wanting us to know what was happening,” Carolyn said.

“It was a great experience. They all seemed to say, ‘Welcome back, Jasper!’ and were very kind to us when we got there. They took Jasper in tow, and he was never shaking or upset when he came back. It was just another day for him, like he was going to work,” Stephen remembered.

Besides long naps in the car following treatments, Jasper showed virtually no symptoms or side effects, keeping up with his best pal, Jilly, also an Italian Greyhound; his adopted Shih-Tzu-mix sister, Pippa; and a slew of feline friends. Now, after a few bouts of surgery and precautionary scans every 90 days, Jasper is celebrating one year of being cancer free. The Stewarts recently made a gift to the Companion Animal Clinic Capital Challenge Fund as a way to express their gratitude to the team at the LSU SVM for Jasper’s special care and recovery.

“You are an amazing group of veterinarians that treat all kinds of animals. That’s not being done in every community. The fact that we can help out in making sure that treatment options are available is a big deal for us,” Stephen said, adding, “The LSU SVM is on the cutting edge, and we want to be a small part of getting that message out there.”

A Second Chance

When Jen Karam’s Golden Retriever, Rex, was diagnosed with soft-tissue sarcoma, she faced the fear and devastation that any pet owner would. Unfortunately, Jen had gone down this road twice before.
"My Scottish Terrier was diagnosed with lymphoma, prescribed prednisone by a local vet, and died within 30 days," Jen shared. "That's why I immediately brought Tahoe, my first Golden Retriever, to the LSU SVM to see if he had a chance of surviving instead of succumbing to the cancer. He was in remission for three years after his treatment."

Bringing Rex to LSU, Jen had a bittersweet reunion with Tammy Moreau, the nurse in the Cancer Treatment Unit who cared for Tahoe and wrote a touching letter to Jen after his passing. "She has a big place in my heart. To see her again was comforting," Jen remembered.

Every Monday for four weeks, Jen brought Rex to LSU for his radiation treatments. Because the Karams live in Lake Charles, he would stay there until his last treatment of the week, on Friday morning. Dr. Andrea Dedeaux (LSU SVM 2011), a medical oncology resident, gave Jen her cell phone number, and the entire staff took Rex into their hearts, treating him like their own. Knowing that he doesn't like to be kenneled, Dr. Dedeaux and other staff members brought Rex home for sleepovers and allowed him to roam the oncology room during the day.

"That made me feel better. It was very difficult having him so far away, spending the night there, and going through those treatments. Knowing that he was in good hands, that they were talking to him, and that he wasn't stuck in a kennel, meant everything to me," Jen said, adding that Rex felt right at home, even helping himself to Moreau's roast beef sandwich one day.
When Rex suffered a life-threatening abscess rupture, Dr. Dedeaux went “above and beyond” for Rex. She spent hours on the phone with Jen and Rex’s local vet to coordinate a treatment plan. The surgeons at LSU worked on Rex from 7 p.m. on a Sunday until 5 a.m. the next morning. With a 50/50 chance of survival and a stay in ICU for two weeks, Rex beat the odds.

While he’s had a reoccurrence and currently takes a chemotherapy drug and antibiotics, Jen said that Rex is a trooper: “You’d never know. He’s doing everything he normally does.” Jen describes Rex’s team at the LSU SVM as compassionate, communicative, and amazing. “They were unbelievable. It brings tears to my eyes just talking about the experience,” Jen shared. “Thank you so much for taking care of my dogs, loving them like I love them, and giving them a second chance at life.”

Quality Time

Tammy Moreau, a nurse in the medical oncology department at the LSU SVM, owes much of her life’s journey to her late black domestic shorthair cat, Mitey. Moreau landed her first job at the veterinary clinic where she brought him as a tiny kitten, the runt of the litter, and now she’s going on 17 years at the LSU SVM, where he received chemotherapy for an injection-site sarcoma for the last 14 months of his life.

“He definitely led me to where I need to be and to what I love to do. I can’t imagine doing anything else,” she shared.

Moreau, a Baton Rouge native, is no stranger to cancer herself. She has been diagnosed with two different kinds of cancer. Following a thyroidectomy, radioactive iodine treatment, and countless doctor visits, Moreau is inspired and humbled by her brave patients at the LSU SVM, who live life to the fullest.

“They come in, and they’re happy to see us, even though they have to have blood drawn, and they have to be restrained. It reminds me every single day that they do this with such courage, and then they get up, want a snack, are happy and go out the door,” she shared.

Through her experiences as a pet owner and a patient, Moreau knows that it takes a “dedicated, compassionate and skillful” oncology team to make a difference in the lives of animals and their owners.

“You have to see the big picture, and you have to be committed, because the majority of diseases that we work with are not curable, but we are buying good time. We’re working on the premise of providing as much quality time with the pet’s family as possible,” Moreau said.

While working in oncology means “the potential of having your heart broken on a daily basis,” Moreau said it’s worth it. More than anything, she values the sense of family that is created among the staff, students, clients and patients, some coming from as far away as Canada and Alaska. Her advice to clients on how to cope with a terminally ill pet is the same piece of advice that her mother gave her years ago, when Mitey was sick.

“She told me, ‘If you don’t stop all of this moping around, you’re going to miss it. He feels great. He wants you to love him and feed him. If you don’t start enjoying your time with him, then what did you do this for?’” Moreau remembered. “It’s very easy to get bogged down with the ‘ifs’ and the ‘whens.’ Let’s be like our dogs and cats and live in the moment. They don’t know that they have cancer!”

Reflecting on her 17 years with the school, Moreau is most proud of the veterinarians that LSU sends out into the world—many of whom, she notes, loyally refer patients back to the school for treatment—and is excited to see what the future holds for the LSU SVM. She calls it “the place I’ve always wanted to be.”
**Cancer Research**

**One Health**

"Cancer is an insidious disease, and it has proven quite difficult, despite all of our best efforts, to identify new therapies and cures," said J. Michael Mathis, PhD, professor and chair of the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine (LSU SVM) Department of Comparative Biomedical Sciences. “But we are very hopeful that we really are at the cusp of exciting times. The research that we are doing here is the cornerstone of new therapies."

The department conducts biomedical science research aimed at innovating novel approaches for therapeutic intervention of diseases. For example, Dr. Mathis is currently investigating how to reengineer viruses to infect and kill breast cancer and colon cancer cells, while leaving healthy cells alone. Colleague Shisheng Li, PhD, associate professor, is studying the role that genetic repair plays in causing cancer after one’s exposure to DNA-damaging agents, and Arthur Penn, PhD, professor, is studying the effects of tobacco exposure on unborn fetuses.

"Each investigator is his own independent agent. We develop a laboratory, we design our own experimental models, and we investigate the results. We hire research associates, we recruit students to work in our laboratories, and we compete for research dollars from the federal government. It’s like a small business," Dr. Mathis said. “Still, we are not working in a vacuum. We work with medical schools and hospitals in our area and across the country. We are a part of a community of scientists that are working together to research cancer and find a cure."

For many of their research endeavors, the CBS team use animal models, specifically mouse and rat models. Dr. Mathis said that through sharing his findings with the team at the LSU SVM, new treatment options can be offered to companion animals before they proceed to human care, benefiting both populations. This is the concept of “One Health.” “Our ability to interact with our clinical oncologists at the LSU SVM is a unique opportunity that is not available everywhere,” Dr. Mathis said. “We can partner with our veterinary clinicians to look for ways of cancer prevention and cancer treatment. Cancer isn’t just a disease of humans; it’s a disease of all mammals. Everything we learn for human disease we can apply to treating animals, and vice versa."

The CBS Department is committed to making groundbreaking discoveries, providing excellent professional and graduate education, and serving and promoting LSU and the greater community. Dr. Mathis, who joined the LSU SVM faculty in 2013, hopes to leave a legacy through his work, emphasizing the CBS Department’s role in training a new generation of scientists to carry on their mission to understand, treat and prevent cancer and, ultimately, to cure it.
Rhonda Cardin, PhD, associate dean for research and advanced studies, received her AB from Washington University in 1983 and her PhD from LSU in 1989. She joined the faculty in April 2016. She comes to the LSU SVM having trained in laboratories at Tulane, LSU, Stanford, and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, where she was in the laboratory of Peter Doherty, DVM, the only veterinarian who is also a Nobel Laureate. Before coming to LSU, she served on the faculty in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. She comes with substantial contract and R01 funding from the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Cardin is responsible for overseeing the LSU SVM’s extensive biomedical research programs and advanced (MS and PhD) degrees.

Libya Dubytska, PhD, assistant professor - research in Pathobiological Sciences (PBS), joined the faculty in July 2016. She received her MS from Ivan Franko State University (Ukraine) in 1994 and her PhD from the Institute of Cell Biology and Genetic Engineering of the NAS of Ukraine in 2003. Dr. Dubytska recently completed a post-doctoral fellowship in PBS at the LSU SVM.

Renee Carter, DVM (LSU SVM 2000), DACVO, associate professor of veterinary ophthalmology in Veterinary Clinical Sciences (VCS), received her DVM from the LSU SVM in 2000. She rejoined the faculty in May 2016, having previously served on the LSU SVM faculty from 2006 through 2012. She completed a rotating internship in small animal medicine and surgery at the LSU SVM in 2001 and a residency in comparative ophthalmology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2006. She is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists.

Renee Carter, DVM (LSU SVM 2000), DACVO, associate professor of veterinary ophthalmology in Veterinary Clinical Sciences (VCS), received her DVM from the LSU SVM in 2000. She rejoined the faculty in May 2016, having previously served on the LSU SVM faculty from 2006 through 2012. She completed a rotating internship in small animal medicine and surgery at the LSU SVM in 2001 and a residency in comparative ophthalmology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2006. She is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists.

Levant Dirikolu, PhD, professor in Comparative Biomedical Sciences (CBS) and director of the Equine Medication Surveillance Laboratory, joined the faculty in January 2016. He received his DVM from Ankara University (Turkey) in 1992, his MVSc and his PhD, both from the University of Kentucky in 2001. He completed a post-doctoral fellowship in veterinary pharamcology from the University of Kentucky in 2002.

Tibor Farkas, DVM, PhD, MBA, assistant professor-research in Pathobiological Sciences (PBS), joined the faculty in April 2016 and received his DVM from Szent Istvan University College of Veterinary Medicine (Hungary) in 1988. He received his PhD from Yamaguchi University (Japan) in 1998 and his MBA from the University of Cincinnati in 2008. He completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the Children’s Hospital of The King’s Daughters and Eastern Virginia Medical School in 2001. Dr. Farkas will be working with Associate Dean Rhonda Cardin.

Jayme Looper, DVM (LSU SVM 1997), DACVR, associate professor of veterinary radiation oncology in VCS, joined the faculty in July 2016 and received her BS from Texas A&M in 1993 and her DVM from the LSU SVM in 1997. She joined the faculty in July 2016 and comes to the LSU SVM from the Chicago Veterinary Cancer Center. She completed a small animal medicine and surgery internship at the University of Florida in 1998 and a radiation oncology residency at North Carolina State University in 2004. She is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Radiology.
Mark Mitchell, DVM, PhD (LSU SVM 2001), DECZM, director of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital and professor in VCS, received his BS, DVM and MS from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 1990, 1992 and 1996, respectively. He received his PhD from the LSU SVM in 2001. He rejoined our faculty in June 2016 after having previously served on the LSU SVM faculty from 1996 through 2007. He is a diplomate of the European College of Zoological Medicine. As the new hospital director, Dr. Mitchell's short- and long-term goals include instituting a new electronic medical records system, completing construction for a new Companion Animal Clinic, hiring more faculty and staff, as well as developing a master plan to grow the hospital to meet the needs of many different stakeholders.

Michelle Osborn, PhD, assistant professor-research in CBS, received her BA from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, in 2001. She received her MA and PhD from LSU in 2008 and 2013, respectively. Dr. Osborn joined the faculty in January 2016.

Michelle Woodward, DVM, MS, DACVD, assistant professor of veterinary dermatology in VCS, joined the faculty in March 2016. She received her BS from the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in 2005 and her DVM from the University of Tennessee in 2009. She received her MS in 2014 from the LSU SVM, where she also completed her residency in veterinary dermatology. Dr. Woodward is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Dermatology.

Faculty Promotions

Veterinary Clinical Sciences

Cherie Pucheu-Haston, DVM (LSU SVM 1992), PhD, DACVD, promoted to associate professor of veterinary dermatology. Dr. Pucheu joined the faculty in 2011.

Patricia Queiroz, DVM, MS, promoted to associate professor of veterinary anesthesiology. Dr. Queiroz joined the faculty in 2007.

Employment Opportunities

If you or anyone you know is searching for a new opportunity, we invite all applicants to view the current SVM job openings. All currently posted opportunities at the LSU SVM can be found on the LSU SVM website at www.lsu.edu/vetmed/employment_opportunities/svm_jobs or on the LSU Career’s page at www.lsu.edu/hrm/job_seekers/apply_for_a_job/jobs_at_lsu.php.
Our 44th Class: The Class of 2020

- 732 Applications received
- 89 Students admitted
- 23 Median Age
- 14 Male students
- 77 Female students
- 72 had college degrees at the time of their acceptance to the LSU SVM

732 people applied to the Class of 2020, and 89 students were admitted; two students were readmitted for a total number of 91 students in the class. This map shows how many students came from which states.
The LSU School of Veterinary Medicine conferred 85 Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degrees at its 40th annual Veterinary Medicine Commencement Exercises on Monday, May 9.

Egeenee Daniels, DVM (LSU SVM 1986), attending veterinarian and director of laboratory animal medicine at the University of North Texas Health Science Center, gave the commencement address at the 2 p.m. ceremony. Dr. Daniels is the recipient of the 2015 LSU SVM Distinguished Alumnus Award.

Joel Baines, VMD, PhD, dean and Dr. Kenneth F. Burns Chair in Veterinary Medicine, presided over the ceremony, and LSU President F. King Alexander, PhD, conferred the degrees. Lillian Barber (Class of 2016) opened the ceremony with the invocation. Program speakers also included President Alexander and Trish Marullo, DVM (LSU SVM 1999), president of the Louisiana Veterinary Medical Association. Dr. Baines led the graduates in taking the Veterinarian's Oath, and Jeremy Greene, DVM (LSU SVM 2016), and Lindsey Clemons, DVM (LSU SVM 2016), closed the ceremony with the benediction.

ABOVE: The Class of 2016 on the steps of the LSU Union just before the commencement ceremony on May 9.

LEFT: “Meat art” fashioned from Mike’s dinner has become a popular feature on Mike VI’s social media accounts. Dr. Trevor Davis (LSU SVM 2016), Mike VI caretaker from 2014–2016) was responsible for almost all of the meat art prepared from 2014–2016. He was assisted by Dr. Lindsey Clemones (LSU SVM 2016), his caretaker partner. The meat art shown to the left was prepared for the Class of 2016, and “T&L” are Trevor and Lindsey.
What made you want to be a veterinarian?

I became interested in becoming a veterinarian at a pretty young age. My interest is likely a product of watching the old Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom and The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau on Saturday mornings! I actually initially intended on becoming a veterinarian to work with exotic animals in the field and at wildlife preserves or zoos. I really did not know until getting about half way through my Master’s degree that I had an interest in molecular genetics and, secondarily, cancer research. Once I was exposed to the multiple disciplines of veterinary medicine in veterinary school, I quickly realized I loved clinical medicine, especially in the small animal clinic.

How did the LSU SVM prepare you for your career?

I attended LSU both as a veterinary student and for my residency in Small Animal Medical Oncology. So in essence, the LSU SVM prepared me on two fronts: first, to be a very confident and well-trained veterinarian, and second, to be a very confident and well-trained veterinary oncologist. I really think the strong point of the LSU SVM is the clinics. As graduates, we walked out ready to be veterinarians who could contribute immediately to our profession. My impression as a third/fourth-year student in the clinic was that we were going to leave as functional veterinarians from a basic knowledge standpoint and a hands-on skill standpoint.
What was the LSU SVM like when you attended?

Wow! That question makes me feel kind of old! I was recently back in the SVM in March doing a locum in the oncology department and the school still felt very familiar and comfortable. Some of the same faces that were around from 2000-07 are still there, but serving in different roles. Dr. Mitchell is the new hospital director!? The same guy who read Dr. Seuss books for BZEM rounds!?! I think the biggest difference now is the amount of new technology. My class was one of the first to use the computer lab on the second floor, and the computers and internet were just beginning to be incorporated into the Problem Based Learning curriculum. I think radiology has come the longest way; we still had to develop films in the dark room, and there was only one digital unit at the time (I think we only got to use it on cats and small dogs). By the time I finished my residency, there was digital in every room. Also in radiology, we didn't have a CT scanner until my fourth year of vet school, and the MRI wasn't installed until the last year of my residency.

What does the LSU SVM mean to you?

I see the LSU SVM as the primary contributor to my education and what makes me the veterinarian I am today. I spent a total of seven years there when you combine veterinary school, my Master's program, and residency. That is longer than I spent at my high school and college! I use knowledge and training I received at LSU daily and would be a completely different person and veterinarian (and definitely not as good) had I attended any other veterinary school.

What is a memorable moment from your time as a student or resident?

Probably like anyone else who was in south Louisiana in the summer of 2005, my most memorable moments were the weeks after Hurricane Katrina. I had just started my residency in oncology in early July, and our second child, Gracie, was born on July 29, 2005. So, I was already pretty overwhelmed by the time August 29 rolled around. I was actually the resident on call for that weekend so after my wife and two kids hit the road to head north to her hometown of Natchez, Miss., I headed to the vet school. I think I spent over 48 hours there and slept on an air mattress back in the radiation vault. We were getting hospitalized patients from clinics in New Orleans all weekend, and the ICU filled up pretty fast. There was a bit of a lull when the storm was actually making land, but the days after were very chaotic. It would be very easy to think back on that time and focus on all the terrible things we experienced in the clinic, but it was remarkable seeing how the students, interns, residents, faculty, and staff came together during that time. It really was a concerted effort to take care of every animal that came through those doors. I truly think that the spirit of the LSU SVM, dedication to animals and hard work, is what got all of us through that time. We helped a lot of folks and came together to help a lot of animals.

What is your current position and where have you worked since graduating?

I graduated from vet school in 2004 (I also completed a Master’s in Veterinary Physiology, Pharmacology, and Toxicology in the summer between second and third year) and finished an internship in Small Animal Medicine at Colorado State University in the summer of 2005. I returned to the LSU SVM for my residency in Small Animal Medical (Oncology) and completed that in the summer of 2007 and am board certified in the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine-Oncology. I worked at a specialty clinic in New Orleans until the summer of 2011 and then joined a satellite clinic of Southeast Veterinary Oncology and Internal Medicine, in Savannah, Ga. This past February, I purchased the Savannah portion of the clinic and became the owner of my new endeavor, Coastal Veterinary Oncology.

Tell us about your family.

I am married to Callie James Daters who I met in college at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va. She was a journalism major and is currently the director of marketing for the Aging Life Care Association. I have two kids (James, age 12, and Gracie, age 11), who were both born in Baton Rouge and still tell everyone that is where they are from! James's career goals are still to play football for the LSU Tigers and then the Saints prior to retiring to become an architect. Gracie has decided to become a professional soccer player.

I have a 3-year-old Golden Retriever named Pixie (she came with that name, by the way!) and we also have my grandfather's dog, a Shepherd mix named Raven. Raven is about 12 years old but going on 20!

We spend our free time on the kids' fields and courts, on the boat, at the gun club shooting sporting clays and skeet, and everywhere in between. I still talk regularly with classmates Todd Fulton and Chris Carrier and enjoy discussing cases and the ups and downs of the LSU Tigers with Jon Fletcher, Jude Bordelon, and Christian Charlton!
What made you want to conduct research on brain-metastatic melanoma?

I grew up as a child with the dream of finding a cure for cancer. As I finished medical school and then residency in internal medicine, I realized what a challenge it is, considering the complex nature of cancer. It is also the metastatic disease that causes more cancer deaths than the primary disease itself. The knowledge of underlying pathophysiology and molecular machinery is the first step towards finding a cure, and that is what attracted me to conduct research on brain-metastatic melanoma.

What have you done since you received your PhD?

I pursued a postdoctoral fellowship and then worked as a research scientist/associate researcher to further study regulation of angiogenesis and cancer metastasis. Currently, I am in a residency training program in pathology at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics.

What are your current career goals?

We are entering the era of precision medicine. As a physician-scientist, my goal is to conduct translational research and apply the knowledge of molecular biology, combined with cancer genetics, to improve patient care.

How did the LSU SVM prepare you for your current position?

I learned the art of scientific writing and critical thinking from my mentors. Thanks to Drs. Dario Marchetti, Steven Barker, William Henk and Konstantin “Gus” Kousoulas for mentoring me through the years; and Drs. Gary Wise and George Strain for mentoring me when needed. Thanks also to Dr. Jane Reiland for teaching me the basics of research, which I will forever integrate into my work. Finally, a huge thanks to Dr. Arthur Penn, who believed in me and inspired me to pursue my goals.

What is a memorable moment from your time as a PhD student at LSU?

Perhaps the day I got accepted to graduate school! It has almost been a decade since I graduated, but I miss my friends, the beautiful LSU campus, the festive game day atmosphere, and taking my son to watch Mike the Tiger every evening!

Originally from Asansol, West Bengal, India, Dr. Roy received her PhD from the LSU SVM in May 2007 from the Department of Comparative Biomedical Sciences (CBS). Her dissertation was entitled, “Role of Heparanase and Heparanase-degraded Heparan Sulfate in Brain-metastatic Melanoma,” and her major advisor was Gary Wise, PhD, professor emeritus and then head of CBS. In September 2003, Dr. Roy, who was then working towards her PhD, placed third in the PhD category at the LSU SVM’s Phi Zeta Research Emphasis Day for her project entitled, “Antisense-mediated Suppression of Heparanase Gene Inhibits Invasion by Brain-metastatic Melanoma Cells.”
Dr. Roy received her MD from Nil Ratan Sircar Medical College and Hospital in Calcutta, India. She began her pathology residency at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health in 2014 and will complete it in 2018.

**Advanced Degree Program**

**Department of Comparative Biomedical Sciences**

Graduate training in this department offers graduate students the opportunity to specialize in biomedical research in one or more of the various disciplines in the department. Broadly, these disciplines are grouped into three areas: 1) Cell and molecular biology of cancer—e.g., metastasis, DNA repair mechanisms, and gene therapy; 2) Cell and molecular biology in development and physiology—e.g., initiation of tooth eruption, role of cytokines in primary heart failure, diagnostic neurophysiology, auditory cortex processing, ion channels in insulin release, stem cells, and signal transduction; and 3) Environmental health science—e.g., inhalation toxicology, aquatic species pharmacology and toxicology, and analytical pharmacology and toxicology. Other areas of expertise in the department include cetacean morphology, cellular ultrastructure, bone healing and neurochemistry.

**Department of Pathobiological Sciences**

This graduate education program attracts candidates with DVM or equivalent degrees and students with bachelor’s or master’s degrees in microbiological, immunological, zoological and biomolecular sciences. The emphasis is on developing intellectual abilities and research skills through investigations of infectious diseases of food-producing, companion, and aquatic animals, as well as animal models for human disease. The interdisciplinary faculty—with expertise in molecular biology of infectious diseases, parasitology and immunology—and well-equipped laboratories, provide a stimulating environment for graduate training. Depending on individual interest, graduate students may choose courses with an emphasis in immunology and molecular virology, bacterial or viral pathogenesis, or parasitology and parasite-induced diseases. Communication skills are fostered through active research discussion groups, interdisciplinary seminars, oral examinations, presentation of papers at scientific meetings, and publication of research findings. The graduate professional residency programs offer an in-depth educational experience in classical morphological, clinical pathology or laboratory animal medicine.

**Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences**

This department offers veterinarians with a fundamental background in clinical sciences the opportunity to study disease problems in small, large, and exotic animals. Advanced training in clinical sciences prepares veterinarians for careers in clinical research and teaching and administration of clinical trials in the private and governmental sectors. Faculty research interests and areas of expertise range from basic research in immunogenetics to applied studies of surgical and medical problems. Collaborative research with other departments in the School of Veterinary Medicine, the university, and extramural agencies is encouraged and fostered. Opportunities are available in a variety of disciplines for graduate students to acquire teaching experience.
The LSU School of Veterinary Medicine is pleased to announce the 2015 Distinguished Alumnus of the Year, Egeenee Daniels, DVM (LSU SVM 1986). Dr. Daniels was recognized at the Louisiana Veterinary Medical Association (LVMA) Alumni and Friends Reception hosted as part of the LVMA’s Winter Meeting at the Hilton Hotel in Shreveport, La. on January 30, 2016.

Dr. Daniels received his DVM from the LSU SVM in 1986. He practiced veterinary medicine for 18 months and started his PhD in epidemiology before beginning his career in laboratory animal medicine. Since then, he has had an extremely successful career as the attending veterinarian and director of laboratory animal medicine at the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth, Texas, where he has led this department for over 25 years. He is also the attending veterinarian for Texas Woman’s University, the University of Texas at Dallas, the University of Texas at Arlington, Texas Christian University, the University of North Texas and the Baylor Research Institute.

Dr. Rhonda Daniels, Egeenee’s wife, received her DVM from the LSU SVM in 1990, and his brother, Dr. Shawn Daniels, received his DVM from the LSU SVM in 1994. Egeenee and Rhonda have two children, A.J. (18) and Endrea (16).

Dr. Daniels has served as a volunteer for Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America and the Fort Worth Zoo and currently volunteers for his church and for Resurrection III (Aid for Recovering Drug Addicts and Homeless). He was named to Who’s Who in Veterinary Science and Medicine in 1992, received the Southern University’s Distinguished Alumni Award in 1998 and has written many publications directly related to his profession.

Dr. Daniels also participates in a multitude of other professional activities, including membership on the Council on Accreditation for the Association of Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International and is President of the Texas Society of Biomedical Research. He previously served as Chairman to the Legislative Committee for the Texas Branch of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science.

The Distinguished Alumnus Award is a means to recognize alumni of the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine for outstanding professional and personal achievements. Any veterinarian who received the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Louisiana State University is eligible for the award. Candidates will be recognized for their accomplishments in veterinary medicine and/or contributions to the community through public service.
Mike VI is receiving an outpouring of support from fans who want to be part of his care.

Mike is getting world-class treatment from LSU veterinary experts and the generosity of Mary Bird Perkins – Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center, and LSU is not in need of donations to pay for Mike VI’s cancer treatments.

However, we are currently raising funds in support of endowed scholarships for Mike’s two caregivers. If you are interested in making a gift to the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine in support of Mike’s caregivers, consider contributing on the LSU Foundation website at www.lsufoundation.org/mikescaregivers.

The Development Team is dedicated to building relationships and seeking private funds to help the LSU SVM continue its mission of teaching, healing and discovery. Please contact any member of our team if you’d like to learn how your gift can improve the lives of people and animals.

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Make a gift to help the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine!
www.lsufoundation.org/givetovetmed
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Show Your Stripes for Mike

As the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine helps treat Mike’s cancer, let’s look back at this rich history and what it means to all of us. Visit www.LSU.edu/MyLSUTiger to learn more and to share some of your own favorite memories.

Speak out on Social! #MyLSUTiger
Mike VI, LSU’s live tiger mascot, arrived on campus in 2007 at the age of two. He turned 11 on July 23, 2016.