

Gathering Data, Building a Community

By Taylor Weary, Inaugural 2021 Bossart Scholarship Winner

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Being selected as the inaugural recipient of the Dr. Gregory D. Bossart Memorial One Health Scholarship has been immensely helpful for advancing my dissertation research as well as my professional development as a veterinary scientist working in the One Health sphere. The scholarship is not only a check written in your name (although that's certainly a huge plus!) but also a door opening into a worldwide network of professional contacts and support. Applying for the scholarship was one of the best decisions I have made in my graduate program, and I encourage other One Health students to do the same!

A significant component of my dissertation research involves screening human nasal swabs for common respiratory pathogens that can infect and kill wild chimpanzees. I need this molecular data to draw epidemiological connections between the two populations, but the cutting-edge diagnostic assay I use can be prohibitively expensive for screening the high volumes of samples needed to find the “needles in the haystack.” The \$5,000 award has allowed me to screen far more samples than would have been otherwise possible, resulting in exciting discoveries about common circulating and co-circulating viruses in Ugandan children—including those we have previously found to be the causes of chimpanzee outbreaks.

In addition to the scholarship's direct impact on my research, I have been honored by the recognition that came with receiving the award, which has poured in from far-flung corners of the globe. I am so grateful for the connections I have made with other graduate students as well as professional practitioners working in One Health. I have even had the opportunity to speak about my work at a meeting of the California Polytechnic State University One Health Club this past winter, which I hope was as fun for the undergraduates as it was for me. For an early career researcher in a field as interdisciplinary as One Health, these connections are as critical to my future successes as the results of my molecular assays. I am humbled to have the chance to support Dr. Bossart's incredible legacy, and I am grateful to the One Health Commission and the Georgia Aquarium for creating this opportunity for students like me.



Taylor and Dr. Tony Goldberg, her major advisor at University of Wisconsin-Madison, with the box of almost 2,000 human nasal swabs shipped from Uganda to analyze for respiratory pathogens.