Strategies for Change

Professor Reuben Rose, Acting Dean

Change, restructuring, downsizing, efficiency and various other management terms are familiar to many people in the modern workforce.

Universities too have undergone enormous change in the last ten years, with the expansion of the entire University sector and substantial decreases in government funding per student. How have we responded to these challenges? I am happy to say that in the last 12 months we have "dug deep" into our reserves of energy and creativity and launched a number of new initiatives including:

- A new Faculty brochure
- A new internet site, recognised as being one of the most comprehensive in the world
- Liaison with the Australian Veterinary Association
- A Strategy for enhancing teaching & research in grazing animals
- Collaboration and cooperation with the University of Sydney Postgraduate Foundation in Veterinary Science
- Review of the veterinary teaching hospitals
- Review of undergraduate student selection
- Enhancement of our teaching by the development of innovative teaching methods

- Workshops involving the veterinary profession to discuss training in grazing animal medicine
- Marketing the Faculty internationally with visits to Singapore and the United Kingdom by Dr. Bill Porges

This is not to say we have solved all our problems. For example, our tight financial situation has meant we have not been able to replace a number of important positions including three Chairs and many other academic and technical staff positions.

As part of "trading our way out" of this situation we have, with the involvement of the profession and other key groups, spent the last 8 months developing an effective strategic plan. The aim of the Plan is to ensure that the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney continues to be a leader in veterinary education with strong international links. The draft plan can be seen on our web site at http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/vetfac/

Of inestimable value is the willing partnership that the veterinary profession plays in training undergraduates in clinical practice and I appreciate the time and commitment that so many practitioners bring to this important task.

Key Strategic Development Areas
Identified in the Faculty's Strategic Plan

- Understanding the market for veterinary qualifications
- Financial viability and faculty renewal
- Student selection, retention and development
- Teaching and learning
- Research and postgraduate training
- Veterinary clinical centres
- Alumni, professional and community relations
- Faculty structure

A copy of the plan can be obtained by writing to
The Faculty Manager, Faculty of Veterinary Science,
University of Sydney NSW 2006.

I continue to rely heavily on the advice and support that I receive from the profession and our alumni. We seek to further enhance our dialogue with the profession and ensure that the highest quality graduates continue to be produced. I welcome any advice that individual members of the profession may care to give.
The Sydney Clinic
(University Veterinary Centre Sydney)

The Medicine service at Sydney is led by David Church, who is spending the first six months of this year on sabbaticalleave in Dublin, where he will be continuing his endocrine research.

Susan Foster, who has just completed her three-year Medicine residency, will cover his clinic. Susan, along with Richard Malik, Vanessa Barrs (a Senior Registrar) and Jules Beatty (a visiting Academic Fellow from the Royal Veterinary College, London) all have strong interests in feline medicine. Jules in particular is researching the role of feline immunodeficiency virus in feline malignancies. Richard Malik also has continuing research and clinical interests in infectious diseases.

Our other Senior Registrar, Graham Swinney, who receives referrals in all aspects of internal medicine, provides a specialist medicine service. Phil Davis, one of the stalwarts of the clinic provides a general service. Phil has a continuing interest in musculoskeletal diseases in racing greyhounds. We also welcome a new resident this year, Jody Braddock. Jody has recently successfully completed an internship at the University Veterinary Centre, Camden. For the first half of the year Jody will be involved in a specialist service under the tutelage of David Watson.

Our surgery service is now composed of a very settled and well-rounded team. Geraldine Hunt is continuing to break new ground in the field of vascular surgery, including cardiac procedures and portosystemic shunts. David Simpson is our orthopaedic surgery lecturer, and has particular interest and expertise in neurosurgery, biological fracture management and new techniques in the management of septic arthritis. Penny Tiddall is entering the third year of her residency. Penny is keen to receive referrals in her areas of research, including surgical management of megaesophagus in cats, and perianal fistulae. Julius Liptak, our second year surgery resident is investigating vascular graft techniques as part of his clinical research program.

Both our medical and surgical services rely heavily on our anaesthetic team to provide a high standard of care for our cases. The anaesthetic group consists of Sanja Zaki, Merran Govender and Yukari Miyake. Ultrasonographic imaging services are provided by Karen Hoffman, with general imaging performed by Graeme Allan and Robert Nicoll. The University Veterinary Centre also has specialist dermatological services provided by Ralf Mueller and Ken Mason, and dentistry by David Clarke.

The Camden Clinic
(University Veterinary Centre Camden)

Many changes have occurred at the Rural Veterinary Centre in the last 12 months.

After 40 years of being the RVC the name has been changed to the University Veterinary Centre, Camden. This reflects the changing demographics in the Camden region with the town now having a population of 35,000 and much of the area surrounding the UGCC undergoing semi-rural housing development. In addition, Campbelltown (population ~ 150,000) lies about 15 minutes to the east of us. Not surprisingly this has changed the case profile at the clinic with small animals and pleasure horses now the predominant in-house patients. We also continue to provide anambulatory service with horses and dairy cattle providing most of the case material for clinical teaching in this setting. Despite the increase in residential developments in the district there about 20 dairy's remain in the area with three thousand cow dairies within 20 km of the UGCC.

As part of a rationalisation of resources between the Veterinary Centres at the Sydney and Camden campuses, the equine treadmill was moved to a new facility at the Camden site in late 1997. The new facility has been in regular use for clinical exercise/stress testing, upper airway endoscopy during exercise and several research studies investigating effects of training on bone, carriage and tendon in young horses.

Vet Science on the Web

The Faculty of Veterinary Science launched its new face for the millennium on the 26th of October, 1998.

Students, staff and members of the veterinary profession gathered for the unveiling of the Faculty’s new website.

The website was co-ordinated by Sydney graduate and Orange vet Raina Plowright and was created by Charlie Forsyth of Exegesis Pty Ltd, with input from many members of the faculty.

"The progressive and forward-looking approach of the faculty has made a vital contribution to the veterinary profession's ongoing efforts to refine and enlarge the services it provides to the public," Dr McGrilvey said.

"The most comprehensive veterinary Faculty website in the world"

The most comprehensive veterinary Faculty website in the world, it was designed for prospective, current and post graduate students, as well as the local and international veterinary profession.

The site contains information about the faculty and the veterinary clinics at Sydney and Camden. It also provides information about each major research area in the Faculty in an easily access format which is both simple and detailed according to the needs of individual users.

President elect of the Australian Veterinary Association, Dr Garth McGrilvey, said the website was a very welcome innovation in the profession where the logistics of the job often made communication with colleagues difficult.

UVCC Postgraduate Training Programs

In recent years we have actively pursued initiatives to expand the relevance and number of postgraduate training opportunities at the University Veterinary Centre Camden. To this end we now provide residencies in equine medicine and surgery and internships in small animal medicine and surgery, anaesthesia, equine medicine and surgery, bovine medicine and surgery and a mixed internship involving exposure to small and large animal activities.

Animal Welfare

Dr Robert Dixon, Chair, Animal Welfare Committee

The Animal Welfare Committee is working hard to promote veterinarians as the professionals in which there is a confluence of the animal specialist with the animal welfareist.

Therefore, the Faculty is becoming more proactive in animal welfare matters. This is being done through a number of avenues, including our Internet site.

Recently, the Companion Animals Act was promulgated and there have been changes to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

The Committee has made submissions on behalf of the Faculty to working parties for both Acts and for other areas.

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee would welcome hearing from Alumni who are interested in the veterinary profession further developing an active role in animal welfare issues.
Teaching in the Faculty

New Directions
Dr David Evans, Chair, Teaching Committee

There is probably no University issue as controversial as curriculum change.

Firstly, because the battle between those who place emphasis on the learning process versus those who believe in the priority of subject content has never been settled.

Secondly, because curriculum change always raises the spectre of winners and losers due to the fact everything that should be in the curriculum cannot be accommodated which invariably means the dropping of a course(s) much loved by the person(s) who teaches it.

Given these potential problems, I am pleased to announce that Faculty Teaching Committee has completed a review of the BVSc degree program with the minimum of bloodshed and a revised course will commence in 2000.

If you would like to know more about the important features of the new course please visit our WWW site at: http://www捊svet.edu.au/sci/teach/curriculum

As well as these plans for the new course, several important changes will occur in 1999. An assessable unit of study in Veterinary Medicine will be introduced in Year 3, and a new unit in Clinical Practice will be introduced in Year 4. The extra-mural Clinical and Animal Husbandry programs have been reviewed and improved.

The Faculty has developed new student computer laboratories, and this has enabled a large reduction in the use of animals in teaching of Veterinary Physiology. Laboratory classes that used animals have been largely replaced by computer tutorials. Many staff members have been successful with applications for funds for development of these new resources.

Over $150,000 has been obtained over the last few years. However, the Faculty remains strongly committed to the use of animals on University farms for development of skills in production animal handling and management.

During 1999 the Faculty has undertaken to greatly expand the use of formative assessment. We will introduce World Wide Web software that facilitates student use of computer-based assessments with accompanying feedback in twenty units of study - almost half the course. This software will enable students to sit practice exams and obtain feedback on the content.

This development recognises the need for support of continual student learning and self-assessment, and for greater variety and flexibility in learning processes used in the course.

Feedback from students and graduates has been fundamentally important during the committee's deliberations on the course revisions. The Faculty is dependent on such feedback to help ensure that the University of Sydney BVSc is the best in Australia.

The new Faculty web site provides comprehensive information for current and prospective undergraduate students concerning the degree program.

Clinical Teaching Workshop

For many years the Faculty has relied on the good graces of those generous Veterinarians who agree to supervise undergraduate students on placement in their Practices.

However, I don't think we have really provided an appropriate level of support and training for Vets who undertake this important function.

On November 21st 1998 this situation was remedied somewhat when the Faculty hosted a Clinical Teaching workshop for veterinarians. The workshop was held in the in the Veterinary Science Conference Centre. Bayer very generously sponsored the meeting.

The primary aim of workshop was to assist practitioners to reflect on the skills required to be effective clinical teachers. In addition, the day provided a great opportunity for Faculty members to receive feedback on how the interaction between the Faculty and Practices might be improved, especially as regards the Extramural program.

Dr Jackie Lublin, a noted educationalist, led the day, and started discussion by asking the question: what are the best and worst aspects of teachers that you have known?

Participants agreed that the best clinical teachers had concern for the individual, used a "problem based" approach, enjoyed teaching and were enthusiastic, had excellent practical knowledge, were reflective teachers, had respect for students, were good communicators, gave clear presentations, were patient, enjoyed their job, were approachable and prepared to consider students as junior colleagues and, finally courageous!

As a group we thought the worst clinical teachers were condescending, intimidating, arrogant, uninterested, sarcastic, not interested in teaching, had no sense of humour, were not clinically credible, had closed minds, exhibited favouritism, were sexist, dishonest and egotistical, were unable to identify with students and seemed defensive. (You will be happy to know nobody volunteered to identify any such poor clinical teachers by name!)

Finally, participants thought that veterinary students seeing practice wanted: respect for student/teacher, hands on experience, interested teachers (interested in students and the discipline), role models, to be given responsibility, a sense of achievement, to know the expectations of the practice and constructive feedback.

We are hoping to host a similar workshop for interested veterinarians each year and we wish once again to thank participating Veterinarians for their support for the Extramural program.

Professional Practice in the New Curriculum

Dr Henry Collins, Sub Dean, Student Welfare

Most Sydney University Veterinary Science graduates would agree that their education contained much that was unnecessary and, after having been confronted with the demands of practice, that there were important deficiencies. The new veterinary course starting in 2000 aims to correct both the excesses and the deficits.

One of the important omissions from the traditional course has been learning about the non-scientific aspects of practice - those abilities necessary for a professional career, including how to run an efficient veterinary business. In the past, the function of the school was perceived to be the production of veterinary scientists, and the emphasis has "aims to benefit both students and practices" been on the basic and applied sciences. Although practice has always been the goal of most students, the arts of the practitioner were not part of the syllabus and were assumed to be acquired during periods of 'seeing practice' and after graduation.

The new course contains units in Professional Practice (PP). The PP program, which runs throughout the 5 years, aims to promote both personal and professional development. PP comprises a wide range of topics including basic accounting, careers, communication, grief counselling, international aspects of veterinary science, legislation, practice structure and management, and veterinary ethics. The program will start with an Orientation Week, and is divided into 4 successive stages of development: student, scholar, veterinary associate and veterinarian. Educational outcomes will describe what the program aims to achieve at each stage.

A major consideration in the introduction to the curriculum of any new subject is the availability of teaching and learning resources. In order to support student learning in PP we are discussing the possibility that students be attached to "mentor practices" for the first 3 years of the course. Students would study aspects of their practices such as Health and Safety, Pricing, Records, and Promotion, and produce reports that would also be available to the principals. The Mentor Practice scheme aims to benefit both students and practices.

There will be no formal examinations, but students will not proceed until they have "satisfied requirements". They will demonstrate achievement of the educational outcomes for PP by submitting a yearly portfolio. This would include reports derived from the mentor practice. Some of the components of the portfolio, such as the ability to research and write a review, would be achieved and assessed through the scientific units. Development of self-evaluation skills will be emphasised. Students, and graduates, need to be able to examine their own performance, identify any deficiencies and know how to correct them.

The PP Program will also provide opportunities for students to discuss and become informed about the major issues that confront veterinarians and the profession. There will be a regular Issues Forum with an invited speaker and formal presentations by students on topics of current interest. 2000 promises to be a vintage year. Planning the new curriculum is providing to be an Olympic task, but is also a golden opportunity to design a more appropriate course for the profession.
Cocktail Party Welcomes New Graduates

Over three hundred guests of the Faculty welcomed the graduating class of 1998 at the inaugural Faculty cocktail party held in December.

The new graduates and their guests had come from the graduation ceremony in the Great Hall where fifty three men and women had received their BVSc degrees as well as twenty three people receiving Graduate Diplomas, Masters and PhD degrees.

During the cocktail party Dr Bill Chalmers (class of 1968) presented a bronze sculpture of a centaur. This work, undertaken by Bill, was unveiled in the new Veterinary Science Conference Centre and commemorated the thirty year reunion of the 1968 graduating class. The new Veterinary Science Conference Centre proved a wonderful venue for the large group of guests and the Faculty hopes that the cocktail party will become an annual event.

1998 Graduates, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney

Degree of Bachelor of Veterinary Science

Inaugural Alumni Dinner

It was school reunion time all over again! How would past students and colleagues look after so many years?

Would we remember former friends when they called us by name or be forced to muddle something incoherent while we desperately searched old neural networks for some long lost memory which would enable us to identify them? Would brilliant students have gone on to make brilliant careers or would the quiet achievers have come to the fore? I am sure these and many similar thoughts went through the minds of many of the attendees at the inaugural Veterinary Alumni Dinner for University of Sydney veterinary graduates held in the new Veterinary Science Conference Centre on September 5th.

In all, sixty five of graduates were represented from Dr Hugh Gordon (1931) to Dr Lan Tran (1996). Some graduates travelled considerable distances to attend, in particular John May (1956) from New Zealand and John Thornton (1963) from Brisbane. There were graduates present from every decade including Harry Carroll (1938), Harry Buhl (1949) and Bill Gee, Rex Butterfield, John Holt, Alan Donald and John Bryden who all graduated in the 1950s.

The 1960s graduates included Kevin Doyle, Doug Bryden, Garth McGilvery and David Snow. Vera Pickering, Margaret Ferrara, Mick Kidd, Jill Maddison, David Church and Mary Porter were some of the swinging 70's graduates in attendance while Maurice Godfrey, Reuben Rose, Jenny Hodgson, Geraldine Hunt and Cameron Whittaker flew the flag for the 80's. Andrew Eaton, Matthew Tay, Carrie Hawthorne, Penny Tisdall and Robert Jamieson were among the recent graduates from the 1990s.

Those attending were wonderfully entertained throughout the evening. Initially we were serenaded by a flute and harp duo while drinks and savouries were served in the foyer. David Church followed up with some veterinary humour and Crawford Moules, a 1984 graduate, launched into a masterful dissertation on "The Vet in the next Millennium." Crawford is convinced that the slug will be the pet of the future, a view that gave further ammunition to those in favour of Vet curriculum reform!

Finally, the evening degenerated into a heartfelt group singing session led from the keyboard by Acting Dean, Prof. Reuben Rose. He had composed a song especially for the occasion and his soulful rendition brought tears to the eyes of many guests. Few will forget this occasion even if they wanted to...

Wires Essay Prize

The Wires Essay Prize of $250 is for the best essay by a 5th Year student on a wildlife topic. The 1998 prize was awarded to Kristy Gilbert for her essay 'Atypical mycobacterial infection in captive marsupials'. Kristy received her cheque and certificate from Joel Katz, Wires Publicity Officer shortly before Graduation. The annual Wires Essay Prize, and the annual Wires Research Scholarship of $5,000 for study in the BSc(Vet) program, aim to encourage interest amongst veterinary students in the health and welfare of Australian native animals. Further details available from the Faculty Office, University of Sydney NSW 2006.

Faculty Members Honours

A number of Faculty of Veterinary Science members received recent recognition for outstanding contributions:

Dr John Holt, a distinguished member of Faculty, received the major achievement award for his contributions to small animal medicine at the recent meeting of the World Small Animal Veterinary Association in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Professor Alan Husband, Professor of Veterinary Pathology, received the Pfizer award for distinguished contribution to research in immunology at the meeting of the international Veterinary Immunology Association in India.

The Australian Poultry Award, which is awarded for distinguished contribution to poultry research and education, was made to Associate Professor Derick Balmain. This award, which was made by the World Poultry Science Association, occurred at the Annual Australian Poultry Science Symposium dinner.

Associate Professor David Hodgson, Director of the Camden Clinical Centre, received the RRIDC-VetSearch 1998 award for distinguished contribution to Equine Research at the recent RRIDC-Vetsearch Annual Equine Research Awards in Adelaide.

Dr Wendy Muir, a Post-doctoral Fellow in the Faculty also has been recognised for the research achievement with the award of the Sir Wilkins prize by the World Poultry Science Association.

Dr Richard Malik received the Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association Research Award at the annual meeting of the Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association for his contributions to Feline Medicine.

Professor Reuben Rose was in Finland recently to receive the medal from the University of Helsinki for his contributions in Equine Exercise Physiology. He presented a major lecture entitled 'What Factors limit Performance in Athletic Horses?'

Dr Roseann Taylor has recently been informed that she will receive the Clunies Ross Award from the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists. The award is given for an outstanding young scientist.