

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

New Veterinary College in Arizona Gains Momentum for Fall 2014 Opening

By Dr. Donald F. Smith
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With the appointment in January of a dean of veterinary medicine, Arizona is moving forward with plans to open the 29th veterinary college in the United States at Midwestern University in fall 2014. They have been licensed by the State of Arizona and recently had an initial site team review by the Council on Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Glendale's Midwestern University is a health care campus in the Phoenix metropolitan area which is home to 4.3 million people.¹ Last summer I asked President and CEO Kathleen H. Goepfinger, Ph.D., why she would contemplate starting a college of veterinary medicine. "Quite simply," she said, "animals contribute to human health and I felt having a health sciences campus without veterinary medicine would be incomplete."² This reminded me of Cornell's founding dean's commitment to one medicine over a century ago and his admonition that veterinary and medical colleges should be co-located on the same campus.³

Midwestern is also committed to educate more veterinarians to serve in rural areas of Arizona where the need for animal health care is acute for companion animals as well as for livestock and horses. The new college proposes to recruit students from rural areas with the hope that they will fill that critical need.



*President and CEO Kathleen H. Goepfinger, Ph.D. with Rudy
Midwestern University in Glendale, Arizona
(Photo by Midwestern University)*

I recently spoke with Mariana Hudson, a third-year student studying animal science at the University of Arizona in Tucson. She and her family operate two cattle and horse ranches and she dreams of returning home to practice in southern Arizona.

“I have been around horses and cattle my entire life and I have always wanted to become a veterinarian and return to this area to practice. If Midwestern opens a veterinary college in Glendale, I would be able to continue helping to run our ranches while attending school. Staying close to home would also alleviate some of my expenses by not having to commute out of state.”⁴



*University of Arizona student Mariana Hudson
at her home ranch in southern Arizona
(Photo from Ms. Hudson)*

Many people feel that the substantial growth in the number of veterinary graduates in the last decade has created an oversupply of new veterinarians entering clinical practice. However, Arizona may not fit in the mainstream of this debate because it is the second most populous state without a veterinary college⁵ and the number of Arizona residents accepted each year into U.S. veterinary colleges is among the lowest in the country.⁶ Also the number of veterinarians per capita practicing in Arizona is much less than the national average.

An unmet need for veterinarians across the entire U.S. is in the public health sector. This priority is recognized by former surgeon general and Arizona resident Dr. Rich Carmona, who is a strong supporter of the critical role of veterinarians in public health. He shared the following with me last year when the first announcement of Midwestern’s plans was made public.



*Richard Carmona MD, MPH, FACS.
Distinguished Professor
College of Public Health University of Arizona
and 17th Surgeon General of the United States
(Photo provided by Dr. Carmona, March 2012)*

"During my tenure as the 17th United States Surgeon General, it became very apparent that veterinarians were essential elements not only to the nation's health, but also to national and global preparedness activities, and as leaders of our multidisciplinary teams.

"Veterinarians were some of the most sought-after professionals by all branches of the Federal Government. Whether from traditional veterinary practice to research and development, zoonoses, emerging infectious diseases and global health, we were always in short supply of veterinarians."⁷

Midwestern will be just the fourth veterinary college in the U.S. to be established on a non-land-grant campus. Though it will fulfill the need to educate students in species of agricultural interest, its urban location and its educational priorities will reflect the reality that the overwhelming majority of practicing veterinarians are employed in companion animal practice. These veterinarians not only serve the health needs of the family pet, but also promote the concept of *one health* for all species because of their positive impact on human health and well-being.

¹ Midwestern University's Glendale campus is a not-for-profit health sciences institution and is home to colleges of osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, optometry and dental health, along with a large number of master and doctorate programs in its health science college.

² Kathleen H. Goepfing, Ph.D. (President and CEO, Midwestern University in Glendale, AZ). Meeting with: Donald F. Smith (Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, NY). 2012 Jun 27.

³ Cornell's first professor of veterinary medicine, James Law, believed that medical and veterinary colleges should be co-located on the same university campus. In response to a bid by the dean of agriculture that veterinary medicine be subsumed with the College of Agriculture, Law famously responded in 1905 and again in 1908 that, "Veterinary Medicine is closely allied to Medicine of man; *not to agriculture.*"

⁴ Mariana Hudson (University of Arizona student). E-mail to: Donald F. Smith 2013 Feb 5.

⁵ Arizona's population is 6.6 million (2012). New Jersey, the most populous state without a veterinary college, has 8.9 million people.

⁶ Smith, Donald F. and Rebecca L. Donnelly. Unpublished data 2012.

⁷ Richard Carmona, MD, MPH, FACS (Professor of Public Health, University of Arizona, Tucson AZ). Meeting with: Donald F. Smith. 2012 Mar 8.

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One Health

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr. Donald F. Smith, Dean Emeritus of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, had a passion for the value of the history of veterinary medicine as a gateway for understanding the present and the future of the profession.

Throughout his many professional roles from professor of surgery, to Department Chair of Clinical Sciences, Associate Dean of Education and of Academic Programs and Dean, he spearheaded changes in curriculum, clinical services, diagnostic services and more. He was a diplomat of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons and a member of the National Academy of Practices. Most recently he played a major role in increasing the role of women in veterinary leadership.

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine is one of his projects where he was able to share his vast knowledge of the profession.