

## Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

# Education of a Dean

By Dr. Donald F. Smith

July 7, 2013

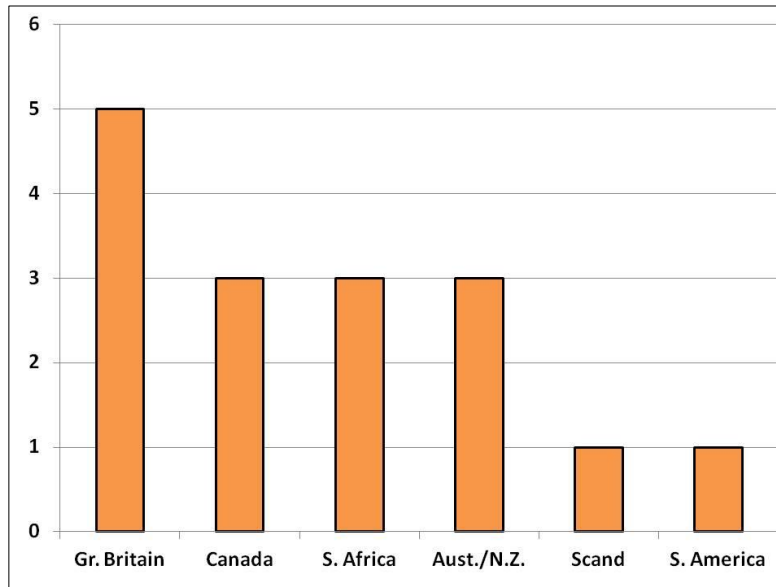
When a professional community has had only 200 deans appointed to the 29 colleges that now make up its educational base, it seems appropriate to make some observations on who those deans they were (and are), where they were educated, the duration of their terms and in some cases, their accomplishments.

Starting with where they received their veterinary degrees, I chose to focus this first story on the last three decades as there have been significant changes in the demographic profile of graduating veterinarians during this period. In that context, I present data here relating to the 88 dean appointments for the US veterinary colleges<sup>1</sup> that have been made between 1984 and 2013.<sup>2</sup> These data do not include deans who were already in place at the beginning of the survey period. The six deans who were appointed at two different institutions during the survey period are listed as separate appointments (indicating 12 appointments) in the second graph.<sup>3</sup>

Though there were some foreign-educated deans in the early years of the profession, I was surprised to learn that almost one-fifth of the deans (16 or 18%) who were appointed in US colleges in the past 30 years received their veterinary degrees from foreign countries.<sup>4</sup> Almost all were educated in Britain or in the present or former British Commonwealth countries.

Several foreign-educated deans received their veterinary degrees from colleges that were not accredited by the AVMA at the time they graduated. In several cases, the colleges are still not accredited. In making this observation, I do not suggest that these individuals are not superbly qualified. However, as long as the Council on Education requires that the dean be a veterinarian, it seems incongruous that the qualifications of the college from which the dean graduated not be a factor in accreditation.

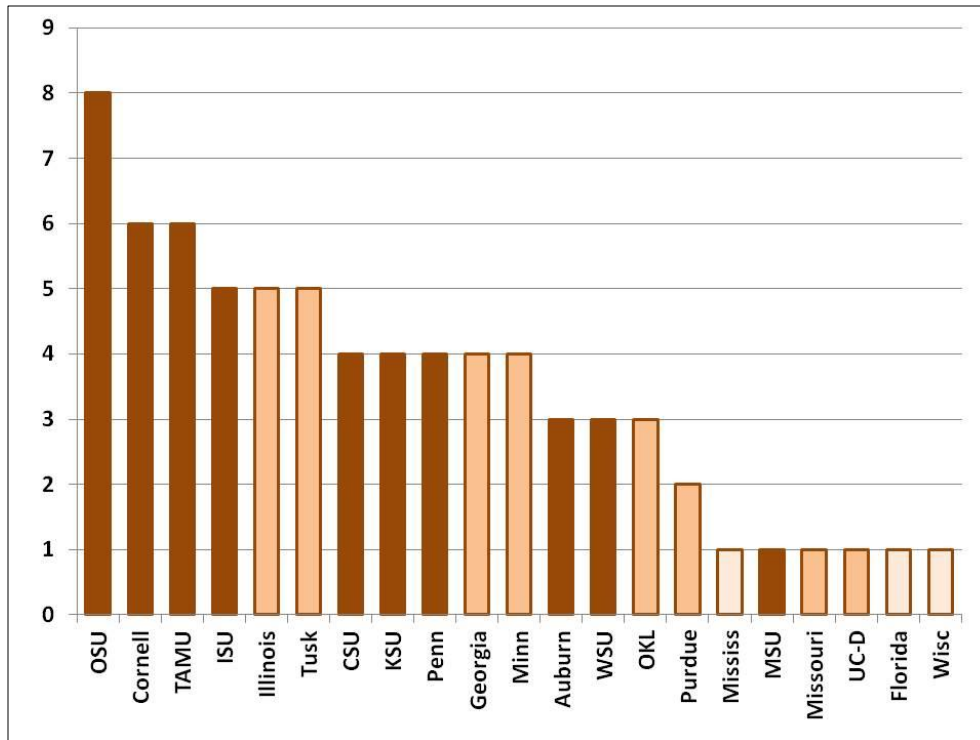
Of the remaining 72 deans who received their DVM (or VMD) degree from a US veterinary college, graduates of the ten colleges that were established in the first wave between 1868 and 1916 accounted for over 60% of the dean appointments (see dark bars in graph below). The heaviest representation (25) was from Ohio State, Cornell, Texas A&M and Iowa State Universities.<sup>5</sup> Only one graduate of Michigan State University was appointed dean during the last 30 years.



*Number of US Dean Appointments Where Dean was Graduate  
of Foreign Colleges of Veterinary Medicine 1984-2013*  
Data from annual AVMA Membership Directories and Resource Manuals (to 2007)<sup>6</sup>

The eight colleges established in the second wave of colleges; that is, during the post WWII period, produced fewer than one-quarter of the deans. However, that trend may now be softening as three-quarters of the dean appointments since 2010 have been of veterinarians who are graduates of the colleges that emerged since WWII, including three that matriculated their first classes in the 1980s (Universities of Florida, Wisconsin-Madison, and Mississippi State University).

As this story is being finalized, there are ongoing searches for deans at two colleges (U. Illinois and Virginia-Maryland). Besides the appointment of women (a topic for a future story in this series), It will be interesting to learn if these and future appointments will yield candidates who are graduates from the more recently-established colleges, and also if US colleges continue to occasionally recruit graduates of foreign colleges to fill their dean positions.



*Number of Dean Appointments by College where Dean was Veterinary Graduate  
Of US College/School of Veterinary Medicine 1984-2013.  
Colors of Bars reflect period during which colleges were established:  
Dark (1868-2016), Moderate (post WWII), Light (after 1970).  
(Data from annual AVMA Membership Directories and Resource Manuals (to 2007))<sup>7</sup>*

In future stories, I shall explore other aspects of dean appointments, including postgraduate training and discipline background, number of years before first appointment as dean, gender considerations, and examples of their priorities and signature achievements.

<sup>1</sup> For sake of simplicity, I group colleges and schools under the single designation of colleges.

<sup>2</sup> This includes the newest member of the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC), Midwestern University's College of Veterinary Medicine in Glendale, Arizona.

<sup>3</sup> The six deans who were appointed at two different institutions during the period 1984-2013 are: Michael Lorenz (OKL graduate), Oscar Fletcher (Georgia graduate), H. Richard Adams (TAMU graduate), Glen Hoffsis (OSU graduate), Lonnie King (OSU graduate), and John Thompson (ISU graduate).

<sup>4</sup> This includes the author, a graduate of the University of Guelph in Canada, and dean at Cornell 1997-2007.

<sup>5</sup> Eight of these appointments represented four individuals who were appointed twice each at separate institutions (see endnote 3 above).

<sup>6</sup> AVMA Membership Directories and Resource Manuals were discontinued in after 2007. For more recent data, the AVMA website ([Member Community and Networking](#)) was used.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

KEYWORDS:

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History of Veterinary Medicine  
Deans of veterinary medicine  
College of Veterinary Medicine  
Foreign veterinary graduates  
AVMA Council on Education  
Veterinary college accreditation

TOPIC:

Colleges of Veterinary Medicine (or the closest match)

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.