



Veterinary Viewpoints

The New York State College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University

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Accreditation

The recent publicity about the status of the accreditation of the College is most unfortunate and deserves explanation. The College undergoes periodic evaluation through the Council on Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association, normally on a five year interval. The last visit had been carried out in 1972 but, in keeping with their policy, following the appointment of the new dean to any school, a special visit was conducted in February of this year.

The preparation for an accreditation site visit is lengthy, requiring submission of a tremendous amount of information to the accrediting team well in advance of the site visit. The team of site visitors consists of representatives of the Council on Education, a representative of the Canadian Veterinarian Medical Association, the State Education Department, and at least one representative of the citizens of the State. During the recent visit, between eight to ten people were here on campus at all times. The team arrived on a Sunday evening and departed the following Thursday afternoon. On Thursday morning they met to discuss their initial observations with me and then subsequently with President Corson. Approximately three weeks later both of us received draft copies of their report.

In general, their findings did not come as a surprise, but rather substantiated the observations I had made since coming to Cornell. Well in advance of the visit I had detailed these to President Corson and other administrative officials. Subsequently, I was asked to discuss these issues with members of the Cornell Board of Trustees and other key University people who were meeting here on campus. At a breakfast meeting, I presented the problems and provided supporting information including copies of the summary draft report provided by the accreditation team.

Although considered to be confidential, the information came to the attention of the Cornell Daily Sun, a student operated newspaper here on campus. Since the Sun is syndicated on both the United Press and Associated Press the article which was written appeared almost simultaneously in a number of papers throughout the State. A day or two later it appeared in the New York Times. Under normal circumstances the report of the accrediting body would have been confidential, as is the case with some eight veterinary schools which, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association, are now on the same probational status. No press conference was called or was the information intentionally disclosed as has been suggested since the legislature was still in session and our budget had not been acted upon. The number of problems and misunderstandings this has caused among students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends of the College has been substantial.

At issue are a number of problems. Dating back to the accreditation visits in 1967 and again in 1972, certain physical deficiencies such as a sterile operating suite for large animals and lack of sufficient isolation facilities in the hospital had been cited. Additionally, they had previously expressed concern about deficiencies in staffing, specifically in Anatomy, Public Health, Epidemiology and a number of clinical specialty areas. The problem of staffing has been exacerbated by the proliferation of clinical specialization within veterinary medicine so that in this report we were cited for a number of deficiencies in clinical staffing. Salary levels in order to attract and retain faculty were also considered to be a problem. Also listed were a few other areas of concern but most of these relate to the above problems.

It is with complete confidence that I can assure you the College will *not* lose its accreditation. The placing of the College in this status of "probational accreditation" is not a reflection of the overall excellence of its educational, research and service programs; rather, it is recognition of certain specific deficiencies which, in the context of that which should be present in a modern school of veterinary medicine, are found wanting. Although of great concern and certainly embarrassment to the College, in the long run the fact that the needs of this College are now openly available for study should elicit the understanding, cooperation and support of all parties concerned with the welfare of this College, the public served and the profession. The administration of Cornell and the State University, working together with other State agencies, are attempting to resolve the problems as rapidly as possible. The supplemental budget recently passed by the State legislature provides funds for the planning of the new surgical facilities. It is hoped that additional means will be found to address some of the more urgent staffing problems over the next several months. We will keep you informed of these matters.

Progress on the College's Development Plan

Accreditation is the major concern of the College. Its remedies in construction monies and additional faculty positions must come from the State of New York. Private fund raising is not the answer to that problem, however, during the past few months the College has also been working in this area.

In the first issue of *Veterinary Viewpoints* the need for private support of a statutory College, specifically Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine was discussed. In June a representative group of twenty alumni met on campus to study a Table of Needs which had been prepared. Background information was provided on each of the nine areas in that table. Examples of recent private financial support were given to show that concern does exist, and even without a formalized solicitation effort money is coming to the College.

The alumni had a number of valid questions regarding admissions, graduates and what portion of monies contributed actually reach the College through the University system. Discussions answered the questions at least to the point where the group unanimously felt we should proceed with the proposed development program. All accepted membership on the College Development Advisory Committee which will meet several times a year to assist in establishing development policy. Further, each agreed to help in setting up and conducting the capital campaign that will begin in the fall. Dr. Frederick O. Wright '41 has accepted the position of General Chairman and has enlisted the following Vice Chairmen:

Dr. Stanley M. Aldrich '50 — New York State
Dr. John D. Shumway '56 — Outside New York State
Dr. Stephen J. Roberts '38 — Class Agents
Dr. Arthur F. North '35 — Leadership
Dr. Grant S. Kaley '31 — Estate Planning

These men and others met on campus in July to work on the guidelines, timetable and staffing of the other leadership positions needed for the fall campaign. This will lead to an organizational meeting at the College on September 27 & 28, 1976, to present the Table of Needs to the entire group and lay out the plans for the conduct of the campaign in 1976, and concluding by June 30, 1977.

It should be mentioned at this time that all contacts with alumni during that period will be by the campaign organization. There will not be a separate Cornell Fund appeal since annual as well as capital support will be discussed at the same time with each alumnus through personal visits wherever possible.

