

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

Foreign-Born Deans of Veterinary Medicine

By Dr. Donald F. Smith

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In a story posted here 18 months ago, I noted that during the last three decades almost one in five open dean positions were filled with non-United States-born veterinarians.¹ I also acknowledged that I was one of those 16 deans, having been born and educated to the DVM level in Canada.

At the end of the article, posted on July 7, 2013, I opined,

As this story is being finalized there are ongoing searches for deans at U. Illinois and Virginia-Maryland. ...It will be interesting to learn....if US colleges continue to occasionally recruit graduates of foreign colleges to fill their dean positions.

As it turned out, both the University of Illinois and Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine did recruit and appoint individuals who were foreign born and who received their veterinary degrees from abroad. As is usually the norm, Deans Peter Constable (Illinois) and Cyril Clarke (Virginia-Maryland) moved to the United States early in their careers, receiving their graduate training here and progressed through the academic ranks at American veterinary colleges. Dr. Clarke had actually been enumerated in the above-cited blog as he was dean at Oregon State University at the time, before being recruited to Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine.

Virginia-Maryland provides remarkable testimony to the impact of the international profile in academic leadership. After the founding dean, Dr. Richard Talbot (1974-1984), all subsequent deans have been foreign-born and have received their veterinary degree from their home countries: Peter Eyre (Scotland), Gerhardt Schurig (Chile), and as mentioned above, Cyril Clarke (South Africa).

The legacy at the University of Illinois is not as striking, though two of the last three veterinary deans are also from outside the US: Victor Valli (Canada) and, as noted above, Peter Constable (Australia).

Even a casual review of the faculty and administrative leaders at all levels of our US veterinary colleges shows an impressive number of foreign-born and educated veterinarians and biomedical scientists. This is especially true at my home institution at Cornell. The college was founded by an Edinburgh-educated Scot, specifically recruited by President Andrew D. White, who traveled to Europe in 1868 in search of a distinguished academician who would become

the first professor of veterinary medicine at an American University.² Building on that legacy, Cornell now has substantial numbers of highly-qualified faculty from around the world, who are well integrated into the teaching and research fabric of the university and the professional culture of the United States.

From a personal perspective, I shall always be grateful to the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania who granted me an internship upon my veterinary college graduation forty years ago. I was one of five foreign-educated large animal interns at New Bolton Center that year. Two of the others were from Canada, and one each was from Ireland and South Africa. Only one US-educated intern entered the University of Pennsylvania large animal internship program in 1974.

¹ Smith, Donald F. Education of a Dean. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*. July 7, 2014.

² Smith, Donald F. James Law: He Helped Establish a University and Founded a Veterinary College, Part I. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*. April 10, 2014.

KEYWORDS:

Cyril Clarke
Peter Eyre
Richard Talbot
Victor Valli
Peter Constable
Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Illinois
Foreign educated veterinarians
Dean

TOPIC:

Colleges of veterinary medicine

LEADING QUESTION:

Which US veterinary college has had their four deans come from four continents?

META-SUMMARY:

An assessment of the proportion of veterinary dean in the United States who are foreign-educated.

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.