

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

Oregon State University Appoints Dr. Susan Tornquist as Dean

By Dr. Donald F. Smith
March 26, 2015

Oregon State's College of Veterinary Medicine has had as many deans in its forty-year history as some veterinary colleges that are twice as old. When Dean Cyril Clarke left the university in fall 2013,¹ Dr. Susan Tornquist was appointed interim dean, the third time that designation had been used during an interregnum period. Some naturally wondered if she would break the college's practice of appointing someone other than the interim designee and be granted a regular term.

That is exactly what happened on March 6th, when Tornquist was announced as the new dean of the college. A professor of clinical pathology, she told me she really had to weigh the decision carefully because she is so committed to teaching and diagnostics in her specialty field. "I really love looking at those exciting cells," she said with a laugh. However, Dean Tornquist is also excited about the opportunity to continue some of the administrative initiatives she started during the last 18 months, while serving in the interim position.²



Dean Susan Tornquist, DVM, MS, PhD, Dipl ACVP
(Photo provided by Dean Tornquist)

Dean Tornquist becomes the first woman dean in the college, and the eighth woman to serve as dean of a US veterinary college.³ Holding DVM and PhD degrees from Colorado State and Washington State Universities, respectively, Dr. Tornquist had private clinical practice and state diagnostic services experience, and a clinical pathology residency at Washington State, before joining Oregon State University in 1996. Before being appointed interim dean, she had been serving as associate dean for student and academic affairs.

Though she does not consider her gender to be a critical factor in her work as senior administrator of the college, she does welcome the opportunity to be a positive role model for the DVM student body that is over 80% female. "I have benefited so much from excellent role models and colleagues throughout my career," said Dean Tornquist, "and I really hope to be able to pay that forward in this new position."⁴ She also appreciated the encouragement she received from the other women veterinary college deans while she served in the interim position.

Dr. Joan C. Hendricks, the Gilbert S. Kahn Dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine elaborated on that support.⁵

When the deans met in Naples for their annual meeting in January, we (senior) female deans were delighted to meet two interim female deans, Susan Tornquist and Ruby Perry (Tuskegee). It turned out BOTH had been approached to be candidates for dean and we all encouraged them BOTH to indeed throw their (metaphorical) hats in the ring. It was very reminiscent, for me, of my own reluctant entry into the candidacy at Penn Vet. Here I was, decrying the lack of female leadership and demurring when told I should be a candidate. We all said-- DO IT! So they did and delightfully, Susan is now one of 8 female Deans in North America!⁶

After Dr. Tornquist's announcement was announced, Dr. Eleanor Green, the Carl B. King Dean of Veterinary Medicine at Texas A&M University was similarly pleased.⁷

It was easy to encourage a successful professional like Dr. Tornquist to consider the position of dean and we are all proud she accepted the offer. She had the good fortune to "try it on" as interim, so she had a good feel for the position. My consistent message to those considering such a position, or any position, is whether they want the job, not the title, the promotion, or the honor, but the job itself. Is this what they want to do every day with enthusiasm and energy? We are glad she thought she would. I really look forward to working with her in the deans' group.

Dr. Karen Bradley, who co-owns a small animal veterinary practice in Vermont and is president of the Women's Veterinary Leadership Development Initiative, expressed her excitement. "This is just wonderful about Dr. Tornquist," she texted me.⁸ "Just last Friday, I was thinking about

some of the women deans who might be completing their terms in the next few years, and wondering who their successors might be. This renews my hope.”

Mine, too.

¹ Dr. Clarke left Oregon State to become dean at Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine.

² Tornquist, Susan (Oregon State University), personal communication to Donald F. Smith (Cornell University), AAVMC meeting, Washington DC, March 15, 2015.

³ Six other women currently serve as dean, plus one as interim dean.

⁴ Tornquist, Susan (Oregon State University), email to Donald F. Smith (Cornell University), March 17, 2015.

⁵ Hendricks, Joan C (University of Pennsylvania), email to Donald F. Smith (Cornell University), March 18, 2015.

⁶ Dean Hendricks includes in her tally, Dean Elizabeth Stone at the University of Guelph (Ontario, Canada).

⁷ Green, Eleanor M (Texas A&M University), email to Donald F. Smith (Cornell University), March 19, 2015.

⁸ Bradley, Karen (DVM, small animal practitioner in East Montpelier, Vermont), text message to Donald F. Smith (Cornell University), March 16, 2015.

KEYWORDS:

Dr. Susan Tornquist
Deans of veterinary medicine
Women’s Leadership in Veterinary Medicine
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TOPIC:

Women in Veterinary Medicine

LEADING QUESTION:

Who is the new dean of Oregon State’s veterinary college?

META-SUMMARY:

Dr. Susan Tornquist becomes the seventh female dean of a United States veterinary college.

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.