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Helm changes hands at the AQUAVET® program for aquatic medicine



Dr. Rod Getchell has assumed leadership of the AQUAVET training program for aquatic medicine. After 25 years of service, Getchell's collaborator Dr. Paul Bowser has passed on the Associate Director's banner. As Associate Director, Getchell will organize the program's logistics, including everything from helping construct curricula, finding instructors, arranging field trips and accommodations, and booking teaching spaces, to orchestrating admissions and answering deluges of questions from prospective students. Throughout his work Getchell will carry on the program's tradition as the gold standard for hands-on training in aquatic medicine.

An aquatic animal health specialist, Getchell brings a wealth of relevant experience to his new position at the helm. After earning his M.S. in 1983 for research on salmon diseases at Oregon State University, Getchell spent many years in the field of aquatic health, studying diseases of crustaceans and mollusks in Maine as a Marine Pathologist. Coming to Cornell in 1990, Getchell earned his PhD while doing research and diagnostic work in several different labs. He eventually landed in the lab of Paul Bowser, where he has since contributed to research on a variety of fish diseases. Getchell has worked on independent fish disease research projects as principal investigator on grants he has written, including a new project funded by the USDA Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) investigating testing methods for Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Disease Virus.

In his new role as Associate Director of AQUAVET, Getchell unites his research credentials with his experience in several of the world's leading aquatic immersion-learning programs, including the SEA Semester field program in marine studies, Shoals Marine Lab programs in marine science, and the AQUAVET program itself. He has spent many years helping Bowser and is well equipped to steer its future course. "AQUAVET has matured over the years, and is now one of the top programs of its kind in the country," says Getchell. "I am happy to serve as Associate Director of such a program, and will make sure it maintains that high level of excellence."

The AQUAVET program provides its participants with the intensive immersion training environment they need to get their feet wet in the field of aquatic medicine. Cornell has cosponsored the program with the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania since the Program began 1977, guided by the belief that the veterinary profession is poised to benefit the health of aquatic environments and the animals they shelter. Veterinary students, biological researchers, and animal health practitioners from across the nation and around the world convene on the coast to learn from the program's

diverse instructors. Every year as many as 40 invited faculty come to teach about their respective fields.

The program offers two courses: a broad overview of aquatic organisms from invertebrates to marine mammals, and a specialized program focusing on the comparative pathology of aquatic animals. AQUAVET has helped spawn many successful careers, reflecting the program's goal to "identify, stimulate, and encourage as many potential leaders of this emerging branch of veterinary medicine as possible." Alumni include the chief veterinary pathologist at San Diego's Sea World, and veterinarians at Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, the National Zoo in DC, and the National Aquarium in Baltimore. Others now teach as faculty at top universities including UPenn, UC Davis, Tufts, NC State, Florida, Virginia Tech, Michigan State, Oregon State and Cornell.

Department of Immunology chair Dr. Avery August acknowledged the contributions of Bowser, who is stepping down after more than two decades of service. "On behalf of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, and the College of Veterinary Medicine, I would like to thank Dr. Paul Bowser for his excellent service leading the AQUAVET Program for more than 25 years," says August. "Over this period, this program has gained international visibility and recognition as one of the best programs of its kind."

Bowser's educational odyssey began at Cornell and proved to be a round-trip. Back when Cornell's Department of Natural Resources was known as the Department of Conservation, Bowser earned a B.S. in Fishery Science in 1970 while training in the Naval ROTC Program, then earned his M.S. degree in 1972 at Iowa State University. He served in the Navy for two years as the Executive Officer of Oceanographic Unit FIVE on the USNS Harkness, and then for one year as an Instructor at the Naval Education Training Center in Newport, RI, where he taught ship handling and navigation. He went on to earn his PhD at Auburn University in 1978, served as an Aquatic Animal Health Specialist in the Aquaculture Program of the University of California, Davis, then he joined the faculty of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University. Docking back at Cornell, Bowser set anchor as a faculty member in 1985, and embarked on a successful multifaceted career in the field of aquatic animal health.

That career has garnered several awards along the way, including three in the last four years. Bowser won the State University of New York Chancellor's Award for Faculty Service in 2007, the S. F. Snieszko Distinguished Service Award from the Fish Health Section of the American Fisheries Society in 2009 honoring Bowser's career achievement, contributions, and service to the field of aquatic animal medicine, and the first-ever Sea Grant "Research to Application Award" for outreach and service addressing the outbreak of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus.

"This great record of service and accomplishment is irreplaceable, but we wish him well as he passes the torch to Dr. Rod Getchell," says August. "Dr. Getchell has been well-trained by Dr. Bowser, and will continue this great record."