

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

The AAVMC is Turning Fifty Years

By Dr. Donald F. Smith

March 24, 2015

The AAVMC – Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges – came of age decades ago, but 2016 will mark its 50th anniversary and what a celebration it will be!

In conjunction with the anniversary, the AAVMC is working to build public awareness and support for academic veterinary medicine and the profession. A year-long national grassroots communication campaign (2015-2016) will reach out to Congress, state legislatures, allied veterinary medical organizations and citizens.

The half-century celebration will wrap up in Washington in March 2016 during a gala when the anniversary-inspired Grand Initiative will be announced. With this to anticipate, the AAVMC launched its celebratory year at Washington's Shoreham Hotel last weekend with a noteworthy three-day conference that included 260 registrants from veterinary colleges in the US and Canada and several other foreign countries.

Founded in 1966 with fewer than two dozen US and Canadian veterinary colleges, the AAVMC has become an international organization. Current membership includes not only the 30 colleges and schools of veterinary medicine in the US and the five Canadian colleges, but the following international schools and colleges:¹

From Europe:

- University of London
- University College, Dublin
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Glasgow
- University of Utrecht
- VetAgro Sup²

From Australia and New Zealand:

- Massey University
- Murdoch University
- University of Queensland
- University of Melbourne
- University of Sydney

From North America and the Caribbean:

- Ross University
- St. George's University
- Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico

The expansion in international members reflects the accreditation of many foreign veterinary programs during the last decade.

The addition of international programs in the last decade, some of which represent the truly elite veterinary programs in the world, has greatly enriched the academic and cultural breadth, and the quality of the US and Canadian colleges and our educational and research programs. For example, during a two-hour interactive seminar on academic leadership held on the last day of this year's conference, deans from the University of Dublin and University of Sydney, both women, provided substantive examples of how their colleges have successfully enhanced the role of women in prominent faculty and administrative positions. Parallel comments from deans and faculty at several US colleges made for a vibrant and energizing exchange. We all benefit from that type of exchange.

While some in this country express concern about the increasing internationalization of the US veterinary profession and propose to close the door on foreign accreditation, I think cutting us off from the world in this manner would be a serious mistake. At a conference in London last September, one senior faculty member at the University of Edinburgh (the quintessential beacon of international veterinary education and influence) expressed to me concern that the initiative by some in the US to constrain AVMA's international accreditation efforts would plunge the US veterinary community into a second-tier world veterinary power. Perhaps his comments reflected an overzealous choice of words, but make no mistake that the world is moving forward with or without us.

For me, I am immensely proud that the AAVMC is not only "on board," but leading the way as we transition into the second half of our first century.

¹ In addition, affiliate members include eight US departments of veterinary sciences (such as at the University of Arizona and University of Connecticut); seven US departments of comparative medicine (such as at Johns Hopkins and M.D. Anderson Cancer Center); and six international colleges of veterinary medicine (such as at Seoul National University and Central Luzon State University in the Philippines). Angell Memorial Medical Center in Boston is also an affiliate member. Guidelines for affiliate members are in the [AAVMC Bylaws, Article I](#).

² Formed by the union, in 2010, of one of the oldest veterinary colleges in the world in Lyon, France (l'Ecole nationale veterinaire de Lyon) with two other related agricultural and veterinary programs.

KEYWORDS:

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
International Veterinary Colleges
Workforce in Veterinary Medicine

TOPIC:

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges

LEADING QUESTION:

What is the AAVMC?

META-SUMMARY:

As the AAVMC turns 50 years old, the internationalization of veterinary colleges become apparent.

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.