

The New DVM Curriculum & You

By Dean Herb Whiteley

After more than a year of intensive study and discussion, our faculty recently approved changes to the veterinary curriculum that will make it more practice-focused and flexible.

The biggest change involves expanding the clinical rotations from 12 to 16 months and requiring two four-week, for-credit rotations at primary care practices of the student's choosing. The goal is for students to get a better feel for practice management and to see more primary care cases than they would encounter at our Urbana teaching hospital.

Although the new curriculum will not be implemented until the Class of 2012 enrolls next fall, the primary care rotations have been approved for elective credit now. If you are interested in mentoring a student, you can register your practice through the online Veterinary Career Resource Center at any time (go to www.VCRCIllinois.org and follow the instructions from the "Post a Position" link).

The new elective rotation allows students to spend 2 or 4 weeks at any U.S. private veterinary practice in order to increase their knowledge and skills pertaining to practice management, business practices, primary care, and preventive medicine.

The practice may see small, mixed, or large animal patients but must have a substantial primary care component. Students must be able to accomplish a majority of defined learning objectives at the practice and must be adequately supervised.

The curricular revisions are the result of much hard work involving the entire faculty. Please join me in thanking them. Special thanks go to the members of the Courses and Curriculum Committee, to its chair Dr. Federico Zuckermann, and to Dr. Jonathan Foreman, who was heavily involved in the curriculum review process over the past year and who stepped into the role of associate dean for academic and student affairs on July 1.

The College Courses and Curriculum Committee, aided by a faculty member chosen for the new position of assistant dean for academic affairs and curriculum, will oversee the ongoing process of coordinating and maintaining a vital and relevant veterinary curriculum.

Much remains to be done over the coming year to trim material from core courses and make room for the expanded clinical year. More than 30 existing core courses will likely be revised. Some material cut from core courses will be moved to elective courses so that interested students can still benefit from the information.

“The key is flexibility,” says Dr. Foreman. “Trimming core and adding electives allows students to tailor didactic courses to their area of interest. Every student will still get a good broad education in veterinary medicine but also enjoy the flexibility to focus.”

We hope that many of you will engage with students and partner with the College through the new primary care rotation program.

I welcome your feedback on the curriculum changes. You can reach me at dean@cvm.uiuc.edu.