

## **Help Us Give Students the Business**

Dr. Herb Whiteley, *dean*

*University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine*

Your state is delivering one of the most innovative veterinary curricula ever developed. The Illinois Integrated Veterinary Professional Curriculum combines increased clinical exposure—an additional 15 weeks' worth—with practical training in a world-class clinical skills center and didactic education that emphasizes clinical relevance. This approach is charting a new path in veterinary education.

And we don't want to stop there.

We want to extend our curricular innovations to the area of business and entrepreneurial skills, and we are looking for visionary partners among our alumni and the veterinary industry to support us in this goal.

Just as our new curriculum increases students' exposure to hands-on clinical settings and real-life applications of their basic science knowledge, so our business curriculum will give students opportunities to observe and engage in real-life business functions in veterinary settings.

Illinois students already have access to a robust series of business electives covering business, finance, management, client relations, communications, and societal issues in veterinary medicine. Together these courses provide an excellent grounding in business for the entry-level veterinarian.

Our next step is to create opportunities for our students to implement this foundational knowledge, and we are exploring various ways to incorporate those experiences into the new curriculum.

A four-week experience in business management designed for up to 20 students is currently in the works for the professional development phase of the new curriculum, which is the final eight weeks before graduation. Entrepreneurial practitioners willing to provide access to a real-life business problem in their practice will host a student for two weeks. In the final week of this course, students will present to the class the solutions they developed in their field experience, so all course enrollees come away with multiple practical tools for veterinary business.

Another practical enhancement of the business curriculum is to develop a two-week clinical rotation in practice management for senior students. The setting would be one of the College's entrepreneurial units, beginning with the Chicago Center for Veterinary Medicine and later expanding to the Veterinary Teaching Hospital or Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

We are also exploring ways to introduce a course on entrepreneurial leadership. Ideally, our own alumni who have forged unique careers will serve as speakers and mentors for students with this interest.

Taken together, these opportunities will create an educational experience that fosters creativity, risk taking, and leadership and prepares students to be change leaders in the veterinary profession.

We value the strong commitment to veterinary students that the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association and its members have demonstrated, and we hope to excite your interest in making this vision of a ground-breaking pathway in veterinary business education a reality.

If you share that passion, please contact me at [dean@vetmed.illinois.edu](mailto:dean@vetmed.illinois.edu) or call Brenda Betts, assistant dean for advancement, at 217-333-5545.