

## What's New in Student Affairs

*By Herb Whiteley*

February saw the culmination of an intensive 5-month admissions cycle. By October 1 our College had received 921 applications for admission. After three rounds of review of the applications, 266 prospective students came to Urbana on February 12 for personal interviews. Four days later, our offers of acceptance went out.

The next few months will reveal the 120 students who will make up our Class of 2011.

I'd like to thank the 22 members of the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association who participated in conducting the applicant interviews in February. As always, we are grateful for your involvement.

This application cycle is the last to be overseen by Dr. Gerald Pijanowski. Earlier this year, he announced that he would step down as associate dean for Academic and Student Affairs in May.

Jerry has done a great job leading and implementing changes in that office over the past 9 years. During that time, studies identified the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and aptitudes that lay the groundwork for successful veterinary careers. As a result, our College revamped the way applicants are evaluated "to help get the admissions process looking at the entire person," as Jerry puts it.

The Class of 2007 was the first selected with the revised process, which uses grades and GRE scores only for the initial screening of applicants. Subsequent phases of the evaluation process consider non-academic elements such as background, experiences, the personal statement, and references.

The interview phase is designed to get at those personal characteristics that cannot be demonstrated in written format, such as communication skills, self-confidence, and so on. The evaluation of the non-academic portion of the application together with the scores from the structured interview form the basis for the final "order of merit" list for offering admission.

"The faculty as a whole seems to like the classes enrolled under the new process," says Dr. Pijanowski. "They can notice a difference."

The change has not negatively impacted the academic quality of the student body. In fact, the grade-point average for entering students continues to be about 3.5 on a 4.0 scale. For the class entering the DVM program last fall, the mean GPA was 3.62.

Admissions is but a small part of the work of the Office of Academic and Students Affairs. "Most people have no idea how much work goes on here," says Dr. Pijanowski, who points with pride to the efficiency, teamwork, and "user-friendliness" of his staff.

Another change during Jerry's tenure in Academic and Student Affairs was the introduction of limited tracking options for fourth-year rotations to give students clinical emphasis in their area of greatest interest.

"Limited tracking addressed a lot of problems from the old system," notes Dr. Pijanowski. "Students are pretty happy with it."

Recruiting, especially of underrepresented populations, has been a project particularly dear to his heart. He has developed strong relationships with programs in Chicago, such as the Anti-Cruelty Society's mentor program, that bring science-based education to high school students.

The fruits of his efforts are just starting to appear. "One graduate of the Anti-Cruelty Society's mentor program is entering the DVM program this fall," says Dr. Pijanowski. "Eight more are currently enrolled as undergraduates at the University of Illinois."

He plans to continue his recruiting activity with Anti-Cruelty Society and the University of Illinois Principals Scholars Program after he returns full time to his position as an associate professor of veterinary biosciences with a joint appointment in bioengineering. In addition, he is looking forward to teaching the dog gross anatomy class and devoting more time to research on the stifle joint.

In seeking a new associate dean for Academic and Student Affairs, I've decided to divide his job into two part-time positions: a 70-percent appointment as associate dean and a new 50-percent appointment as assistant dean for Academic Affairs and Curriculum.

An internal search is under way to select the associate dean, who will then work with me to identify a new assistant dean. Both positions will be filled from within the faculty.

The associate dean will be responsible for student recruiting, outcomes assessment, courses and curriculum, budget planning and development, scholastic petitions, campus liaison; oversight of admissions, the mentoring program, and the Teaching Academy, to name a few.

The assistant dean will report to the associate dean and will oversee curriculum content review and evaluation, liaison to courses and curriculum committee, coordination and scheduling of courses, clinical rotations, and external practice rotations.

Mary Kelm will continue as assistant dean for Student Affairs, focusing on student counseling, operations of the admission process, and oversight of the Veterinary Career Resource Center and student organizations.

My sincerest thanks go out to Jerry, Mary, Shelley Raider, Karen Eichelberger, Nikki Hodge, and Jackie Sturdyvin for their caring and diligence in providing services to our students and keeping the DVM program running smoothly.