

Message from Dean Herbert Whiteley

University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine

Laying the Groundwork for Our Vision

As I look back at the past year, I see a number of significant developments that have strengthened the College's aspiration "*to be a leader in veterinary and comparative biomedical education, scholarship, and public engagement in the University of Illinois system, in the state, in the nation, and around the world.*"

The Veterinary Workforce Expansion Act, introduced in both chambers of Congress in the spring, is aimed at increasing the number of veterinarians serving in public health and biomedical research by expanding the capacity of the nation's veterinary colleges. We are addressing the needs outlined in the VWEA by establishing a joint DVM/master's in public health degree program, which was approved in February, and by admitting our largest first-year class ever, 112 students. We also recently received a 5-year NIH grant to help fund our summer research programs, which since 2003 have given 27 pre-vet or veterinary students experience in biomedical research.

Translational Biomedical Research is a new phrase for work that has become a major focus at NIH and on the University of Illinois campus. It refers to interdisciplinary collaborations that "translate" fundamental research discoveries into practical biomedical applications to improve human and animal health and society. Our College is leading this campus initiative, which has been called the most important of the past 30 years. The Veterinary Teaching Hospital and our clinical faculty members constitute a unique and indispensable resource for the success of this campus initiative. We also offer strong research programs in infectious disease, reproductive biology, environmental health/conservation medicine, and orthopedic biology.

The College facility plan, developed to ensure that the excellence of our facilities matches the excellence of our people and programs, made its debut in May. It maps out more than 200,000 gross square feet of proposed construction over the next 20 years. Included are an "academic commons" with teaching laboratories and classrooms to accommodate an expanded class size, an Equine Sports Medicine facility, additions to the Small Animal Clinic for state-of-the-art surgery suites and imaging areas, and renovations to the Basic Sciences Building to expand research and diagnostic laboratories.

While we anticipate that the VWEA legislation will help fund new teaching facilities, we look to private gifts to support renovations and new construction to expand the hospital as well as eight new endowed chairs or professorships and \$10 million in additional support for graduate fellowships, residencies, and veterinary scholarships. Our goal for the upcoming University-wide campaign is more than \$50 million over 10 years.

New leadership has also been a hallmark of the past year: President Joe White and Chancellor Richard Herman at the University and campus levels, department heads Dan Rock and David Williams in our College. The year to come will bring a new director for the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, a new head for the Department of Veterinary Biosciences, and a director for the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, a newly created position.

Strategic planning is currently happening across campus. Far-reaching agendas focused on bringing tangible benefits to the world will be submitted to President White in January. Our College is well prepared to contribute, with programs in translational biomedical research, public health initiatives, and local and global efforts in ecosystem health and environmental sustainability.

Looking ahead to 2006, I see the College moving closer to its vision. The AVMA accreditation team that makes a site visit in April will see that Illinois *is* "a leader in veterinary and comparative biomedical education." We are making a positive impact in the University of Illinois system, in the state, in the nation, and around the world.

And as our leadership grows, we become a stronger partner for the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association and for the practitioners across the state. Our continuing success is closely intertwined with our ability to serve you now and in the future.—Herb
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