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VMAS President's Letter

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In March 2011 my term as president of the Veterinary Medical Alumni Society will come to a close. As I write my last Bellwether letter, I’d like to reflect on the past two years, during which one word surfaced again and again: “Change.” I have, during my tenure, witnessed some of the most dramatic changes within Penn Vet, its alumni, staff and students.

Of course one of the most major impacts on the School has been the challenging economic times, which has affected everyone in some way, shape or form. For Penn Vet, it meant a major state budget cut and decreased case loads in the hospitals, compelling the School to rethink its operations.

Although the process of operational change is difficult, it has resulted in positive enhancements and enthusiasm to move forward.

We have also been faced with finding solutions to the changes occurring within the veterinary profession and ensuring that our students’ education continues to not only be relevant, but be trail-blazing. One area that is especially important to recognize is the growing demand for veterinary professionals in the public health and government sectors. This evolution has led our faculty to find innovative curricula solutions and options in order to attract students to a career path related to food animal and global health, making Penn Vet graduates as competitive as ever.

Finally, alumni involvement has been one of another of the most noted changes I’ve seen during my two years as VMAS president. I’ve seen alumni’s annual giving increase and have taken pride in noting that my peers have also carved out resources and time to support specific priorities and goals. More than ever, we are supporting student scholarships, volunteering time with committees and working with faculty, Dean Hendricks and the Alumni Office. In addition, alumni have been more proactive in fostering relationships with current Penn Vet students by providing externships with students and serving as mentors.

As I sat on the stage at the 2010 Penn Veterinary Medicine Commencement, I was impressed and inspired by the diversity of our students. Penn has always been a leader in diversity recognizing that it is through different backgrounds and experiences that new ideas are borne. This alone – the diversity of the Penn Vet student body – breeds a change in how we think about veterinary medicine – and about how we, as veterinarians, have an opportunity to impact the world around us for the better.

It has been an honor to serve as your president and to be a part of Penn Vet’s heritage and its future. My commitment to Penn Vet and its students, however, is far from over. Beyond this presidency, I will continue to be committed to their success. I hope you’ll join me in that mission.

—CARLA CHIEFFO, V’86 GR’98
PRESIDENT, VETERINARY MEDICAL ALUMNI SOCIETY

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