

From The Dean



Recently, I came across a revealing piece of history about the School concerning the first Dean, Dr. Rush Shippen Huidekoper. Huidekoper was a graduate of the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania and was an avid horseman. Heeding a lecture delivered in 1807 by his relative Dr. Benjamin Rush to the Medical Department on "The Duty and Advantages of Studying the Diseases of Domestic Animals and the Remedies Proper to Remove Them," Huidekoper went to France in 1880 to obtain a degree at the world's second oldest veterinary school, Alfort, just outside Paris. Upon his return he was elected Professor of Internal Pathology and Contagious Diseases and Dean of the Faculty in 1883. The original faculty comprised twelve professors, ten with medical degrees. With Huidekoper they accepted the School's first class in 1884.

All of this is fairly well known but what is not so well known is that Huidekoper resigned in 1889 due to a conflict with the governor at the time, James A. Beaver. Today, Governor Beaver's name is celebrated at Penn State's football stadium. Huidekoper recognized from the start that a veterinary school at a private university could not succeed without state funding and in 1889 obtained the support of the legislature for an appropriation of \$100,000. Unfortunately, this was vetoed by Governor Beaver. Dr. Huidekoper, discouraged by the School's grim financial situation, stepped down later that year. It was not until 1907 under the leadership of the School's third Dean, Leonard Pearson, that the School received an appropriation from the Commonwealth. This was in the amount of \$100,000 and was used by Pearson to start the Quadrangle Building at the School's new site at 38th and Woodland Avenue. The original site was a few blocks away at 36th and Pine Street.

The story is interesting for it shows that uncertainty over the appropriation has been a problem for the School from its beginning and has been the undoing of more than one dean. I hope I do not succumb to the same fate and see the present year as a watershed in the School's relations with the Commonwealth. I say this because for many years, the University has received an appropriation from the Commonwealth known as the General Instruction line in addition to the School's appropriation. In the current academic year the General Instruction line amounts to \$9 million. Traditionally, the University's appropriation has been more difficult to justify in Harrisburg than that for the Veterinary School due, in part, to the University's \$2 billion endowment and the competing claims from universities in other parts of the Commonwealth. Because of these continuing difficulties and in recognition of the chronic underfunding of the Veterinary School, the University Administration has made the pragmatic decision to forego the General Instruction line in FY'98 and focus the entire state appropriation request with the Veterinary School.

This presents a remarkable opportunity for the School that should help us secure more predictable funding from the Commonwealth and at the same time, meet some of the School's most pressing needs. These include reducing the effective rate of tuition and addressing a \$4.5 million deferred maintenance budget at New Bolton Center. The next several months will require detailed negotiations in Harrisburg but I see this as the best opportunity in a long time to finally lay Dr. Huidekoper's ghost to rest. ■

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Dr. Brinster Recipient of Bower Award

Dr. Ralph Brinster, Richard King Mellon Professor of Reproductive Physiology at the School, is the recipient of the 1996 Bower Award and Prize in Science, the richest American prize in science. The Bower Awards are presented annually by the Franklin Institute.

Dr. Brinster is being recognized for his original and highly significant contributions to the field of mammalian embryo development and gene regulation. He was chosen by a prestigious international panel of scientists including Lap-Chee Tsui, Ph.D., professor of molecular genetics in Toronto, Canada; Dr. Pablo Rudomin, M.D., Ph.D., science advisor to the President of Mexico; and Marvin Caruthers, Ph.D., professor of biochemistry at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Brinster devised elegant experimental

techniques which provided an insight into the early events in the developing embryo and introduced techniques for the production of transgenic — with foreign genes — animals. This ability to experimentally modify the germ line — an animal or plant's reproductive lineage — and then pass those traits along to the offspring of the altered species is one of the key advances in biology. To accomplish this remarkable milestone in mice depended on being able to maintain and manipulate in vitro female germ cells, the fertilized egg and early embryos in an uncomplicated and efficient manner. Beginning with his Ph.D. thesis in the early 1960's, which resulted in the development of a simple system to culture mouse eggs (one of the most cited papers in the life sciences), Dr. Brinster's lab has provided the means to

carry out many of the exciting experiments in the field of developmental biology. One dramatic application of this method was the introduction of a gene for rat growth hormone into the germ line of mice that produced "super" mice.

In his most recent work, Dr. Brinster took frozen rat stem cells — the cells that make sperm — thawed them and grew them in living mice. The mice produced rat sperm along with their own. His continued leadership in the field of transgenic biotechnology promises significant advances in animal husbandry and human health.

The Bower Awards will be presented during a convocation ceremony on May 1, 1997. There will also be a series of lectures and symposia on biotechnology in conjunction with this event. ■