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Deans' Messages: Penn Vet Deans Honor the Past, Plan for the Future

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Penn Vet Deans Honor the Past, Plan for the Future

From its origins in the crucible of American medicine in 1884, into the first decade of the twenty-first century, Penn's School of Veterinary Medicine has shaped and advanced the education and practice of the profession. Established when the U.S. economy was still largely agricultural, the school's founders—citing the fundamental similarities between disease processes in humans and animals—believed the new veterinary school would serve agriculture best by developing as a science-based branch of medicine. Eventually the *One Medicine* concept would become the school's guiding principle and proudest legacy.

The promise of the early years was difficult to realize. Located in Philadelphia in a private university, the veterinary school had scant access to Commonwealth funding and was scarcely visible to Pennsylvania's agricultural constituency until **Dr. Leonard Pearson** became the school's third dean in 1897. A visionary leader and scholar, Dr. Pearson reached out to the Commonwealth and to agricultural groups and individuals while planning and raising funds for the architecturally significant Quadrangle building. Following Pearson's death in 1909, the school, seemingly forgotten by the university and losing touch with its rural constituency, entered a "holding on" period; little money existed for faculty growth and development, research or improved facilities. Nonetheless, the school continued to produce many graduates who would make major contributions to the profession and society.

In 1953, soon after becoming the school's eighth dean, and after assessing its dire circumstances, **Dr. Mark Allam** asked a group of senior faculty to vote on whether he should recommend phasing out the school. The unanimous response, an expression of confidence in the new dean, was an unambiguous resolve to continue and, moreover, to strive for nothing less than preeminence by exploiting the advantages afforded by immediate access to Philadelphia's superb biomedical community. The recent acquisition of a fine rural campus (New Bolton Center) for food-animal and equine teaching and research provided additional grounds for faculty optimism.

What followed, at a breathtaking tempo, can best be described as a renaissance. Indeed, Penn Veterinary Medicine had entered a golden age. Energized by the dean's vision and ability to persuade the school's public and private constituencies to support its programs, an inspired faculty, led by powerful department chairs, seized the extraordinary opportunities presented by location and by the unprecedented availability of federal grants for research, training and construction. The world soon became a recruiting ground for faculty and trainees anxious to participate in Penn's grand experiment to transform veterinary education and practice.

Today, inspired by the recently opened Vernon and Shirley Hill Pavilion for teaching and research, and having entered the new century so triumphantly, the modern faculty's spirit of innovation, boundary crossing and openness to risk will continue to propel the school forward as it celebrates its 125th birthday.

—ROBERT MARSHAK, DVM
DEAN EMERITUS

Deans of the School

In 1993 Gilbert S. Kahn, breeder, exhibitor and judge of purebred dogs and supporter of animal welfare and canine health issues, made a gift to name the deanship of Penn Veterinary Medicine. The Gilbert S. Kahn Dean of Veterinary Medicine at Penn was the first endowed veterinary deanship in North America.

Joan C. Hendricks, VMD, PhD
2006 to present

Alan M. Kelly, BVSc, MRCVS, PhD
1994–2005

Edwin J. Andrews, VMD
1987–1993

Robert R. Marshak, DVM
1973–1987

Mark W. Allam, VMD
1953–1973

Raymond A. Kelsler, DVM
1946–1952

George A. Dick, VMD
1931–1945

Harold E. Bemis, DVM
1930–1931

Louis A. Klein, VMD
1910–1930

Leonard Pearson, VMD
1897–1909

John Marshall, MD
1890–1897

Rush Shippen Huidekoper, MD
1884–1889

What will Penn Vet—and the profession—look like during the next 125 years? Certainly different! Look at the pace of change in the last century—societal change, technological change, biomedical change. The challenge to us—individually and collectively, whether we care for animals professionally or personally, as individuals or as groups—is to be working today to maximize the health of animals in the future as well as the present.

How will we at Penn Vet invent the best and brightest future for the world's animals? Looking into my crystal ball, I predict we will change ourselves and the profession—again.

I predict that we will bring veterinary medicine's contribution to society at large. We will set the gold standard for veterinary involvement in disease prevention and surveillance through population-based medicine. This includes not only ensuring the health, welfare and productivity of herds and flocks of farm animals, but also ensuring the well-being of animals in biomedical research colonies and animal shelters. Veterinary medicine fosters better animal health and healthier human populations, and we will develop the most cost-effective health care—prevention of disease! Penn Vet's traditional role in leading "One Medicine" will be expanded to lead the way in "One Health"—the emerging concept that animals and humans are part of one ecosystem at risk. Healthy humans require healthy animals, both domestic and wild—and these all require and contribute to environmental health. Penn Vet will train our students to impact the health of living things globally. We will use international programs and Web-based training, we will add knowledge of trade and epidemiology to the conventional core competencies. With this training, our graduates will show that veterinarians can serve as the front-line in detecting and preventing disease—a "veterinary reserve corps" in the fight for health.

I predict that we will manage the high costs of veterinary care and veterinary training. Penn Vet will pioneer economical methods of care and training. Optimal use of new technologies as well as innovative cost-effective processes will allow us to demonstrate the benefits of veterinary training and services to the economy and public health. This will demonstrate to donors, public health foundations and the government that it is a wise investment to adequately fund veterinary training and care. We will pioneer in cost-effective practices, implementing innovative processes, including fiscal accountability in all aspects of training, research and patient care. Evidence-based publications on these practices will pave the way for others to follow our lead.

I predict that we will uniquely lead in educating veterinarians and pioneering in clinical care. Penn



Dr. Joan Hendricks with Dr. Robert Marshak. Photo by John Donges.

Vet will add value to professional and post-graduate training by fostering joint programs with other leading schools at Penn—and beyond. These programs will equip veterinarians to be squarely in the lead in addressing complex, controversial societal issues regarding the place of animals in society and the optimal means of translating basic research into real-world impact on health.

I predict that we will foster new models for community veterinary service. Penn Vet's programs will set the standard for volunteerism in an urban setting, building on our existing volunteer programs in local schools and beyond. We will work with urban horses and with shelter animals. We are leading the way by partnering with the City of Philadelphia on the inclusion of pets in emergency preparedness planning and developing new models of pet therapy with partners such as Penn Nursing and its Living Independently for the Elderly (LIFE) program, which helps maintain independent living for local needy elderly residents. We will partner with other governmental agencies, veterinary organizations, peer veterinary schools and humane organizations to make a real-world difference for animals and their owners.

As **Dean Marshak** reflects on Penn Vet's first 125 years, he notes our ups and downs and the renaissance that brought Penn Vet to our international leadership in health care. We are, again, in a time of challenging and unprecedented trial and change.

We will need your help—friends, alumni, parents, colleagues—to keep us informed about what you are seeing and doing, and to help us continue to transform veterinary education, practice and research.

—JOAN C. HENDRICKS, V'79, GR'80
THE GILBERT S. KAHN
DEAN OF VETERINARY MEDICINE