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Dean's Message

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On an icy Groundhog Day, I visited the nearly complete James M. Moran, Jr. Critical Care Center at New Bolton Center with the entire project management team. The project, in many ways, symbolizes who Penn Vet is and where Penn Vet is going.

We build on our historical strengths. We solve current problems. We look to the future. And at this moment, we are caught in fascinating juxtaposed circumstances. While we have exceptional resources and remarkable friends, we are also working within stringent financial limits.

To be concrete, we have lost more than 150 people since the summer of 2008, most through attrition but — painfully — almost 70 through “position discontinuations” (layoffs). By the summer, we will have a dozen fewer faculty members and a number of additional faculty have announced they will retire in the next few years. Because of the cuts in our Pennsylvania funding, we have come too close to having to shut down our Veterinary Center for Infectious Disease — a center whose tasks we are absolutely committed to in preparing for disastrous disease outbreaks.

We are more focused than ever on our core missions — teaching veterinary students, healing patients in innovative ways and moving the understanding and practice of medicine forward with fundamental and applied research to provide the best advanced training in the world.

The Moran Critical Care Center is a perfect symbol of our future and puts us at the forefront of treating large animals with suspected infectious diseases. Private practices do not have the capacity or mission to serve these patients, but we do.

Warm in color and in concept, the building's physical layout will be conducive to human interactions and superb patient care. It is thoughtfully designed and the level of care it will make possible are incredibly impressive, oriented to both biosecurity and patient comfort — not to mention features that will be WONDERFUL for humans like the ability to provide optional remote video access to owners, trainers and referring vets to monitor the progress of their animals.

The juxtaposing circumstances existed, too, in the construction of this facility. While we were granted a generous state release of capital funding in 2006 and received a gracious naming gift from Mrs. J. Maxwell Moran (Betty Moran) in honor of her son, James, we were committed to ensuring the facility was value-engineered and would be delivered on time and within budget. And, of course, cuts in our Pennsylvania appropriation have at times threatened our ability to operate this state-of-the-art facility.



Photo by Lisa Godfrey

As you will see in reading this issue of *Bellwether*, we continue to use our experience and expertise to lead the veterinary profession. Whether it's identifying new approaches to preventing, identifying and treating infectious diseases, or implementing monumental improvements in facilities and programs to set a new standard for patient care, research and teaching, Penn Vet will look forward to boldly accomplish our vision. We have come through some extraordinary times — recently and historically — with an ability to be agile, to adapt to losses, to make thoughtful — even if difficult — decisions. And we will be clear-eyed and positive about the consequences.

We are thankful for our friends and the private support we've received throughout these recent months, fully recognizing that it's that kind of support that is so critical in getting us through these challenging times.

But what is currently in jeopardy — and in question — is our ability to convey to the public that veterinary schools and veterinarians are a public good and that the loss of public funding threatens the health and safety of the human populace. If we are successful, we can look to regain support for programs like consulting for the Center for Dairy Excellence; provide new and better surveillance for emerging diseases on farms, including those that spread from animals to people like H1N1; and reach out to treat working dogs, police horses, patients whose owners cannot afford veterinary care at full price; and subsidize training in farm and food animals to provide extensive hands-on experiences for more and more students interested in rural and food supply practice.

You, as a *Bellwether* reader, have a vested interest in Penn Vet's success and can rally with us to craft and convey these important messages. We look forward to your help.

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