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Dean's Message

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Recently, 125 Penn Vet students walked across the stage at The Annenberg Center as members of the Class of 2012. I am, as always, exceptionally proud and incredibly humbled by this annual procession as year after year our scholars become even more impressive.

These young peoples' ambition and goals for their futures also encourages me.

As was the case when I began the role of Dean in 2006, in 2012 the profession is at a crossroads. The finances of our profession and of veterinary medical education specifically are highlighted as extreme concerns. No school at Penn has been through challenges as severe as Penn Vet and we are working to both diversify our own sources of revenue and also to increase student aid to reduce student debt. Our strong faculty, remarkable students and alumni position us to lead the profession.

We are also proactively working with the legislators in Harrisburg to position our profession as a lead player in ensuring the public health and welfare of animals as well as humans. This issue of *Bellwether* is dedicated to answering the question of "What does a vet do?"

Three times a day, more than 12.7 million Pennsylvanians sit down to a meal, confident that the food before them is safe and nutritious.

Every morning, tens of thousands of Pennsylvania farmers begin their workday with the assurance that their livestock is free from infectious diseases and that the dairy products, eggs and meat they produce are wholesome.

Every payday, hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians bring home a paycheck, with the comfort of knowing that the \$61 billion agriculture and agribusiness industry in which they work will continue to help support them, their families, their neighbors and their communities.

They can do so because of the vital role Penn Vet plays in protecting our food supply.

Penn Vet has graduated more than 6,000 veterinarians since its first graduating class of 1887. The vast majority of Pennsylvania's practicing veterinarians are Penn Vet grads, and their most vital tasks include ensuring food safety and providing critical research and care to our animal agriculture industry.

Penn Vet and the veterinarians it trains protect the health and well being of livestock, diagnosing and curbing many infectious diseases that are communicable between animal and man, such as Avian/Swine Influenza, West Nile Virus, Lyme disease, Salmonellosis, Listeriosis and E coli.

Penn Vet's research transcends the animal world, advancing basic understanding in the areas of cancer, infectious diseases, regenerative medicine and neuroscience and working to apply that new knowledge to design better treatments for diseases of animals and people alike. The school is a global leader in research that links animal science to human welfare, advances food safety and provides vital defense from bioterrorism and global pandemics.

In this issue of *Bellwether*, you'll read examples of this work from across the school. This issue's cover story highlights the important work of Dr. Tom Parsons who leads our Swine Teaching and Research Center. Dr. Parsons is making huge strides in alternative, welfare-focused swine housing facilities while also addressing the need to feed an ever-growing global population. His work has not gone unnoticed by industry leaders. Read more on page 4.

My article on page 8, about my recent trip to India, is a perfect example of Penn Vet's global reach. I aim to institute formal veterinary exchange programs in India and China and am laying the groundwork to make these programs a reality.

You'll also read on page 12 about the day-to-day work of Field Service veterinarians and how herd health plays a vital role in ensuring animal health as well as human health. The Shelter Animal Medicine Club sometimes travels with Field Service veterinarians to provide often ignored but much-needed care to barn cats, including spays, neuters, vaccinations and treatment for illness and injuries.

I hope that when you have read this issue of *Bellwether* you'll have a greater appreciation for your local veterinarians and a better understanding of what it is, exactly, that we do.

And for our alumni, I hope it is a refreshing reminder of the complex, amazing and sometimes misunderstood roles we play in our profession.

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