

Opportunity Scholarship Program Impacts Students *and* Donors

by Joan Capuzzi Giresi, C'86 V'98

For **Diana Chang, V'05**, receiving an Opportunity Scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine has been much more than a badly-needed source of financial aid. It has been a sense of gratification.

"It's a great honor because it's like someone reaching out their hand to you to help you along. It's an amazing feeling," says Ms. Chang.

The **Opportunity Scholarship Program** pairs each donor, who commits to giving \$2,500 per year for four years—a total of \$10,000—to a single student, who is selected based on strong academic qualifications and financial need. Since the program's inception in 1998, 40 Opportunity Scholarships have been awarded.

Dr. Charles W. Raker, C'41 V'42, chairman of the Opportunity Scholarship Program Committee, adds that the beneficiaries are "students



The Henry and Mary Nebzydoski Opportunity Scholarship
From left to right, Andrew P. Nebzydoski, V'84, Diana Chang, V'05, and Patricia A. Morgan, V'85.

who we feel would be a credit to the profession and to the alumni of the University of Pennsylvania."

For Ms. Chang, a Taiwanese immigrant who is funding her veterinary education entirely on student loans and scholarships, the award has meant not having to work part-time while in school. Opportunity Scholarship funds have also spared **Mary Ellen Hennessey, V'05**, from having to juggle school and a job. "I need all the time I have to study," she says, "and I know I couldn't do it with a job."

Recipient **Brooke Moore, V'05**, who is also borrowing the entire tuition amount, less scholarships, notes that the financial benefit of her Opportunity Scholarship is far greater than the face value of the funds. "With interest, that

\$10,000 is at least \$15,000 on payback," she says.

Opportunity Scholarships also benefit the School, explains Dr. Raker, by luring competitive students who might otherwise not consider Penn due to its high tuition in comparison to the public veterinary schools. "By offering some scholarship aid, we can maybe turn the tide and have them come to Penn and not go to some other veterinary school."

Scholarship donors may submit preferences for their recipient students, which aids in enhancing the mentoring relationship. For example, Ms. Chang's sponsors, spouses **Drs. Andrew P. Nebzydoski, V'84**, and **Patricia A. Morgan, V'85**, asked that their student recipient be from Northeastern Pennsylvania and be interested in large-animal work.

Each student in the program is also paired with a mentor who is either his or her donor(s) or a faculty member. Dr. Raker, for example, has offered advice on summer jobs in the veterinary field to the student whom he sponsors and mentors. In his mentorship of a second student—whose sponsor is not a veterinarian—Dr. Raker hopes to help the third-year student in his pursuit of an equine residency.

Dr. Suzanne J. Smith, V'82—who, with her husband **Dr. Peter H. Craig, V'55 G'85**, sponsors and mentors Ms. Moore—hopes the student spends some time at Dr. Smith's mixed-animal practice in Milford, N.J. "I hope this is a place she can run to when she needs to get reanchored to where her future is going to lead her in practice," she says.

Drs. Smith and Craig met Ms. Moore at the 2001 Rush Shippen Huidekoper Society dinner, held in recognition of those donors who contribute \$1,000 or more to the School in the fiscal year. The event, held November 10 at the

Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, also featured a presentation by **Dr. Peter Dodson** on recent dinosaur discoveries.

Dr. David P. Martin, V'66, who met his and his wife's student recipient, Ms. Hennessey, at the dinner, says the scholarship program provides an added benefit to

donors: "It caught my imagination as something that was really neat to see in a single person rather than to just give money that goes into this big nebulous pot."

Craig, who recalls that the tuition cost was just \$165 a semester when he went to veterinary school, is pleased with the opportunity to provide essential tuition assistance to Ms. Moore. "The help she'll get from this will not only benefit her now," he says. "It's really going to launch her future."

As for the future of the Opportunity Scholarship Program, the original 13 scholarship recipients will graduate this year. Dr. Raker and his fellow committee members are already contacting the donors of those scholarships to renew their support, and they hope to add on ten new scholarships this year.

Joan Capuzzi Giresi is a writer and a veterinarian in the Philadelphia area.

For more information or to receive a brochure on the Opportunity Scholarship Program, please contact Joshua E. Liss, Director of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, at (215) 898-1481 or via e-mail at <lissj@vet.upenn.edu>.



The Martin Family Opportunity Scholarship
From left to right, David P. Martin, V'66, Mary Ellen Hennessey, V'05, and Ulrike Martin.



The Spring Mills Veterinary Hospital Opportunity Scholarship
From left to right, Suzanne J. Smith, V'82, Peter H. Craig, V'55 G'58, Michael Craig, and Brooke Moore, V'05.

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