IN THIS EDITION

Innovative learning strategies in Veterinary Science at CSU

A plan to make life easier for rural veterinary practices

Veterinary Science at CSU receives a funding boost
I take great pleasure in welcoming you to the second edition of CSU Tails.

I was most impressed by the positive feedback the University received from the inaugural edition, and I hope this latest issue will further your insight into the Bachelor of Veterinary Science program at Charles Sturt University.

It is not uncommon to hear of the shortage of skilled practitioners working in rural and regional Australia. Through my travels, I have seen many areas in regional Australia struggling to employ people with the education and commitment needed to work and succeed in these remote locations. It is often surprising, however, to hear of regional hubs such as Wagga Wagga reporting difficulty in finding replacement staff in the medical industry.

The feature story in this issue, ‘A plan to make life easier for rural veterinary practices’, was inspired by a recent article in the ‘Parkes Champion Post’ which explained the critical situation of the provision of veterinary services unfolding in the area. The veterinary service in Parkes, NSW, is a three person practice which was operating with two and a half staff until the beginning of this year. In March, the practice lost a veterinarian due to relocation and it is feared a replacement will not be found. This leaves the remaining practitioners with a choice of longer hours under increased pressure or to relocate themselves.

CSU is continually working to reverse trends such as this appearing across the professions. The Bachelor of Veterinary Science program is the newest in a string of courses, including the Bachelor of Pharmacy, which aim to keep educated and skilled practitioners in regional areas.

In its inaugural year, the veterinary science program achieved great success, with both students and staff demonstrating an immense commitment to the ethos of the course and to regional Australia.

I would like to thank all those who have assisted the Veterinary Science program in the past year and look forward to continued and new support in 2006.

I hope you enjoy this edition of CSU Tails.
It seems so much has happened since our first edition six months ago! The pace of development is inexorable, of course, as the students move through the program at a relentless pace. Our second year program is now well underway with the Class of 2010 immersed in physiology, anatomy and biochemistry and already developing some key clinical skills such as bovine pregnancy diagnosis. The selection of 53 new students into first year has reinforced the notion that Australia has great depth in its supply of academically-strong young people with a passionate interest in rural Australia and the health, welfare and management of animals.

Numerous conversations that I have had with practitioners over the past six months – some stimulated by the publication of the previous issue of CSUTails – have strengthened my conviction that Australia needs more veterinary graduates with a desire to make their homes in rural areas. We feature one of these cases in this issue but a number of others have been brought to our attention. Senior veterinarians in rural practices are experiencing serious difficulties in attracting and keeping veterinarians – in some cases the difficulty approaches desperation. It is also clear that low salaries are not the primary factor interfering with the supply of veterinarians for rural Australia. The problem is not restricted to farm animal veterinarians – rural practices with predominantly equine or small animal clientele are also acutely aware of the difficulties in recruiting veterinarians.

These opinions seem in stark contrast to the findings of the Frawley Review of 2002/03, which stated (with qualification) that there was no immediate shortage of veterinarians in Australia! In that review, Frawley encouraged the broadening of the skill base of rural practices – a challenge that we have taken up in this course – but it is clear that shortages have developed in the supply of traditional veterinary services as well.

Time will tell if the CSU approach is effective in redressing the problem but it seems likely that the situation will become worse before our graduates enter the employment market in four and a half years. In the meantime, we will continue to select the brightest and best of Australia’s rural talent and prepare them for the challenges ahead.

Please enjoy this second issue of CSU Tails. We do, of course, only scratch the surface of the new developments and new staff appointments in such a short newsletter but I hope it gives you a sense of the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff and students in Veterinary Science at CSU.

CSU’s vision:
To attract and retain veterinarians in rural Australia
If you share this vision, support future issues of CSU Tails through advertising/sponsorship.
Contact the Foundation on 02 6338 4680
www.csu.edu.au/special/vetfoundation

Advertising contacts
If you would like to show your commitment to the industry and assist the future generation of veterinarian professionals through an advertisement in the next issue of CSU Tails contact the Foundation on 02 6338 4680.

Welcome from the Director of Veterinary Science
Donations of cattle, equipment and funds to assist in the establishment and development of the veterinary science course at Charles Sturt University (CSU) have further demonstrated the community’s support of the new program.

In a joint initiative between leading companies in the health industry, Welch Allyn and Lyppard, first year Veterinary Science students each received a stethoscope valued at over $150. Through assistance such as this, companies are able to make a contribution to the students who will one day become the backbone of rural veterinary practice.

“To have the support of leading companies such as Welch Allyn and Lyppard in the first year of the program gives the students a real sense of being junior members of the profession. They are delighted to have personal equipment and the companies establish brand recognition amongst the practitioners of the future; it is a win-win situation,” said lecturer, Heidi Austin.

In addition to this support, Angus breeders Bryan and Lucinda Corrigan of Rennylea Angus, have organised the donation of 23 head of cattle from last year’s donation of Poll Herefords put together by Robert and Moira O’Reilly of Redgate Litchfield, the Bulle family, Bryan and Libby Litchfield, the Bulle family, Bryan and Libby

Donors of Angus cattle include Romani Pastoral Company, Bill and Shona Graham, Guy Fitzhardinge, Jim Wolfensohn, Nick and Julia Burton Taylor, David and Genevieve Mott, Bruce and Anna Allworth, Stephen and Cindy Scott, Tim and Jessica Scott, Jim and Libby Litchfield, the Bulle family, Bryan and Lucinda Corrigan.

The Charles Sturt Veterinary Foundation has also received generous financial support from members of the veterinary profession. Donations totalling over $26,000 will assist in the development of the Veterinary Science program through contributions to the capital works program and scholarships for talented and motivated students.

If you are interested in supporting the CSU Veterinary Science program, contact the Charles Sturt Veterinary Fund on 02 6338 4680, visit www.csu.edu.au/special/vetfoundation or utilise the membership form on the back page of this magazine to make a donation.

Donors of Angus cattle include Romani Pastoral Company, Bill and Shona Graham, Guy Fitzhardinge, Jim Wolfensohn, Nick and Julia Burton Taylor, David and Genevieve Mott, Bruce and Anna Allworth, Stephen and Cindy Scott, Tim and Jessica Scott, Jim and Libby Litchfield, the Bulle family, Bryan and Lucinda Corrigan.

Once again, student selection into Veterinary Science at CSU was based on a written application and an interview to ensure students have the necessary background and motivation to be successful in the course and after graduation.

This year, CSU received over 350 applications for the Veterinary Science degree program and accepted 53 students. The interview panels included staff from the University and veterinary practitioners from the region in order to bring both academic and workplace perspectives to the selection process.

“The opinion of practitioners in the selection of students is particularly valued. They see many young veterinarians and veterinary undergraduates in the course of operating their practices and have a very clear idea of the importance of students’ early experiences in preparing them for work in veterinary practice,” said Ms Jennifer Hyams, who coordinates the student selection process.

This year, the 16 male and 37 female entrants comprise school leavers and mature-age students. Four have completed degrees previously. The proportion of school leavers is slightly higher than in 2005 – 55% compared to 49% last year.
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Rural and regional communities in Australia continue to face a potentially devastating shortage of experienced veterinary practitioners. Charles Sturt University's (CSU) Veterinary Science program is undertaking a different approach to veterinary education in order to combat this ongoing problem.

It is well known within veterinary circles that graduates are increasingly moving towards small animal practice, reversing the trend apparent in the 60s and early 70s which saw an expansion of veterinary services to regional Australia through both practice and government work.

In more recent years, a combination of factors associated with country practices has been encouraging educated professionals away from rural areas and into metropolitan centres. For some veterinarians, life and work in the metropolitan areas seems to offer many advantages, including more practitioners to share the workload, shorter hours and less time spent on call.

A regional practice located in Parkes, NSW, is the latest to report a critical shortage of trained veterinarians. The practice lost a staff member in March 2005, leaving only one full-time employee to carry the workload.

A shortage of veterinary services in areas such as Parkes has a drastic impact on the surrounding community. Parkes Veterinary Clinic practitioner, Dr Daryl Elphick, is trying to raise community and government awareness of the problem.

"There is a huge impact on the whole community when there is a shortage of veterinary services. It goes so much further than the family pet; a lack of vets in the area effects racing and farming as well as the operations of the local council," said Dr Elphick.

Dr Elphick is also concerned about declining animal health and negative attitudes from members of the general public if nothing is done to reverse current trends.

"I am the only vet in the region, meaning I am providing services to over 11,000 people. If I am out of town working with livestock there is no-one in the practice to deal with day to day problems. People want veterinary services available immediately in times of crisis, but at the moment, a lot of country areas are not able to provide that. Unless something is done animals are going to miss out on potentially life-saving procedures and care and the community trust in the profession will be undermined," said Dr Elphick.

Ensuring graduates are willing and prepared to work in rural Australia is the key focus of CSU's Bachelor of Veterinary Science.

Preparation for the program began in the early 1990s when CSU embarked on a course profile that provided opportunities for rural students in the health profession, such as pharmacy and physiotherapy. Living up to its catchphrase ‘train from the country, in the country', the veterinary program is located in the regional hub of Wagga Wagga, NSW, home to a variety of farmed animal species and where students can...
be readily exposed to the lifestyle of rural practice through the University’s strong connections to local veterinary practitioners.

Natasha Lees, a new member of the CSU Veterinary Science team, believes training students in a rural environment increases the likelihood of graduates staying and working in similar areas. “Our rural location makes it relatively easy for us to give appropriate emphasis in undergraduate training to an understanding of the intensive and extensive livestock industry and the role that vets will play in the agricultural sector in the future,” said Ms Lees.

Director of the CSU Veterinary Science program, Professor Kym Abbott says the University’s unique approach to educating students is aimed at reversing the shortage of graduates with an ongoing commitment to rural and regional Australia.

“Every veterinary program in Australasia provides strong training for work with pets and performance animals but we feel we have a particular responsibility to address the changing needs of livestock producers for veterinary services. Vets are not only responsible for the health of animals, they are also crucial players in the maintenance of profitability of the farm animal sector and in the integrity of rural communities,” said Professor Abbott.

Addressing issues raised in The Frawley Report, which was conducted by the Federal Government in 2002-3 to identify problems with rural veterinary services, CSU developed comprehensive selection criteria aimed at ensuring successful applicants are prepared for life in rural practice and are able to demonstrate an ability to communicate and empathise with country people.

With these attributes in mind, a three step selection process was formulated which allowed the panel to determine which applicants were more suitable for the course. This process includes the submission of a written questionnaire to establish the applicant’s commitment to rural Australia and the livestock industries, an interview and the demonstration of a high level of academic achievement at school or university. (Prospective students must also apply through the University Admissions Centre.)

Lecturer, Heidi Austin, believes this process is the best way to determine the most suitable applicants for the course.

“There is so much more to success as a veterinarian than having a high UAI (University Admission Index). CSU is the only veterinary course in Australia to apply broad criteria to the selection of all students entering the course – criteria such as demonstrated experience and awareness of the value of a country lifestyle as well as an understanding of livestock and livestock production. Now, after only one year, our students are already demonstrating a strong drive to make a difference in regional areas and show a real love of the industry. I am so pleased the hard work we have all put into the selection process has paid off,” said Ms Austin.

The selection process allows for students with outstanding abilities and achievements in a range of areas including academic merit to enter the profession – applicants who might otherwise not gain acceptance if selection were based on the singular characteristic of previous academic grade. Director, Professor Kym Abbott, believes this gives applicants raised in country areas an equal or better opportunity to train as veterinarians.

“Unfortunately, it is a proven statistic that the school students who are more likely...
Professor Peter Chenoweth

Professor Peter Chenoweth joined the Charles Sturt University (CSU) Veterinary Science program in 2005 and brings a strong international reputation and extensive experience in veterinary education. Professor Chenoweth is involved in the undergraduate and postgraduate programs at CSU with an aim to produce graduates who can significantly contribute to the livestock industries as well as society in general.

When did you decide you wanted to be a vet?  
As early as I can recall. I came from a family of medical practitioners and this probably had some influence.

What did you do before starting work at CSU?  
I held an endowed chair (The Coleman Chair in Food Animal Production Medicine) at Kansas State University for approximately eight years. Prior to that I was a faculty member within the Veterinary College at the University of Florida. I have spent approximately 22 years in the US with stints on the faculty at the two schools mentioned above as well as at Colorado State and Texas A&M University. In Australia, my time at the University of Queensland included a stint as Director of the Pastoral Veterinary Centre (Goondiwindi) as well as Deputy Dean.

What research have you been involved in?  
I have done a lot of work with bull reproduction, being most fortunate to have had a number of very good graduate students to assist me in that area. I have also been active in areas of male reproduction in a number of other species. At Kansas State University, I was fortunate to be closely involved in collaborative research on endangered wild cats with the Smithsonian Institution, and even had one student working on Giant Pandas in China!

What is the most interesting part of a career as a veterinarian?  
The variety, comparative approach, ‘neat’ people and the opportunity to travel and work in other countries. It is a profession held in very high public regard, and one which provides many opportunities to serve mankind. For me, it has always been a vocation which constantly rewards its followers.

Why did you choose to work at CSU?  
Because the new veterinary school at CSU represents a dream that I have held for a long time – to ensure that we train adequate numbers of competent and knowledgeable veterinarians to serve rural communities and the livestock industries. Traditional schools were not meeting these needs and were not in a position to change direction to do so. CSU had the vision to make it happen.

What do you think is the main threat to the veterinary profession?  
In an ongoing sense, the problem facing rural industries is one of ageing and dwindling manpower and expertise, lessening political support, narrowing margins and the vagaries of global markets and local weather. Some of these are not easily addressed, although educating competent and motivating appropriate professionals (e.g. veterinarians) to serve rural industries can only be of benefit.

What keeps you inspired and motivated?  
I love what I do – simple as that. The vet students play a big role in this, as they are intelligent, highly motivated and all-round great people to work with.

I also get a big kick out of discovery (research) and its associated networking with opportunities for travel and continuing learning and intellectual stimulation.

However, it has to all come together within a theme, which for me is veterinary education (and research) to benefit the livestock industries. And I have reached a stage where I can attempt to give back to the professions that I love (veterinary and education) via such things as mentorship. Failing all else, I can wax philosophically to any that might have the disadvantage of being in listening range!
Charles Sturt University (CSU) welcomed the announcement of the Federal Government’s $4.4 million funding boost which will be allocated to teaching and learning facilities for the Veterinary Science program in 2008 and 2009.

“The funding is great news for the University and regional and rural Australia where our Veterinary Science graduates will work to meet the shortfall of skilled professionals,” said CSU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ian Goulter.

The Federal Minister for the Riverina, Kay Hull MP, highlighted her support of the Veterinary Science program through her assistance in securing these funds.

“The University has a staunch advocate in Kay Hull and she has been strongly behind the development of the Veterinary Science program at CSU,” said Professor Goulter.

The funds will go towards the construction of the Veterinary Clinical Training Centre, research laboratories, staff and postgraduate offices and additional teaching space on the University’s Wagga Wagga Campus.

Director of Veterinary Science, Professor Kym Abbott, says although the funds are welcome, there is still a long way to go.

“The $4.4 million grant is definitely appreciated and will contribute to the cost of building state-of-the-art facilities for students and staff. However, this grant is considerably less than the total cost of construction and equipping of these facilities. We will continue to seek the support of industry and the community to ensure the construction of the high quality facilities that our students need,” said Professor Abbott.

CSU is committed to providing the facilities required to deliver an outstanding veterinary program despite the fact the program was established without a promise of financial support from the Federal Government. The $4.4 million represents not only a significant funding boost but also a welcome sign of government support for our objectives in veterinary education.

Funding for the construction program has been divided into two stages. Stage 1, totalling $9.1 million, has been provided by Charles Sturt University and included the refurbishment of teaching laboratories and lecture spaces, a new Pre-clinical Centre, the purchase of the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory from the NSW Department of Primary Industry, the construction, during 2006, of a new post-mortem room and the construction of new cattle yards and sheep yards designed for undergraduate training.

Stage 2 includes the construction of the Clinical Training Centre which will be used primarily for the clinical training of students with horses and small animals, teaching spaces and staff offices, refurbishment of the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory to a level required for commercial service and research and additional research laboratories to provide for the dramatic expansion of the School of Agricultural and Veterinary Science’s research capability as new academic staff join the program.

Early estimates suggest the development of Stage 2 will require around $14.7 million during the period 2006 – 2010. The Charles Sturt Veterinary Science Foundation is working with the School of Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences to raise crucial funds and facilitate donations for the capital works project.

$2.4 million of the Government funding will be received by the Veterinary Science program in 2008, followed by the remaining $2 million in 2009.

Innovative learning strategies in Veterinary Science at CSU

Charles Sturt University (CSU) Veterinary Science is a long and demanding six-year program and students in the course have much to learn. In the more traditional five-year programs in Australasia and the UK, lectures form the basis of the teaching program for theoretical material, supported by practical classes and clinical practice.

After four years of lectures, the thrill of an exciting new course can start to wear thin for even the keenest students, and the prospect of an extra year of lectures in a six-year program was something that concerned both Professor Peter Chenoweth and Professor Kym Abbott. With this in mind, the two professors explored the possibilities of introducing a problem-based learning (PBL) curriculum into the veterinary course.

Following an introduction to the Dean of the new Veterinary College at Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, California from Dr Doug Bryden, Kym and Peter visited the new school in March 2005 and saw first-hand the outstanding benefits to the student experience that PBL had to offer. Following this, with visits to the Graduate Medical Program at the University of Sydney and the continuing advice of Ms Penny Little, who was closely involved with the Newcastle Medical School PBL program, the staff in the School of Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences have come to understand and embrace PBL. It is clear CSU now has a great opportunity, while the program is under development, to institute a curriculum which will develop students as life-long learners, competent problem solvers, and equip them with the substantial knowledge base they need on graduation. The PBL program will also provide them with an enjoyable and stimulating learning experience while at university.

A number of workshops for both students and staff have been held over the past 12 months but the most recent, organised by Peter Chenoweth, was conducted by Penny Little and Dr Steve Waldhalm, of Western U, who visited CSU for a week in February. The visit was a great success, and exposed staff and students alike to the way in which PBL can work in a veterinary curriculum.
Charles Sturt University (CSU) is attracting highly skilled, passionate and motivated staff to assist in the development and teaching of the developing Veterinary Science program. 2006 will see the induction of at least seven new members of the teaching staff in the fields of Veterinary Physiology, Pathology, Dairy Cattle Medicine, Parasitology and Equine Reproduction.

Natasha Lees, who joined the team in January, says the opportunity to have an impact on the development of the Veterinary Science program attracted her to the position of Lecturer in Dairy Cattle Practice.

“I was attracted to CSU because it was an opportunity to be involved in the creation of a new vet course, which is an exciting experience. I like the aims of the CSU Veterinary Science program, especially graduating veterinarians with a depth of knowledge and skills in all areas, but in particular those applicable to rural and regional Australia,” said Ms Lees.

Stephanie Knott joined the CSU staff after completing her PhD in Feed Efficiency of meat sheep with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries at Hamilton.

Director of the Veterinary Science program at CSU, Professor Kym Abbott, is particularly pleased by the response from leading academics and early career scientists eager to be involved in the program.

“It was always going to be an unknown, when the course started, whether the regional setting for the School would be a disincentive for experienced staff to join us. Clearly it is for some, but there is also a significant body of academic veterinarians who see this new venture as an opportunity and a reason to move away from the densely populated metropolitan centres,” said Professor Abbott.

The School of Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences is currently advertising positions for Lecturers in Veterinary Microbiology, Small Animal Medicine and Surgery. For more information regarding these opportunities, please contact the School on (02) 6933 2760.

Charles Sturt University (CSU) Veterinary Science student, Erin Davis, has been awarded a grant from the Big Brother Movement program which will cover costs associated with travelling to the UK to study overseas veterinary practices.

Ms Davis, who is in her second year of Veterinary Science at CSU, said receiving the award made her feel her hard work had been recognised.

“I was pleased with what I learned in my first degree and studying Veterinary Science at CSU has now provided a tremendous opportunity to develop a career that I had always longed to do,” said Ms Davis.

Ms Davis will use the grant to travel to the UK where she will visit veterinary diagnostic laboratories, sheep consultants, sheep and cattle producers and university veterinary schools.

“Winning this award allows me to do something I have never done before -- study overseas. I am looking forward to looking at livestock production in England, Wales and Scotland, and meeting interesting people in interesting jobs, and I believe it will help me both personally and professionally,” Ms Davis said.

CSU Veterinary Science Course coordinator, Heidi Austin, says Ms Davis’s award is testimony to her hard work and dedication.

“This is a significant achievement for Erin and, of course, we are delighted that the qualities we saw in her during the selection process have been recognised by the Big Brother Movement,” said Ms Austin.
## Veterinary Science Wine Pricelist

**Cellar Door Hours**: Monday - Friday 11am - 5pm  Saturday & Sunday 11am - 4pm

**NB**: 20% Discount is included in price

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**Standard Range**

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**Freight Costs INCL GST**

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- Supporter - $250 per annum
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  - □ $20 □ $50 □ $100

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### CAT

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Advocate from Bayer comes in both a cat and dog formulation, available in 3 or 6 month packs. Revolution is a registered trademark of Pfizer. Sentinel Spectrum is a trademark and registered trademark of Novartis Inc., Basel, Switzerland. ADVOCATE is a trademark of Bayer AG, Leverkusen, Germany. BAY1414.