More than 9 billion chickens and 93.7 million cows are produced in the U.S. (USDA).

An estimated 7.29 million horses, 81.7 million cats, and 72.1 million dogs are owned by U.S. households (AVMA).

Human + animal + environmental health = One Health

85% of Ohio’s veterinarians are Ohio State grads

Average debt load of recent DVM graduates = $130,000 (AVMA).
Letter from Dr. King

Dear friends and stakeholders:

Last year, our inaugural Focus-Forward Weekend responded to the growing recognition that the veterinary medical profession is on the doorstep of a new era of profound change. Accordingly, we structured the 2010 conference to address several of the "macro" issues and challenges facing the profession – issues such as global food systems, public health, biomedical research, and ecosystem management.

We noticed then that the subject of finances was never far removed from the presentations and discussions, whether it was student debt load, the profitability of veterinary medical practices, or the economics of operating a comprehensive college of veterinary medicine. Hence, it seemed that this year’s conference should explore the “business” end of the veterinary profession in detail. In addition, the AVMA believes that the financial and economic challenges faced by the veterinary profession are its top priority.

Thus, our Focus-Forward Weekend 2011, held in July at the Blackwell Inn at the Fisher College of Business, was entitled, “The Financial Future of Veterinary Medicine.” Our four targeted topic areas were:

• Building new business models for veterinary education and the College of Veterinary Medicine;
• Improving business success for private practices;
• Addressing student debt and marketability of new graduates; and
• Creating new economic opportunities by driving demand.

Our goals for the conference were to generate ideas on how to address these issues, identify action steps the college can take to be successful in each area, and help link these recommendations with a new college vision and its strategic plan. This report summarizes the presentations and subsequent discussions that took place during the conference. It also presents the most highly recommended action steps for the college to consider going forward.

I believe that any effort by our profession to address our broader challenges would, quite frankly, be incomplete without a thorough understanding of the financial underpinnings of any actions we might contemplate. That is why I feel secure in saying that our college’s second Focus-Forward Weekend will help inform and illuminate the path that lies ahead.

Respectfully,

Lonnie J. King, DVM, MS, MPA, ACVPM
Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine
Executive Dean, Helath Science Colleges
Ruth Stanton Chair in Veterinary Medicine
Professor, Veterinary Preventive Medicine
Background

The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine is uniquely positioned to assume a leadership role in assessing the economic forces affecting our profession and identifying new paradigms and practices that can help build a stronger financial future.

Ranked fifth among the nation’s 28 veterinary medical schools by U.S. News & World Report’s “Best Graduate Schools,” Ohio State has the only veterinary college nationwide to share the same campus with six other health sciences colleges: dentistry, medicine, nursing, optometry, pharmacy, and public health. With 580 professional students, the college ranks first in size in the nation.

Some 35,000 companion, farm, and equine animals are treated each year at the three hospitals in the college’s Veterinary Medical Center: the Hospital for Companion Animals, the Hospital for Farm Animals, and the Galbreath Equine Center. Thousands more are visited by Ohio State veterinarians and students from the Marysville Large Animal Service. More than 7,200 Ohio State veterinary alumni practice in all 50 states and 29 countries. The college is recognized nationally and worldwide for its leading-edge research in such areas as oncology, food safety, avian influenza, infectious disease, and advanced orthopedic procedures, among many others.

Perhaps most importantly, the college recently published “Veterinary Medicine: Economic Impact in Ohio 2010” – a report produced in partnership with the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association. This report is the state’s first-ever study of the economic impact of the veterinary profession in the state of Ohio.

Even a snapshot of the report’s findings offers a compelling view of a profession that delivers a significant, positive impact on our state’s economy. Some 3,500 veterinarians work in Ohio, and 85 percent are graduates of the college. Our state’s 1,100 private practices and clinics employ more than 12,000 personnel. And more than 59,000 Ohioans work in 14 separate economic sectors related to the profession.

Ohio veterinarians contribute nearly $2 billion annually to the state’s economy, add $3 billion in associated business, and protect Ohio’s $107 billion agricultural industry. In total, the state’s veterinarians provide care for 3.6 million cats, 3.2 million dogs, nearly a half-million birds, 2.6 million farm animals, 320,000 horses, and thousands more goats, sheep, llamas, alpacas, and other, more exotic animals.

The information contained in this report further illuminates the backdrop for Focus-Forward Weekend 2011. It confirms the presence in Ohio of the financially impactful veterinary medical profession, and it affirms that whatever the current economic challenges may be, the profession has every reason to look forward to an even stronger financial future. And it reveals that the Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine, rightfully, will be a leader in forging that future.
Situation Analysis

Most financial experts agree that the U.S. economy entered the current recessionary environment in late 2007, and that the recession, still lingering in 2011, may be the nation’s worst in at least 40 years. As a service profession and a profession dominated by small businesses, veterinary medicine has been particularly impacted. In fact, those involved in the veterinary medical profession saw the “writing on the wall” before it was commonly understood that the country had entered into recession.

Without question, veterinary medicine was already at a critical crossroads in its 250-year-old history, a fact that was made abundantly clear during the first Focus-Forward Weekend in 2010. Today’s challenging economy only heightens the need to understand the economic forces affecting our profession, so that we might more clearly and decisively redefine and reshape our financial future.

The experts engaged to lead discussions during Focus-Forward Weekend 2011 offered deep insights into the current economic state of the veterinary medical profession. Some of the information they presented was sobering, to be sure. At the same time, attendees also received and shared valuable wisdom as to how to assess, address, and overcome the challenges of today’s difficult economy.

During the event, we focused on four critical issues that we believe are interrelated. In the years prior to this recession, veterinary practices were already experiencing declines in a variety of usage “metrics,” including the number of transactions per veterinarian, the number of new and active clients, total visits to veterinary clinics and visits per pet, and the percentage of households with pets making visits to their veterinarians. These emerging realities have forced many veterinary practices to increase fees and charges – with a resulting “sticker shock” among clients, further exacerbating the decline in visits (Bayer Report). These issues were discussed by presenter Karen Felsted (see page 9).

With respect to the academic aspect of the profession, state support for veterinary education at the nation’s 28 veterinary medical colleges has been shrinking since reaching its peak in the mid-1970s. This economic fact of life has caused student tuition to grow into an ever-larger share of the revenue stream for veterinary colleges. On the expenditure side, costs are increasing faster across the board than overall revenue, including the costs of general operations, new faculty and staff, research support and infrastructure, technology, facilities, and clinical training. Dr. Trevor Ames examined these challenges in his presentation (page 8).

Presenter Denise Tumblin (page 11) noted that the average debt load for veterinary school graduates has been steadily rising and stands, today, at approximately $130,000 per graduate nationally — even higher at Ohio State. More than half of all graduates enter private practice.
Though starting salaries for these new veterinarians can average as high as $70,000, net monthly income after the deduction of living expenses – including steep student loan payments – often falls into a range that is modest at best. Most college students are experiencing increasing debt, and graduate and professional students are especially vulnerable as they have higher tuition rates than undergraduates.

Alan Kelly examined global issues in his presentation (page 12). Evolving societal needs in areas such as food safety and security, agribusiness, public health care, animal- and food-related diseases, environmental health, disaster response, and disease surveillance will present significant challenges for world leaders in the decades to come. Many of these challenges are being driven by unparalleled growth in the world’s population. Estimates suggest that by 2050, the earth’s population will grow to 9.2 billion, requiring a 50 percent increase in demand for food from animal protein sources. At the same time, this rapidly growing population also enjoys pet ownership, and the number of pets will continue to increase worldwide. Veterinary medicine can and must play a role in each of these evolving challenges.

Scott Anderson, president and chief executive officer of Patterson Companies, Inc., offered an inspiring vision of how the veterinary medical profession can address its financial future in his keynote remarks on the first evening of Focus-Forward Weekend.

He suggested, for example, that veterinary practitioners think in terms of “positive sum competition” within their profession, rather than “zero sum competition,” the latter meaning that when someone wins, another loses. Anderson observed that veterinary medicine offers many opportunities to be unique, many avenues to be successful, and many ways to “win.”

Anderson envisioned an economic future for the profession that is full of encouraging signs and ripe opportunities. He noted that members of the baby boom generation are “huge pet owners,” and that the human-animal bond has never been stronger. He urged attendees to embrace preventive care and pet wellness programs in the same way that the dental profession capitalized on the “fluoride revolution” with a promotional campaign that encouraged more regular visits to the dentist. Patterson suggested that conference participants should think broadly in terms of areas for new partnerships, and pointed to the pharmaceutical industry as one brimming with possibility.

Finally, he challenged the veterinary profession – and the Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine, specifically – to become leaders in society. “It is always best to be the leader, even if that can be difficult at times,” he said.

The themes Patterson touched on during his remarks resonated throughout the two days of Focus-Forward Weekend 2011 that followed. His remarks offered a realistic yet optimistic view of how veterinary medicine can transform the fiscal challenges that lie ahead into opportunities for a strong and bright financial future.
Overview

Focus-Forward Weekend 2011
The Financial Future of Veterinary Medicine

Conference Overview and Process
The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine held its second Focus-Forward Weekend in Columbus on July 21–23, 2011. The conference kicked off on Thursday evening, July 21, with a reception, dinner, and keynote remarks by Scott P. Anderson, president and chief executive officer of Patterson Companies, Inc. Following were two days of thoughtful, provocative discussions arranged around four topics at the heart of the current and future financial state of the veterinary profession.

More than 165 individuals representing a variety of interests in veterinary medicine participated in the three-day conference. They represented the following categories (percentages are rounded):

- Faculty (31%)
- Staff (18%)
- Students (14%)
- Industry (14%)
- Private practitioners (11%)
- Nonprofit (5%)
- Clients/donors (5%)
- Government (3%)

Focus-Forward Weekend 2011 was driven by four primary objectives:
- Review and explore the critical economic issues facing the college and profession;
- Generate ideas about how to respond to these issues;
- Recommend actions for the Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine that will position it for success in this changing economic environment; and
- Integrate these recommendations and ideas into the college’s planning and mission.
All plenary sessions were facilitated by Daniel J. Stone, principal, WholeSystem Consulting. Facilitated table group discussions followed each of the four Friday presentations, with the goal of generating fresh input on the topic at hand. A groupware computer system fed the highlights from these discussions in real time to a “theme team” of college staff members, whose mission was to distill the input into summaries that targeted major and recurring themes, as well as to capture “gem” ideas.

Discussion Topics
Four discussion topics were selected as most representative of the overarching forces and challenges impacting the financial underpinnings of the veterinary profession. Each conference attendee received a personalized conference schedule for the Friday sessions, designed to ensure that participants shared the day with as many different individuals as possible. A facilitated table discussion followed each presentation, addressing three questions of pertinence to the topic at hand.

At the Saturday wrap-up session, four rounds of table discussions took place, with participants being asked to consider lists of primary recommendations distilled by the “theme team” for each of the four discussion topics. Participants then voted by electronic keypad on their top three preferred recommendations for each topic, based on the following criteria:

• The likelihood that the proposed action will actually address the issue;
• The potential for the action to be implemented and then be successful; and
• The relative cost/benefit of the proposed action.

Following the voting, attendees participated in a final set of table discussions to identify any additional strategies for the College of Veterinary Medicine that had not previously been mentioned or considered. Each table was asked to offer one or two such strategies.

Finally, attendees used keypad voting to evaluate the conference itself. Focus-Forward Weekend 2011 adjourned promptly at noon. For a complete list of themes and ideas generated during the discussions, please go to vet.osu.edu/focus_forward.
Conference Session

Construction New Business Models for Veterinary Education and the College of Veterinary Medicine
Dr. Trevor R. Ames, Dean
University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine

Overview
A dramatic paradigm shift in the financial structure of public land grant universities has occurred, characterized primarily by shrinking financial support from state governments and the emergence of tuition as a major revenue stream. Revenue reductions are exacerbated by increasing costs in almost all areas of higher education. Declining state support has resulted in dramatic increases in tuition, increased emphasis on income generation, and compromised discovery of new knowledge and scientific breakthroughs. Higher education is even viewed by some as a private rather than public good, with benefits accruing to the student rather than to society at large. This paradigm shift has had a direct impact on colleges of veterinary medicine such as those at the University of Minnesota and The Ohio State University, two of the three largest veterinary colleges in the nation. The highlights from Dean Ames’ presentation about the University of Minnesota reflect events and situations at all veterinary colleges in the U.S.

Highlights of Presentation
Clinical income at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine today represents 30 percent of overall funding, followed by sponsored research (20 percent), state funding (19 percent), and tuition (16 percent).

Diminished state support has had significant impacts on Minnesota’s veterinary college, including faculty and staff reductions, delayed faculty hires, postponed equipment purchases and facility improvements, less research support, and more emphasis on revenue generation, including increased tuition, salary savings, and external sales.

Specific financial challenges now facing land grant veterinary colleges include the need to reassess the operation of their teaching hospitals, medical clinics, and diagnostic laboratories; new strains on the capacity to deliver extension and continuing education programs; and pressure in meeting the applied research needs of livestock stakeholders.

Other challenges in operating veterinary teaching hospitals and medical clinics involve increasing competition from the private sector, the use of students as a labor force, meeting specialty board standards, growing demand for “practice-ready graduates,” and the “primary care versus specialty care” debate.

Possible financial solutions for veterinary colleges include cost reductions through such actions as performance management of faculty and staff and elimination of low-revenue services at clinics and laboratories. New revenue generation options could consist of increased grant submissions, awards, royalty income, and external partnerships. Other options might involve increased philanthropy support, enhanced pricing structures, and rebranding/increased marketing of available services.
Top Participant Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share teaching resources</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market the VMC in new ways</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate best management practices</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop alumni attachment</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiate CVMs (e.g. focus on One Health, Oncology, Food Animal, etc.)</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused faculty appointments</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness program</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pet insurance program for Ohio State</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conference Session

**Improving Business Success for Private Practice**

*Karen E. Felsted, Chief Executive Officer*

*National Commission on Veterinary Economic Issues*

Overview

Studies by various respected organizations* confirm that many veterinary care usage metrics are declining – and were doing so even before the economy went into recession. Despite a general increase in the number of pets, other metrics have receded, including transactions, new and active clients, and total veterinary visits. Factors causing this decline include the recession, fragmentation of veterinary services, abundant Internet information, “feline resistance” (cat owners simply not seeking care) and “sticker shock” over the increased fees most practices have instituted. A recent study also found that the profitability of veterinary practices lags that of other small businesses, including CPAs, chiropractors, dental and optometry offices, family doctors, and physical and occupational therapists. Broad recommendations to address these issues from professional veterinary organizations include better marketing and use of social media, improved education on why pet exams are important, improved management practices, more strategic pricing, payment options, and wellness plans.

*Information included in this section comes from sources that include the AAHA Financial & Productivity Pulsepoints/JAVMA/AVMA U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics; AAHA Veterinary Fee Reference/NCVEI/BVCUS; 2010 AAHA State of the Industry Report; Bayer Veterinary Care Usage Study; Veterinary Economics 2009 State of the Industry Report; 2009 Nicholson Kovac Veterinarian New Media Usage Study; and AVMA-Pfizer Business Practice Study.*
Highlights of Presentation

Large numbers of pets are not receiving basic care. A 2006 study showed that nearly 24 percent of pet-owning households spent zero dollars on care, and nearly 51 percent spent less than $199 annually for veterinary care. Net patient visits have declined 17 percent, while practice revenue rose by just 3.1 percent overall in 2010 versus 2009. Prior to the recession, practice revenues had increased on a scale of 7 percent to 13 percent.

Pet owners have more options today in caring for their pets. The number of pet store clinics is on the rise, as are specialty practices, mobile “parking lot” clinics, shelters, and subsidized care.

Nearly 40 percent of pet owners first check for information online if their pets are sick or injured.

Potential responses to these issues by veterinarians could include the development of a mantra similar to the “twice-a-year dental cleaning” so effectively promoted by dentistry. It is important for doctors and staff to tell the same story to clients. Veterinarians also must be sensitive to “sticker shock” concerns of their clients; a majority of clients have reported that veterinary costs have grown to be much higher than they had expected.

Veterinarians are taking a variety of actions to improve their profitability. Some 95 percent of all practices have raised fees. Other actions include better inventory management, reduced expenses, new services, and, to a lesser extent, attendance at management seminars, increased marketing, and the use of practice management consultants.

Top Participant Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business practice training</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student tracking</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private insurance plan</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion by pharma, etc.</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer immersion project</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational culture</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing the Ohio State veterinary graduate</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College-owned community practice</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conference Session

Addressing Student Debt and Veterinary Medicine Marketability Issues
Denise L. Tumblin, Owner
Wutchiett Tumblin and Associates

Overview

Incoming veterinary students face a host of challenges as they begin their studies, including amassing the required knowledge of their future profession, as well as tuition costs, eventual debt load, and relatively low salaries within the broad medical profession. The national average student debt now stands at approximately $130,000. A 2011 study conducted by Wutchiett Tumblin and Associates found that, despite starting salaries of $65,000 to $70,000, new veterinarians can net as low as $1,200 in monthly income. The same study also identified challenges facing veterinary teaching hospitals, including cost and resource management, budget cuts, attracting and retaining faculty, the number of student applicants, and declining caseloads. The study also identified challenges facing veterinary practices, including the mentoring of new graduates, concerns about the skills of new graduates, cost of quality care, client perception of the value of veterinary services, and declining client visits. Potential solutions could consist of: for students, being more frugal, pursuing more real-world experiences, and honing communications skills; for new graduates, building relationships, pursuing more learning opportunities, and honing staff utilization skills; for teaching hospitals, sharing education resources, teaching better business practices and financial literacy, and educating the public; and for veterinary practices, better mentoring of associates, providing learning opportunities, and improving profits and salaries.

Highlights of Presentation

The Wutchiett Tumblin survey found that veterinary students identified community involvement, practice ownership, becoming a mentor for others, and development of a specialized medical interest to be the most important aspects in their career planning.

The vast majority of veterinary students plan to join companion animal or mixed-animal practices. Far fewer numbers are targeting exclusively equine, food animal, exotics, and specialty practices.

Student respondents indicated that, in envisioning their first three months on the job, they are most apprehensive by far about medical errors. Other top concerns include developing patient treatment plans and communicating effectively with clients.

Pay and benefits, the level and extent of medical care, and the presence of ethical standards were the top attributes students named in choosing a veterinary practice.

When asked what would be most important to them if they spent a day observing a prospective practice, students by a wide margin named practice environment, standards of care, and education and mentoring as their top three choices.
### Top Participant Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decrease DVM training years</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease pre-veterinary years</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase scholarships</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate with other colleges</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt repayment by prospective employers</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase personal finance education</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repayment for serving under-served communities</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated business income for scholarships</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conference Session

**Creating New Economic Opportunities**  
**Alan Kelly, Former Dean**  
**University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine**

**Overview**

Global food security – defined as the provision of an abundant, affordable, available, and nutritious food supply – is an area of increasing importance as the world’s population continues to grow, especially in the developing nations of India and China and the continent of Africa. This challenge, though quite large, presents significant opportunities – and responsibilities – for the veterinary medical profession. It is made even more acute by the estimate that world population will grow from its present-day 6.9 billion to 9.2 billion by 2050, with more than 70 percent of the population living in cities by then. Some experts believe that the global food supply will be the “livestock challenge” of the 21st century. To meet the demand worldwide, traditional and organic farming simply will not be enough, meaning that large-scale farming will come to predominate. And, with available land for farming diminishing, the proximate concentration of people and food animals poses one of the most serious environmental and public health challenges in the coming decades. The U.S. will be called upon to build veterinary capacity to help meet this challenge in areas such as production medicine, disease control, bio-security, livestock production, and infrastructure development. Moreover, veterinary medicine must become more involved in helping to sustainably increase the efficiency of food production worldwide.
**Highlights of Presentation**

The number of undernourished people in the world today is estimated at approximately 200 million.

Almost all of the forecast global population growth in the next half century, some 2.3 billion, will be in cities of the developing world, where urbanization is proceeding at unprecedented rates.

In Asia, young people are migrating to cities in search of opportunities; in Africa, people are pushed there because the land simply can no longer support them.

Veterinary medicine has large opportunities and responsibilities regarding the global food supply and should be more involved in helping to sustainably increase the efficiency of food production worldwide.

The U.S. veterinary profession must assist developing nations in becoming more committed to aid projects and will likely need to help in the building of veterinary capacity.

Veterinarians must participate in purpose-driven, multidisciplinary research projects focused on the development of a sustainable supply of food.

**Top Participant Recommendations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incentive new career areas</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined programs in new areas</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate program for global health or agribusiness</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better market value of DVMs</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner to build/fund programs</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global health exposure</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slots for One Health</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-tool vets post-graduation</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New program areas</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased leadership, political, government, fund-raising skills</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional Strategies

Overview
At the Saturday session, attendees were asked to consider other possible strategies for The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine that had not been specifically mentioned during the conference. Referred to as “BHAG” strategies – Big Hairy Audacious Goals – the ideas produced by participants are listed below in their entirety. Each idea will be given its “day in court” as part of the follow-up to the conference.

Other Recommendations
Commercialize our intellectual property, both from the perspective of marketing our ideas and creating a think tank to develop ideas.

Examine research models in higher education.

Evaluate the efficacy of the Veterinary Medical Center having a distributive model of services – which services can be moved off-site, primary and tertiary care, etc.

Develop new economic models for graduates: recruit a more diverse applicant pool; change admission requirements; provide more sponsorship of students; include more inner city, international, and other ethnically diverse students in the pipeline.

Conduct a comprehensive, itemized analysis of the real cost of educating a veterinary student and use this as a basis for setting tuition and aligning with cost.

Consider curricular revision, including pre-vet and admission requirements.

Change our recruiting strategy to target populations that have an interest in agribusiness, public health, engineering, and business.

Form an endowment to provide student loans at a lower rate.

Allow the market to speak – in other words, allow tuition costs, student debt load, and fees to go where the market drives them. This will enable the calculation of the real cost of educating a student and allocating faculty accordingly.

Become a “bank” that makes loans to students using differential interest rates.

Become the inverse of Ross University: establish an urban facility with a large small-animal practice and a rural facility with a large-animal practice. Let others deliver the first three years of veterinary education and concentrate just on clinical teaching, learning, and experience.

Step back and re-examine our corporate approach, products, marketability, return on investment, and ability to drive demand for veterinary services.

Offer an undergraduate degree or minor in veterinary medicine.

Bring colleges of veterinary medicine together and propose a tax on pet products that could support the veterinary profession.

Restructure the college into a research institute and school of veterinary medicine and practice, to separate costs and responsibilities.

Identify how the college can become a leader in unifying the profession.

Increase partnerships with other colleges so the fourth year of one program is the first year of another – this will reduce a student’s time in school and enhance the collaborative process.
Observations by Dean Lonnie King
September 2011

Just as I indicated in this space in our 2010 Conference Proceedings document, it is too early to make definitive statements on how we will move forward following this year’s conference. I do feel safe in saying, however, that we have successfully branded Focus-Forward Weekend as a meaningful, worthwhile visioning and planning tool. My sense is that this conference will return in future summers to examine additional areas of high importance to our profession. For now, our key task is to carefully review every idea that was put forth during Focus-Forward Weekend 2011 so we can begin to determine our next steps at the college. Participants at Focus Forward have given us superb ideas and insights that will be used in the strategic planning and operations of the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Here are my initial observations about what took place during our conference in July:

Attendees resoundingly liked what they saw and heard at Focus-Forward Weekend 2011. Ninety-one percent agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with conference outcomes, with the same percentage agreeing that the design and facilitation of the conference enabled them to be productive. And 90 percent of attendees felt stimulated and enriched by their participation.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, “only” 65 percent of respondents felt the conference will have a positive impact for the college (29 percent were neutral). I appreciate the honesty and candor of those in attendance. I have certainly attended meetings, seminars, and conferences designed to “envision the future,” only to see the recommended next steps never materialize. Let me assure you that this will not happen with our Focus-Forward Weekends.

Attendees strongly endorsed our new format – using small discussion groups that were hard-wired to a central “theme team.” Ideas were integrated and merged into larger themes and then further discussed and voted on to establish priorities and concurrence of recommendations. For each of our four economic topics, approximately 150 to 170 ideas were generated and then, in real time, consolidated into critical themes. We have also saved all of these ideas and perspectives in a large database for further review and reflection.

As was the case in 2010, attendees were quite clear in identifying their most preferred next steps in each of our four discussion areas in 2011. In all four cases, we saw strong consensus on the top three or four recommendations proposed by attendees, with a fair-to-sizable gap between those and the other recommendations considered during each session. This fact confers a high degree of confidence that we can move forward in the most appropriate and broadly supported ways possible.