

## Setting Priorities

*By Herb Whiteley*

What are you going to do?

Imagine you are in my shoes. You have a faculty that includes some of the best minds in the world, an outstanding cadre of professional and graduate students, and an array of services that meet real needs in society.

But resources—time, money, space—are limited. Faculty specialists are difficult to recruit. Every year a portion of your state funding must be returned to fund campus initiatives and salary increases.

Yet every year University administration asks you to identify your priorities: What are you going to do? And this critical corollary: What are you *not* going to do?

Fortunately, a planning team of College leaders confers to set priorities, and there is no lack of exciting initiatives we would like to pursue.

Here are the Top Five priorities for the College:

1. *Ensure the integrity and viability of the DVM program.*

This includes seeing that the veterinary curriculum undergoes a thorough review and revision as well as securing new funding sources for programs and faculty.

2. *Translational biomedical research.*

Our research forte lies in health advances that benefit people, animals, and the environment. To promote this goal we must hire faculty engaged in basic and applied (clinical) research activities—and recruit top graduate students—to our

programs in infectious disease, reproductive biology, environmental toxicology, conservation medicine, oncology, orthopedic biology, and endocrinology. Our teaching hospital and diagnostic laboratory play crucial roles in advancing this work.

3. *Chicago Center for Veterinary Medicine.*

Chicago is the population center of our state, where most of our alumni are, where leading biomedical research centers are, and where a large number of animal owners, potential donors, and prospective students are. Our long-term growth depends on tapping into these resources.

4. *Facilities.*

We have mapped out our facilities needs to support our growth over the next 20 years. New clinical and teaching facilities are vital to helping us achieve our vision of excellence.

5. *Center for One Medicine.*

We are proposing a new University-wide program that would help prepare society to address the animal and human dimensions of emerging public health issues, such as avian influenza and anti-microbial resistance.

To focus available resources on these priorities, there are other activities we must *stop* doing. After much deliberation, we have decided to accept the recommendation, issued recently by the Provost's external task force, to consolidate our College's beef operations at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center with that of the College of

Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) and to discontinue the outdoor swine production program.

Our Urbana research farm facilities will become our headquarters for food animal teaching and research, with a particular research focus on infectious diseases such as PRRS, the most significant disease threat plaguing U.S. pork producers.

The University's program at Dixon Springs will continue to operate under the direction of the College of ACES, and veterinary students will continue to have educational opportunities at Dixon Springs and other animal facilities throughout the state.

Although we must make some difficult trade-offs, I hope you share my enthusiasm for the initiatives we have identified as our optimal course to promote excellence and attain national and international prominence. We need your involvement to succeed.

I welcome your feedback at [dean@cvm.uicu.edu](mailto:dean@cvm.uicu.edu).