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Looking for Leadership: The Search for a New Dean Continues

BONNIE SMITH[†]

On July 1, 2000, Dr. Richard Ross stepped down from his duties as dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine to fill his new role as dean of the College of Agriculture here at Iowa State University. Since October 1, Dr. Norman Cheville, formerly head of the Department of Veterinary Pathology, has been serving as interim dean of the college. Meanwhile, the university began its search for the right person to lead the College of Veterinary Medicine into the 21st century.

The process began in November with the formation of a search committee. Committee members were chosen from the many constituent groups which have a vested interest in the College of Veterinary Medicine. The groups include the university administration, other colleges within the university, practitioners, state and federal government agencies, and the livestock industry, as well as the faculty, staff, and students of the vet school. The committee is chaired by James Bloedel, Vice Provost for Research and Advanced Studies at ISU.

One of the committee's first steps was to decide what qualities it was looking for in a new dean and from these, formulate a position description that communicates these issues. Prerequisite for the position are a DVM or equivalent degree and the ability to hold a tenured professorship in one of the college's departments. The qualified applicant must also have a distinguished record of scholarly accomplishments, a commitment to diversity, and a vision for the three missions of a land-grant university: research, teaching, and outreach. Other qualities that the committee was looking for included energy, creativity, strong leadership, administrative experience, and the ability to communicate effectively with all types of people.

In short, the new dean must be a well-rounded person who is comfortable in all the myriad aspects of veterinary medicine-by no

means an easy assignment. The position of dean is stressful, time consuming, and very demanding. Our school, as well as our profession, is at a critical time of change and advancement. The new dean will have the task of leading us through that transition so that ISU CVM remains one of the top veterinary schools in the country.

Finding a candidate that will please everyone is extremely difficult. Each group of stakeholders wants a dean that will support their particular interests. The search committee's challenge is not only to find the most qualified candidate, but also to convince that candidate that Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine is the best place to work.

From the beginning, the committee agreed that the search needed to be conducted in a timely and efficient manner. After diligently seeking nominations and applications from around the country and the world, the committee began reviewing the applicants on January 1, 2001. After scrutinizing the applicants' records on paper, calling references, and meeting for preliminary interviews in Des Moines, the search committee selected finalists. The finalists were each invited to Ames for a two and a half day campus visit and interview. Although they can be quite hectic and stressful, these visits give the candidates a chance to become better acquainted with Ames, Iowa State University, and the College of Veterinary Medicine, and to meet with the many different groups of stakeholders. As the search committee and others are evaluating the candidates, the candidates are also evaluating Iowa State as a place where they would like to live and work.

At press time, the results of the search have not been released. The committee has submitted a recommendation to the provost, who will make a final decision. Although we don't know yet who the next dean will be, we continue to look forward to the future of our school with confidence and eager anticipation of where our next leader will take us. ♦

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