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Editorial

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Editorial

Is the graduating veterinarian the well rounded professional person that he should be? Before we can answer this, we must consider what the qualities of a professional person are. Webster's dictionary states that medicine, along with theology and law, make up the three learned professions. Is the mastering or comprehension of only veterinary medical information enough to qualify an individual as a member of a learned profession? Learned, which means well informed, certainly means more than a highly specialized knowledge of one field. This must be kept in mind by all concerned with the development of our students, and every effort must be made to improve situations which hinder this development.

One important situation to consider is the fact that from the time a student enters college as a pre-veterinary student he is involved in the race for the almighty gradepoint. This continues for the next six years. A student often finds that in order to keep up the pace he must forego many of the broadening experiences available in a university community and essential for well-rounded development. Is the value of the gradepoint itself so great that it should be emphasized to the extent that it is? Many people seem to consider grades as an end in themselves rather than as the measuring device for which they are designed. Certainly it must be recognized that a measuring device of this type is needed to determine who should be admitted to a college of veterinary medicine. This measuring device is of value in evaluating students within the college as long as it is kept in the proper perspective and is truly an indication of the student knowledge, intelligence, and industriousness.

Once the student is in a veterinary school he should meet scholastic standards that are consistent with his becoming a good veterinarian. The student of higher than minimum abilities should be encouraged to make use of these abilities both scholastically and in any manner he feels will best prepare him for becoming a learned professional man. Educators at many schools have recognized the need for such a broadened education by developing honors programs which allow a student to broaden his education at his own pace once he has met certain scholastic standards. Most of these programs allow the student a reasonable drop in grade-point, with the realization that the broadened education is more valuable than the high grades. The situation in a veterinary school somewhat parallels this. We have a select group of students who, after proving their ability, should be encouraged to take part in additional educational experiences. Some of these are: further course work, honors programs, music, intercollegiate and intramural sports, church activities, outside reading, JAVMA activities, the ISU Veterinarian, university theatrical productions, and student government. Many of our students feel they do not have time to do these things when they consider the present emphasis on grade-point. When this happens the purpose of graduating learned professional men is defeated.

The students themselves can do much to broaden their education. This would involve a critical self-evaluation in two aspects. One area is the student's attitude towards his studies. He should study diligently to gain as much medical knowledge as he can in the time he spends studying. However, if he finds he is studying for the sake of high grades rather than knowledge, he should start allotting time for more broadening endeavors. The student should also consider what he does with his spare time. Any time taken from studying should be used for activities which add to his development as a complete person. This certainly does not condone the attitude of some students who rationalize their lack of ambition in studying with the often heard statement that grades aren't everything, or those who over-emphasize activities at the expense of sound veterinary training.

The instructors in a professional school can also do much as individuals to further the development of the students. First of all, it is necessary for each instructor to evaluate the demands that he makes upon the students. He must expect the students to work hard in attaining the necessary medical knowledge. A
student expects to be challenged in this respect when entering a professional school. However, the instructor must consider whether the challenge presented to the student is actually adding to his knowledge or whether it is just time consuming busy work. This time could be used in many other ways to develop the student. It is also the responsibility of the instructor to guide and actually encourage the students as a group or as individuals to broaden their education.

The college as a whole can also do much to further the development of its students. The pre-veterinary curriculum should be evaluated to give the student the best combination of courses from outside the college. The 4 year veterinary curriculum should also be evaluated to determine if it is keeping up with modern trends in medical education. Steps should also be taken to eliminate the excess emphasis which is often placed on grades. A possible solution is a pass-fail and pass with honors system for at least the last two years of veterinary school. This would remove the pressure of grades, encourage and permit a broadened education, allow for adequate evaluation of each student, and permit continued high performance by students of above average ability.

It will take constant effort by all concerned to prepare our students for the challenges they will face after graduation. As our profession develops, its members will find themselves working in areas of service that are new or becoming much more important than in the past. Regardless of what a graduate does, the people of the community will consider him, with a minimum of six years of college training, as being well educated and able to offer services to his community extending well beyond veterinary medicine in its strictest sense. If the students and faculty will take part in and encourage the development of a well rounded education, the veterinarian will be better able to fulfill his role as a learned professional man in his community and also enrich his personal life.

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