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Consultants to Associations

Summit on Equine Veterinary Education

October 11, 2007 – Cincinnati, Ohio

Background

Nationally recognized academicians and private practitioners (Appendix A) were brought together by the American Association of Equine Practitioners for a one day workshop for the purpose of initiating a dialogue and partnership between academic institutions and private equine practitioners in addressing key issues related to the recruitment, education and retention of equine veterinarians.

Specific Outcomes Sought

1. Agree on how to partner to attract the right candidates to apply to veterinary medical schools (that want to and will enter equine practice), how to effectively admit qualified applicants with an interest in pursuing a career in equine veterinary medicine, and how to recruit the right students into the equine veterinary profession.
2. Agree on how to partner to deliver the core knowledge, skills and competencies that new graduates need to possess to become effective and successful equine veterinary practitioners.
3. Agree on how to partner to address issues related to an equine practitioner's work-life balance, quality of life, job satisfaction and other issues that impact retention in the equine veterinary profession.

Summit Recommendations

Breakout group discussions were used to allow each topic to be thoroughly discussed and recommendations were developed. All breakout group recommendations were then vetted through full group discussions that included all Summit participants. Significantly, consensus was achieved on a number of general and specific points. Participants were clear in their hope and expectation that action plans will be initiated by appropriate organizations, and that partnerships will be developed between academia and practitioners to assure that these recommendations are addressed in a spirit of cooperation and with a sense of urgency.

Participants agreed on the following observations and recommendations to the following five key questions that address the objectives of this Summit.

I. How do we attract the right type of students and nurture/mentor them appropriately for admission into veterinary colleges/schools?

- A. Who are the best candidates? They have the following characteristics:
 - Passion for science
 - Passion for animals (horses)
 - Are good with their hands
 - Ambition
 - Want an outdoor work culture
 - Have good people skills
 - High GPA, although some of the best practitioners don't have the highest GPAs.We need to identify them early!

- B. Where do we find the best candidates? Create outreach programs with:
- Racetracks
 - Pony Clubs
 - 4-H; FFA, agricultural clubs
 - Through better partnerships, such as veterinary colleges and agriculture departments
 - Second career people, including veterinary technicians

II. How do we attract the right type of students and maintain their interest in entering the equine veterinary profession?

- A. We need better marketing strategies.
- AAEP should create a standing committee
 - Develop a general strategy for marketing equine practice
 - Develop partnerships among schools, state associations, clubs, etc.
 - Educate and engage faculty members
 - Identify the needs of universities, students and candidates
 - Promote the profession through undergraduate and high school equine programs
 - Promote practice opportunities and career diversity
 - Create regional opportunities for programs for 1st and 2nd year students (OEPS – regional level)
 - Expose them to practice opportunities and career diversity
 - Dispel myths (long hours, life style and low pay)
 - Identify effective practitioners as speakers – good externship programs
 - Join the Herd for student chapter members
 - Need practitioner participation
 - Use advisors to create liaisons with practitioners and conduct practice tours
 - Improve awareness of AAEP and its Mission Statement
 - Call upon practice groups to engage students
 - Look at other professions with similar issues
- B. We need better and earlier mentoring programs.
- Promote and expand the Shadow a Vet program; Vet-2-Vet program.
 - Refine and expand mentoring programs (for example to include students).
 - Identify the candidates early; start mentoring before and as enter undergraduate school
- C. Find out why current practitioners chose equine practice and when he/she made this decision.
- D. AAEP should document the annual need for equine veterinarians (job opportunities, etc.), as well as attrition from the profession.
- University administration needs to see data and be convinced that there is a shortage of and increased need for equine veterinarians.
- E. Be “Myth Busters” – address the misconceptions about long hours, low pay and poor lifestyle associated with equine practice. Actively dispel these myths utilizing contemporary communication tools and appropriate marketing strategies.
- F. AAEP should provide incentives and support to student advisors and potentially other faculty leaders.
- G. Provide early and regular OEPS experiences – locally and beyond.
- H. Provide vertical integration of the curriculum.

- I. Increase practice involvement in the curriculum, especially to provide positive, fun activities for students.
 - Need effective role models for students while in school.
 - What makes a good role model?
- J. Increase involvement of practitioners in SCAAEP (student chapters).
- K. Create more hands on experiences of basic procedures.
- L. Generate and distribute demographic data to guide and attract students.
- M. Identify students earlier in their high school through undergraduate education with potential interest in equine practice and focus efforts on them.
- N. AAEP needs to support AAVMC efforts in veterinary manpower initiatives.
- O. Need to expose students to “enlightened practices” vs. practices that are being less than successful in today’s environment.

III. What can/should academic institutions do to modify their curriculum or the manner in which it is delivered?

Participants were in agreement that schools do a good job of teaching students and instilling knowledge, but that there is a need to address concerns that students frequently graduate lacking hands on skills that practitioners expect of new graduates. With this in mind, participants agreed on the following observations and recommendations.

- A. The list of core competencies is excellent.
Should be refined and then shared with veterinary schools, practitioners, students.
- B. Schools are doing a good job. Students are well trained, but there are some gaps at some schools, such as reproduction and practice management/business..
- C. Assure that all schools have flexibility in their curriculum to allow students to go outside of the school to assure that they can develop core competencies.
- D. Develop a master database of schools and practices and what they have to offer in terms of student learning opportunities.
- E. There is a need for more husbandry training due to less animal savvy.
- F. Develop and objectively evaluate a clinical assessment of competency.
- G. The core knowledge taught is acceptable. However, it would be useful to create a task force of university representatives and practitioner representatives that objectively evaluates the core knowledge and competency taught, and objectively reviews how and at what level clinical assessment of competency is evaluated.
- H. Integrate practice and the university curriculum more.
- I. Identify centers for teaching opportunities where students can be taught clinical skills where such opportunities do not exist at their school. (These centers may eventually evolve into centers of excellence for specific procedures.)

- J. Because of the loss of teaching herds, explore teaching opportunities at retirement facilities and prisons.
- K. Revisit the Pew Report released several years ago in terms of its recommendations related to educational programs and the teaching of students. Also, look at the Foresight Analysis.
- L. Look at new technologies that can be employed for providing education to students. For example, develop of an excellent teaching module at one university that can be made available to all students nationwide.

IV. What type of partnerships are needed and can be developed between academic institutions and private practitioners to help in the development of core competencies of new graduates, and how can we facilitate such partnerships?

- A. Distribute AAEP core competencies list to colleges of veterinary medicine, students and practitioners. Encourage schools to adopt these core competencies and to assess students against them. AAEP needs to put in place a system for regularly refining the list and regularly providing it to schools, faculty, students and practitioners. Require/encourage students to keep logs of what they have learned so that they know what skills they are lacking when compared to the core competencies. University departments should do regular self-assessments to determine how well they are meeting the needs of teaching core competencies.
- B. Practitioners should better communicate to schools and students what their expectations are with respect to the ability of new graduates to perform in practice.
- C. Universities should leverage strengths and develop opportunities with private practices. There is a need to access more animals and to meet learning needs of students not filled by faculty in all cases.
- D. Schools should promote externships in private practice.
- E. Create a task force to market externships to practices and formulate guidelines.
- F. Created "Guided Preceptorships" (such as at Washington State University) where there is a contract with practitioners, where evaluation mechanisms are in place, and where adjunct professor status is given to preceptors.
- G. Get practitioners into veterinary schools for weekly rounds. Create opportunities for virtual rounds. Encourage students to go to practices for rounds.
- H. Create an online system for interns to share case reports.
- I. AAEP should serve as a clearinghouse for unique learning opportunities (e.g. Bureau of Land Management, Rescue Sanctuaries) and should expand offering of short courses.
- J. With all the need for new information that is necessary for schools to teach, it seems increasingly necessary for students to spend time beyond the four year curriculum to develop hands on skills in all areas of practice.

V. *How can/do we partner to address issues related to an equine practitioner's work-life balance, quality of life, job satisfaction and other issues that impact retention in the equine veterinary profession?*

- A. There was concern among some participants as to whether the perception of a decline of practitioners in the profession of equine veterinary medicine is real or only a perception. If this is true, there seems to be only anecdotal evidence as to why this is occurring. Is the issue (if real) one of a lack of interest in the profession by new students or a problem of new practitioners not remaining in the profession after 3-5 years of practice? Is there an issue of job dissatisfaction? There was agreement that it would be valuable to gather more hard data to support or refute the premise, and if problems exist, to know more accurately what they are. If action is required, good objective information will also help to develop action steps that truly address the causes.
- B. There is a negative perception by students regarding quality of life, long work hours and earning potential that does need to be addressed. Life style concerns can often be a sense of lack of control over time and/or earning potential. In addition to other strategies for addressing this previously discussed, students should be surveyed regarding their professional practice expectations. In addition, survey all those who hosted internships to see if there is a problem, and if so, what those problems are.
- C. Need good workforce (supply and demand) data to know what the problems are now and what they are likely to be in the future.
- D. Continuous mentoring after graduation and into practice is critically important for retention in the profession.
- E. Promote "enlightened" practices as the best way to have a successful and personally and financially rewarding professional practice.

VI. Final Recommendations

Although all recommendations offered in this report are considered important, participants identified the following seven action steps to be taken as soon as possible.

Of highest priority:

1. Gather data to determine if people are truly leaving the profession. If so, gather data as to why they are leaving, in what numbers they are leaving, and in what numbers new practitioners are moving into the profession.
2. Refine the list of core competencies; distribute them to all school faculty and administrators, students, practitioners and other equine organizations.
3. Implement a "Myth Busting" program. Develop and implement a program that is based on facts, employs contemporary marketing expertise, and aggressively markets this information to students, faculty and all others who impact the profession.

Important, but of less priority in terms of urgency:

4. Implement programs that provide earlier and more robust mentoring programs at all levels.
5. Implement programs that increase early exposure to equine practice.
6. Increase support from AAEP to student advisors.

7. Identify potential pools of applicants who are excellent prospects for career in the profession.

VII. The Value of the Partnership

The Summit concluded with agreement that the issues raised by the Summit are critically important to the profession of equine veterinary medicine. There were positive feelings that there currently exists a good relationship between academicians and practitioners, and that strengthening these relationship can only be beneficial to both parties, to students and to the profession. Toward that end, it was agreed that addressing the issues and taking the action steps proposed should be done with strong collaboration and continuing partnerships between academic institutjons and practitioners. Finally, it was agreed that AAEP is the most appropriate organization to take the lead in facilitating implementation of the recommendations resulting from this Summit, but that this in no way means that AAEP alone should shoulder the responsibility of implementing the recommendations put forth. As a facilitator, AAEP should continue to engage schools, faculty, administrators, students, practitioners and other organizations as action plans are developed and implemented.

Attachment: Appendix A – List of Participants

Appendix A
Participants in the AAEP Summit on Equine Veterinary Education

Academia	Practitioner	Staff	
Task Force Members (9)			Location
Anderson, Kathleen/TF Member			Practitioner, Equine Veterinary Care Sales Services, PC, Elkton MD
Berk, Jeff/TF Member			Practitioner, Ocala Equine Hospital, Ocala FL
Dwyer, Ann/TF Member			Practitioner, Genesee Valley Equine Clinic LLC, Scottsville NY
Green, Eleanor/TF Member/EC			University of Florida
LeBlanc, Michelle/TF Member			Practitioner, Rood and Riddle, Lexington KY
McCue, Pat/TF Member			Colorado State University
Moore, Rustin/TF CHAIR			Ohio State University
Shoemaker, Stuart/TF Member			Practitioner, Idaho Equine Hospital, Nampa ID
Wilson, Julie/TF Member			University of Minnesota
EC / Staff / Facilitator (9)			
Baker, Sally / STAFF			AAEP
Brokken, Tom / EC			Practitioner, Franklin & Brokken, Ft Lauderdale FL
Corey, Doug / EC			Practitioner, Associated Veterinary Clinic, Adams OR
Foley, David / STAFF			AAEP
Mitchell, Brad / STAFF			AAEP
Roberts, Mandy / STAFF			AAEP
Schlegel, Jack / FACILITATOR			Schlegel & Associates, Sarasota, FL
Stivers, Sue / STAFF			AAEP
Tucker-Kendall, Tip / STAFF			AAEP
Invitees (26)			
Bayly, Warwick			Washington State University
Bertone, Joe			Western University
Brown, Chris			Michigan State University
Clark, Andy			Practitioner, Hagyard Equine Medical Institute, Lexington KY
DeLorey, Mary			Practitioner, Kettle Falls WA
Grevemeyer, Bernard			Ross University
Grice, Amy			Practitioner, Rhinebeck Equine, Rhinebeck NY
Guglick, Mary Ann			St. Georges University
Haynes, Pete			Louisiana State University
Hubbell, John			Ohio State University
Huber, Mike			Oregon State University
Jackman, Brad			Practitioner, Pioneer Equine, Oakdale CA
Lofstedt, Jeanne			University of Prince Edward Island
Magnusson, Roger			Practitioner, La Grange KY
Moyer, Bill			Texas A&M University
Pascoe, John			University of California-Davis
Rees, Roger			Practitioner, South Valley Large Animal Clinic, South Jordan, UT
Sabo, Carol			Practitioner, Haymarket VA
Spike-Pierce, Deborah			Practitioner, Rood and Riddle, Lexington KY
Sweeney, Corinne			University of Pennsylvania
Taylor, Scott			Practitioner, Arizona Equine Medical & Surgical, Gilbert AZ
Thompson, Jim			University of Florida
Warner, Angie			Tufts University
White, Nat			Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine
White, Suzi			University of Georgia
Yvorchuk-St Jean, Kathleen			Ross University - 2nd from Ross (Ross will cover expenses.)