

learning experiences." Dean Valli reflected the same attitude, "There are no alternatives of equivalent teaching value." Clearly, after years of effort within the college and a more intense research effort in the past few months, this issue needed to be aired in the public forum in order to effect a lasting positive change in the curriculum.

Media Coverage

I can tell you *no one* at the college was pleased to see the *Chicago Tribune* front-page article, "Vet Students Oppose U. of I. Animal Killings" (1/4/00). To me, it represented a failure on the part of our college to respond appropriately to students' concerns for alternatives to the terminal use of animals in the veterinary curriculum; ironically, the reasonable and scientifically sound arguments of the conscientiously objecting vet students were reduced to a sensationalistic news article. To many faculty, administrators, and students, this story's representation of the labs was very upsetting.

What resulted, however, was a dozen years of progress in the span of ten days. On Jan. 14th, Dean Valli distributed a memo to the college detailing the events in progress at the college, including the suspension of the terminal animal labs, a halt on obtaining animals from Class B dealers, main campus allocation of funds for alternatives, the Courses and Curriculum Committee's sponsorship of an Animal Usage Policy allowing for conscientious objection in the veterinary curriculum, and a call for "zero-tolerance" of harassment. Dean Valli noted of the conscientious objectors, "Their efforts have played an important

role in the process of helping us reassess the best way to provide them with a quality education."

On-line articles and letters to the editor on this issue have been compiled at: <http://www.cvm.uiuc.edu/~aehill/animal.ue.html>.

College Policy Allows for Conscientious Objection

In February, with an overwhelming majority vote, the college faculty passed an Animal Usage Policy, which, for the first time, officially allows for student nonparticipation in "demonstrations or invasive procedures performed solely for instructional purposes which conclude with the death or euthanasia for the animal." This policy further states, "The instructor will provide alternatives that may be substituted for animal experiences for those students seeking alternatives." The passage of this college policy was an important step after years of effort on the part of multitudes of veterinary students seeking a more humane education. College faculty are being motivated to find noninvasive and non-terminal methods of training veterinary students without forfeiting the "hands-on experience" necessary to make skilled veterinarians.

Hands-on Experience

A common misconception of alternatives is that animal laboratories must be replaced only with computer programs or other technologies. Every veterinary student wants to gain as much hands-on experience as possible in vet school, so we faced some resentment from fellow students who felt their opportunity for hands-on experience had been taken

away by our efforts. On the contrary, many alternative labs in veterinary schools can and *do* incorporate live animals. For example, physiological principles can be demonstrated on dogs with noninvasive (e.g., ultrasound) and non-terminal (e.g., chemistry blood panels) techniques. The students gain hands-on experience, and the dogs survive the day.

In addition, students have several opportunities to gain valuable hands-on experience through volunteer programs: Community Practice Services with Dr. Kent Davis, the Wildlife Medical Clinic, Equine ICU, and an extension program with the local humane society. Junior year includes small animal surgery (entirely "alternative"), large animal surgery, clinical laboratory practice, and interaction with hospitalized animals. Fourth-year is 12 months of clinical rotations, as always. Clearly, concerns that Illinois students will graduate incompetent for lack of 18 hours (six 3-hour labs) of terminal animal labs are unfounded.

In Conclusion

All in all, we've discovered that our voices and actions can make a valuable impact on our profession, our education, and the treatment of animals. I encourage all veterinary students to get involved in these issues *now*. Find an issue that instills passion within you, do your research, and present your arguments scientifically and professionally. You will learn a lot about expressing yourself in a political world; you will hopefully avoid disillusionment in your pursuits; and you will definitely make a difference for the animals.

Tufts University Terminates Terminal Surgeries

In February, Tufts University, School of Veterinary Medicine (TUSVM), announced plans to eliminate, in the upcoming academic year, the surgery elective which involves the killing of dogs at the end of the surgical procedures. TUSVM will be the first veterinary school in the United States to eliminate *all* terminal procedures (for all species) in their curriculum.

In a joint press release from TUSVM and the New England Anti-Vivisection Society, Dr. Gary Patronek, head of

Tufts' Center for Animals and Public Policy, was quoted as saying, "This step is the culmination of a series of efforts since 1989 to provide top quality veterinary surgical training while at the same time promoting the humane treatment of animals." Patronek added, "By increasing surgical opportunities at area shelters and our own spay/neuter clinic, we are able to provide students with a challenging surgical experience that builds confidence and provides an excellent way of learning the

fundamentals of good surgical technique. After a period of evaluation, Tufts has found no distinguishable difference in the skill-level between students who have or have not taken the elective surgical lab. This has been supported through post-graduate employer feedback," he said.

AVAR commends TUSVM for taking this positive step forward. We hope that other veterinary medical schools will follow their lead.