

Editorial Notes

As a member of the Class of 1992X, I feel it is important to ponder over some of the changes that have taken place or are about to take place in the veterinary college education process. The main reason for the changes being a drop in enrollment numbers first from 120 to 100 and then to admitting only 76 in my class.

I'll explain the 'X' behind 1992 first. Our first semester in vet school we were enrolled in two classes--Philosophy 303X and Anatomy 305X. The X's stand for "experimental." We were not quite sure what that meant when we started. We figured either they didn't know quite what they were doing or they really did know what they were doing and we were a part of the plan. Now don't get me wrong, I am not against changes or trying to make progress but you have to admit it sounded kind of questionable. Anyway it wasn't long before we named ourselves the "Class of 1992X" and decided we really were being experimented with.

I must say though that most professors have been great in taking suggestions on how to improve their experimental classes. For example, the first semester two of our classes explored the idea of group learning. We were put in groups of four. For anatomy, we researched a given topic and had to prepare a twenty minute presentation to be given as a third of the lecture period. Two other groups did the same and so our lectures were composed of student presentations. By doing things this way it was hoped to improve our learning abilities and eliminate some of the competitiveness that existed among former students.

We, however, felt that although it was very helpful in getting to know each other, we really had little if any idea of what we were actually talking about. Besides we felt we were paying to be lectured to by someone who knew the information. So mid-semester we evaluated the course. With the professor's cooperation we ceased lecturing and did lab presentations

that supplemented the professor's lecture. So we did still get the benefits of group learning and felt we were learning the information better.

Our sophomore year brought with it the idea of tracking. This idea has been tossed around and debated both at Iowa State and across the country. Tracking would enable us to choose a particular area and in a sense specialize in that field. So spring semester in place of the past applied anatomy course that included both small and large animals, we selected either Companion Animal or Food Animal Applied Anatomy. We were allowed to take the second class as an elective if we so desired. The purpose of starting us in a limited area was in hopes that by the time we were seniors, we would be able to track during the last semester. Plans were to track in small animal, production medicine, equine, mixed, or independent areas so that we would be better prepared for the career ahead of us and to meet the public's needs of veterinarians.

This is my junior year and last week we drew for senior rotations. During the past three years we have heard a lot of talk toward tracking and bits and pieces about what they intended to do with less students available in the clinical rotations. The Class of 1991 has 92 students while the Class of 1992 has only 65. A lot of ideas were tossed about and a lot of time was spent on behalf of the professors to come up with a solution. However, as things often go nothing was ever set in stone. We asked a lot of questions but always got a "we don't know anything for sure yet." In the last few weeks we were presented with a proposal for tracking second semester of our senior year. This, from what I understand, is Plan B. Plan A required more money to hire technical staff to fill in the vacancies and provide more professor/student time. However, due to economics or politics, Plan A died in early infancy. Back to Plan B. Plan B has its disadvantages and advantages. The biggest advantage being at least 3 people per rotation, usually four. Tracking could be considered either a disad-

vantage or an advantage--for those who know they never want to touch a large animal or a horse, they could limit the amount of time they spend on that species. However, there is always the possibility that they might change their mind a few months or years down the road. I know a couple of seniors who have changed their minds on what they want to do because of experience during senior rotations. If they hadn't been in those rotations would they have limited themselves and then not be able to change easily later on? People make career changes all the time, would tracking make it necessary to come back for more education if you wanted to change to a different species?

Tracking appeared as a disadvantage to the students who still aren't sure what they want to do. Especially those who know they'll be in a mixed practice but who also want production medicine and plenty of small animal experience. By tracking, they could not take production medicine without giving up some small animal time, a mixed track did not include production medicine.

The biggest disadvantage from the students point of view was that our free block time would decrease from twenty weeks (including two at Christmas) down to twelve or fourteen. Again arguments could be made for

this as an advantage but from what upper classmen and graduates have said I still view this as a disadvantage especially since many of us have been considering what we would do with our twenty weeks since we entered vet school.

As I said Plan B was presented to my class--a close to unanimous vote in favor of it was required or it could not be done. There were still many unanswered questions and questions to which there were no answers. Both students and faculty knew it wasn't the ideal choice. The vote failed. Plan C, to continue as they have the past few years with only 2 (3 at most) people per rotation with twenty weeks of free block time is in effect. Plan B will be presented to the sophomore class next spring for them to vote on.

After hearing one thing and then another we decided not only were we experiments but we're guinea pigs as well. We have been told in almost every class that we should rest up for next year because it's going to kill us. What I wonder now is if we really are guinea pigs in an experiment and we are going to die next year, where are the animal rightists when we need them? Ah...but that is another topic for another day.



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