

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

College of Veterinary Medicine

Herbert E. Whiteley, DVM, PhD
Veterinary Medicine Basic Sciences Building
2001 South Lincoln Avenue, MC-002
Urbana, IL 61802



October 31, 2025

Professor Robert Causey

Department of Animal Science and Veterinary Sciences

University of Maine

Dear Robert:

I want to thank you and Chelsea Carr for the tour and discussion at the J. F. Witter Teaching and Research Center. It is an excellent opportunity for students to learn and gain “hands on” experience in all aspects of the agricultural animal industry. Last year I also had the opportunity to visit the new veterinary diagnostic laboratory. I have several observations and comments. Since I do not have an in-depth understanding of your entire program some of my comments may already be in place or not applicable to the vision for the department and program.

To give you a better understanding of my thoughts, a little background might be helpful. I graduated from Maine in 1973 with a degree in Animal and Veterinary Sciences. I then attended Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine. I practiced for several years in Massachusetts and then went to Colorado State University for a PhD and board certification in Veterinary Pathology. I was on the faculty at University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine for 10 years, then moved to the University of Connecticut as head of the Department of Pathobiology and Veterinary Sciences for 7 years. I returned to Illinois and served as Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine for 13 years. I also had the opportunity to serve on the AVMA's Council on Education doing accreditation reviews in the U.S. and internationally.

From my observations and discussion with you and Chelsea, I believe you have an excellent opportunity to develop a unique program to prepare students to enter veterinary medicine, graduate programs or the animal agriculture industry.

Several comments/thoughts:

- Facilities including the horse arena, new automated milking system and veterinary diagnostic laboratory provide a unique opportunity to develop an integrated multi semester progression of courses, and extra-curricular student experience that would be unique to any other program in the New England area. It would be an excellent recruitment message for students throughout New England.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



- Opportunities for development of student projects associated with specific courses or stand-alone independent study projects would be numerous. I was impressed with:
 - The ability to study equine gait and pathophysiology in the horse arena providing students the ability to integrate anatomy and pathology.
 - The new automated milking system and associated technology in identifying individual cow behavior patterns and health will give students a unique opportunity to understand many aspects of dairy health and management that will be at the leading edge of dairy production and health practices.
 - Opportunities at the veterinary diagnostic laboratory would give students an opportunity to integrate and understand basic pathophysiologic principles.
- All the above could then be tied back to specific classroom work and small group discussions.
- I believe a holistic approach giving students classroom and hands on experience in animal production systems and animal health at the Witter Farm and Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory would truly set UMaine apart from other programs in the area. I think this would give students applying to veterinary college or graduate school an excellent way for them to stand out with admissions committees and research faculty and will give them excellent discussion points for application essays and interviews. Additionally, students entering the job force will have unique experiences and understanding that will make them attractive to employers.
- Certainly, funding for animal experiences is a concern and will need to be addressed for the long-term success of a program. Several ideas:
 - Develop a one- or two-page plan outlining the significance of the program and its impact on students. Work with colleagues within the department, college or other units on campus to develop a more detailed proposal or “white paper” on what an integrated experiential program might look like. Make the case for additional support beyond what is available from University or College resources to support a robust student experience.
 - Industry support. Taking a holistic approach that would include animal agriculture and equine industry leaders or corporations/businesses, state government officials from the Department of Agriculture, Natural

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



Resources and Public Health. Formation of an advisory panel that would include all “players” across the state with a charge to develop a funding plan to sustain the program.

- Additional student laboratory fees or differential tuition. This is common practice in programs in engineering and business. My understanding is that there are approximately 200 students in the department. This is excellent enrollment when compared to similar programs in New England.
- Targeted development and fundraising initiative from stakeholders or university supporters around the state and region using the developed “white paper”.

I am available if you or colleagues want to discuss ideas further or strategize about a way forward.

Sincerely,

Herbert E. Whiteley, DVM, PhD
Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Pathologists
Professor Emeritus
Dean Emeritus