

What makes an excellent Faculty of Veterinary Medicine?

Albert WCA Cornelissen (a.w.c.a.cornelissen@vet.uu.nl)

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Utrecht University, PO Box 80163, 3508 TD Utrecht

The environment of universities has changed dramatically. Universities participate in globalization. Therefore, universities have to respond rapidly to new challenges and new circumstances. Research universities are liable to lose their leading role unless they are able to form, or join, worldwide networks of researchers working at the frontiers of knowledge. Collaborations with other 'knowledge institutions' are essential. These collaborations do not only have to contribute to regional development, but also have to have positive effect on their research grant portfolio.

Globalization, the fast developments in information technology and the existence of large scientific databases, does not only make most of what universities do transparent, but is also used to judge their output on such as items as impact and quality. This is done on a large scale and is used to rank them. Students, Schools, Faculty management, University Boards and the responsible ministries, mostly the Ministry of Education, use this information. All our stakeholders use these data to determine their policies in education and research and distribution of budgets. Thus, universities have to act. The core of this message is that departments and faculty members must accept the need to change and reject the *status quo*. This brings me to the core of the lecture: What makes an excellent Faculty of Veterinary Medicine?

Schools have to have a proactive strategy and thus have to be aware of national and international developments and the relevant reports addressing veterinary medicine and more general reports on the status and strategy of universities. Today's rapid advancements in veterinary medicine, veterinary technology and medical information have spurred an increase in specialized services and practices. These developments have produced intense, continuous pressure on veterinarians to remain current with new trends. The future of the profession is diversification. The veterinary field will continue to diversify as new insights, technologies and treatments or preventive procedures are developed. Graduates are expected to accumulate more specific knowledge and to receive the appropriate training needed for the various sectors in the field. This has to have an impact on the development of veterinary curricula. This will be discussed on the basis of the present situation in European schools.

Research universities want to be internationally recognized for their teaching and research. This implies that they are not only evaluated at the level of the school and in national systems, but do fall under the rules of globalization. Their science has thus to be at the forefront of scientific developments. Here competition is harsh, but also challenging and – more importantly – a strong research position can be obtained. Reassessment of research programs should lead to a better strategy for acquiring external funding, boost the quality of research by enhanced chances for scientific innovation at the interface between disciplines and has to lead to an economic use of limited resources. This will enable schools to attract and retain high potential scientists and will also increase fund raising capacity. These managerial aspects of science will be discussed on the basis of the Utrecht experience.

Organization and management are also critical factors for success. Many European Veterinary Schools have here a traditional, mainly inward looking attitude. Schools have to change this position and open up, collaborate with other faculties, influence the policies of their university and talk intensively with the profession and partners with similar missions. Collaboration is more fruitful than competition and does strengthen an international position. It is not always easy, since it implies that they have to bridge the competencies of academic professionals. However, successes on the basis of collaboration are very convincing arguments. A progressive attitude brings much: it is easier to attract and keep top talent; productivity in research output and services increases; it can cut costs due to sharing of infrastructure and strengthen the grant position. Organization and management are also illustrated on the basis of recent developments in Utrecht.
