

# endnote



Alexis Wenski-Roberts/ Image Lab

**T**he cost of college and professional education is high, and getting higher. In times of economic stress, preserving public funding for higher education may seem an unaffordable luxury to some. Cornell President Jeffrey Lehman views it as a necessity, as he recently explained in an address to the members of the State Senate Finance Committee and the State Assembly Ways and Means Committee. In addition to noting that educated people contribute to economic progress and “enable the continued evolution of civil society,” Lehman asserted that the state reaps many times the returns from investing in the greatness of New York’s university system that it

would from funding it at a level that was only adequate.

The excellence of the Cornell University Hospital for Animals is a source of great benefit to the State of New York. In addition to providing a wide range of specialized clinical services to the people of the state and a fertile environment for advancing knowledge of animal health care, the hospital and its activities form the basis for our entire veterinary medical teaching program.

The outstanding physical plant, provided through generous state funding and opened in 1996, is peopled by some of the profession’s most gifted and talented faculty and staff. We have increased the hospital’s specialty offerings in recent years to include a full-service oncology unit, exotic animal medicine, dentistry, alternative therapies, and significantly expanded sections of cardiology, large animal surgery, small animal surgery, and small-animal emergency and critical-care medicine. Under the able leadership of Assistant Dean Bonita Voiland, the hospital has revamped its administrative structure and heightened efficiency and customer service. These improvements in breadth and quality, achieved through long years of planning and gradual implementation, have resulted in a nearly 50-percent increase in caseload over the past six years. Cornell’s veterinary students, whose education is our fundamental concern and purpose, are extraordinarily well served by the experience they gain in this finest of referral teaching hospitals.

Excellence is expensive, however, particularly in an era of burgeoning technological advances and unprecedented competition for top clinical faculty. The cost of clinical programs and equipment has increased even more rapidly than veterinary education in general. At the same time, unfortunately, the economic challenges that have faced the State of New York, particularly since 9/11, have had widespread impact. For Cornell University, the state’s budget woes have brought a substantial decrease in operating support. Even with maximized efficiency and a strategic narrowing of focus, the

quality of our programs will suffer in the next decade unless some measure of funding is restored.

For our part, we continue to build on efficiencies and good management practices that started with the amalgamation of departments several years ago. To achieve better decision-making at the level of the end user, we have also put resources, as well as the responsibility for managing those resources, into the hands of individual departments and units. In partnership with the University, we have instituted procedures to reduce overlapping administrative efforts at various levels of the institution. These changes have not been easy, but they have positioned the College to take advantage of clinical and research opportunities that align with other university priorities.

Along with cost-cutting, we have been working to develop long-term solutions for increasing revenue, particularly in the area of fundraising. The financial support of individuals who value the work we do has always been vital not only in addressing immediate needs but in providing stable income in perpetuity. Long-term investment provides an essential buffer in times of economic retrenchment, and we will be working to increase our endowment substantially.

Thanks to the great generosity of the Maurice R. and Corinne P. Greenberg Foundation, we are closer to realizing the purchase of the magnetic resonance imaging equipment that is so critical to our neurology and oncology services. Our outlook has also been brightened in the past year or so by the exceptional philanthropy of Isidor and Sylvia Sprecker, Patricia Cornwell, the estates of Eleanor Gillis, Ethel Phipps, and Edna Emerson, and several others. We are deeply grateful for their generosity, as we are for the sustaining support of all of our contributing alumni and friends. They are the foundation on which we are building our future.

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Dean of the College