

# A conversation with Susan Lilly

*For Susan Lilly, Executive Director of Development at the College of Veterinary Medicine, raising funds is ultimately about relationships. Here at the CVM, she is working to promote a “culture of philanthropy” at all levels—an attitude that embraces relationship building and encourages everyone to be a passionate champion of the College and its mission of teaching, research, and service. Susan came to the CVM in July 2007 with more than 20 years experience in higher education development activities. Prior to joining the College, she was Associate Director of Major Gifts at Michigan State University. Susan holds a Bachelor of Science in Management and Supervision and a Master of Science in Administration, both from Central Michigan University. She is also a Certified Fund Raising Executive, an internationally recognized professional credential which is granted based on an individual’s significant development experience and the ability to pass a rigorous written exam to demonstrate mastery of core knowledge areas related to fund raising practice. Susan heads the seven-person Office of Development and, in her position as secretary, supports the 37-member Board of Directors of the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Foundation, an organization created to raise funds and awareness in support of the College.*



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**This past July you completed your first year as executive director of the CVM Office of Development. How would you summarize your first 17 months?**

It’s been an extremely busy and exciting time. Within days of my arrival at NC State, Governor Easley signed the budget that included the North Carolina General Assembly appropriation of \$38 million for the construction of the Randall B. Terry, Jr. Companion Animal Veterinary Medical Center. That was a major accomplishment. I know several individuals on our North Carolina Veterinary Medical Foundation Board were instrumental in helping us make our case. The appropriation, of course, allowed us to hold last November’s groundbreaking ceremony for the veterinary medical center. Coincidentally, we also observed the 25th anniversary of the current Veterinary Teaching Hospital. The VTH has served us well during the past quarter century but the facility was designed to accommodate 12,000 cases and the VTH now manages in excess of 20,000 annual cases. When

completed in 2010, the Terry Center will be more than double the size of the VTH and will be a national model for excellence in companion animal care.

**The groundbreaking for the Randall B. Terry, Jr. Companion Animal Veterinary Medical Center must be a highlight?**

Yes, and let me first say the groundbreaking ceremony occurred on a beautiful day in what had been a miserable week. I took that as a good omen. Call me sentimental, but I think Randall Terry had some influence on that day. Not because of the dignitaries who attended or the fine speech that Oscar Fletcher, former CVM Dean, gave about what the College and the hospital meant to Randall Terry. I think Randall was there because three of his Golden Retrievers were there. It was a great way to celebrate Mr. Randall Terry and the start of an undertaking that's going to be magnificent and of importance to the health of companion animals in North Carolina and beyond for the next 25 years.

**What role will private funds play in developing the Terry Center, a veterinary medical facility that is ultimately a public resource?**

Private donors are consistently among the most active supporters of capital campaigns at public universities. At some point in the past, NC State may have been funded solely through tuition, fees, and state support but that hasn't been the case for decades. The CVM is state assisted, not state supported. For the Terry Center, estimated to cost \$72 million, the funding is almost evenly split between public and private support. As noted, the state appropriated \$38 million, leaving \$34 million to come from private donors, which includes the \$20 million gift from the R.B. Terry Charitable Foundation—the largest single private gift in the history of NC State University. Of that \$34 million in private support, there's still about \$10 million left to raise. Thanks to another generous gesture, the R.B. Terry Foundation

will match gifts made to the Terry Center dollar-for-dollar, up to a total of \$5 million. I would be remiss if I didn't mention that several naming opportunities still exist in the Terry Center!

**The Terry Center is an obvious development focus but there are a number of CVM programs and activities that require funding beyond state support.**

Yes, most definitely. In recognition of this need, the development office added staff members Michael Strader and Kate Azizi in 2007. Michael has a dedicated focus on equine giving as Director of Development for Equine Programs, and Kate, as Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations, is focusing on securing funds from those sources. Michael's efforts have allowed us to

meet the requirements one of our equine donors, Jim Cogdell, who provided a \$100,000 challenge grant to help raise funds for planned improvements to our Equine Health Center in Southern Pines. We have now raised a total of \$216,000 for the project. Kate has been instrumental in securing contributions from a number of corporations, most notably a \$625,000 gift from Novartis Animal Health in support of the Clinical Trials Program within the Center for Comparative Medicine and Translational Research.



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**The Campaign for Animal Health and Welfare—the CVM contribution to the NC State University Achieve! Campaign—was initiated in the fall of 2005 to address a number of CVM needs. How is that effort progressing?**

The campaign is progressing remarkably well. We raised more than \$95 million to date for six focus areas: facilities, programs, faculty, research, students, and unrestricted support. The total includes \$33 million to renovate or build facilities, including the \$20 million from the R.B. Terry Foundation for the Terry Center. We raised some \$22 million to support programs in animal welfare, biomedical research, companion animal health, ecosystem

health, equine health, and food supply medicine. More than \$12 million was raised for faculty support, including the establishment of our first distinguished professorship. More than \$19 million came in for research. Student support totaled \$6.3 million and \$1.8 million came in for unrestricted gifts. Our supporters have come through for us not only financially but also by sharing their enthusiasm about the CVM and encouraging others to support us. But as any fund raiser will tell you, there's more work to be done. The campaign is by no means complete—we have merely taken a moment at the end of the Achieve! Campaign to reflect on our successes and celebrate the friends who have accompanied us on our journey.

**Do any particular campaign gifts stand out?**

Where do I begin? I have to mention again the transformative gift from the R.B. Terry Foundation—it will change our campus and how the CVM will function in the future. Also, the gift from Terry Seaks, who honored his wife Jane by helping to establish our first endowed distinguished professorship. Terry is a visionary who has set an example we envision will encourage others to create additional endowed professorships so we can attract and retain top-notch faculty. The gift from our Campaign chair, Susan Ward, and her husband Randall will support the Hannah Heart Pavilion, a cardiology specialty clinic in the Terry Center named in memory of the Wards' beloved Newfoundland. I also think of the gift from the Randleigh Trust to name the William Rand Kenan, Jr. Library of Veterinary Medicine as well as the Jim and Mollie Rasor Leadership Scholarship established by the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association. The list goes on. I could name every donor over the course of the Campaign because they all made a difference, regardless of the size of their gift.

**We are now faced with an extremely uncertain national economy. What might this mean in the months ahead for the ongoing Campaign for Animal Health and Welfare?**

I believe it is safe to say that the NC State development team

feels fortunate the university concluded the very successful three-year Achieve! Campaign before the current economic downturn. Going forward, we have to focus our energies and continue to raise awareness of the value of the CVM people, programs, and activities. One of my goals is to help create a culture of philanthropy at the College, by which I mean creating an environment that promotes philanthropy and makes no apologies for the need to fund raise. This environment becomes even more important in today's uncertain economy. Part of the equation in build-



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ing an effective development environment is acknowledging that everyone at the CVM has the power to connect with our donors and prospective donors. The other part of the equation is helping donors learn about the spirit of philanthropy; it's not just about what the donor can do for us but what we can do for the donor and what the donor wants to accomplish in the world. I want to connect the right person—or organization—with the right project at the right time so the gift makes a difference in their lives, as well as ours. I want the donor to feel enriched by the whole experience. Teaching people about philanthropy can be difficult in some cases, while other individuals have grown up with

the concept of charitable giving to worthwhile organizations.

**Your responsibilities include supporting the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Foundation. How does the CVM engage and benefit from the various interests represented by the board members?**

I was impressed when I saw the list of board members—the son of a former governor, a major developer of downtown Raleigh, current president of the Arabian Horse Association, and so many dedicated to helping “those who have no voice”—our animal companions. These are strong advocates for the CVM mission. The board members have impressed me with their level of involvement, how actively they work to support our efforts. They also have significant networks of people who can help the College in numerous ways. They help and support us in ways we don't

even realize sometimes. Working with the board has been one of the most interesting components of my job.

**Does development work for a college of veterinary medicine present challenges that you may not have expected?**

The scope of what I'm looking to raise funds for here at the CVM is very broad. I wasn't surprised by that but it is definitely one of the most challenging aspects of my work. There are so many opportunities to support the CVM and my role is to help donors make the link between their interests and our programs. I'm not doing this alone, of course, our development staff is connecting with friends of the College about a variety of needs involving large animal or small animal concerns, support for research, student scholarships, and so on. In my previous position, I was dealing primarily with alumni. Now I'm interacting with a more diverse group of donors and prospective donors—large and small animal hospital clients, referring veterinarians, faculty, board members, and corporate donors as well as alumni.

**What role do CVM faculty members play in the development process?**

Faculty members play a huge role in development. My staff and I make a concerted effort to collaborate with faculty as much as possible because they help us understand the specifics of what the College needs. Additionally, they are the people who have the relationships with many of our current and potential donors—hospital clients as well as corporate research partners. We also encourage faculty to come to us when they are looking for program or project support.

**Does veterinary medicine's changing role in our society affect development activities?**

Definitely. As the human-animal bond evolves, what society expects of veterinary medicine changes. This, in turn, can drive additional needs within the profession and specifically within our College. How people view animals influences who may become friends and partners of the CVM. Animals are family members

to most of our donors. As veterinary technology advances, we're able to treat more complex issues and people have a greater appreciation of the science supporting the health of the pet or horse. Almost every major gift to the CVM came about because of the connection among animal, owner, and the treating practitioner. Importantly, many donors want to help in a particular situation that mirrors theirs. Deborah Resnick provides a good example. She didn't just give to the VTH service that saw her dog. She created the Fund for Discovery to advance veterinary research to help animals in the future by supporting and encouraging today's students to pursue veterinary research careers.

**Looking forward, what is the biggest development opportunity available to the CVM?**

There is a tremendous transfer of generational wealth anticipated in the next 10 to 20 years. Baby boomers are retiring and thinking about their legacies. This is the time for us to educate people and let them know what opportunities exist in veterinary medicine as well as how they can help us when setting up their estates. There are ways we can provide recognition and a legacy but also give the individual a chance to see the future impact of their gift—I think it will transform how we operate and do business.

**Do you have any personal insight on your first 1.5 years?**

I'm enjoying learning about the various aspects of veterinary medicine and how the profession touches our daily lives. I didn't appreciate how important veterinarians are to our food supply. I didn't realize that so much research is being done on infectious diseases that are transferable from animals to humans. I didn't know that veterinarians went to Iraq as medics. I wasn't aware of the important role veterinary medicine plays in protecting our ecosystems or supporting global public health. Many people often do not understand the scope of veterinary medicine—and a big part of my job is to educate them. The CVM, in so many ways, is a great resource for the citizens of North Carolina.



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