April 1, 2010

Walt Loveland, PhD  
Chair OSU Graduate Student Council  
Oregon State University  
Corvallis, OR  97331

Dear Dr. Loveland:

We are very appreciative of the Graduate Student Council’s recent approval of policy that provides for implementation of dual degree programs at OSU. Thank you for letting us be a part of those discussions, so that members of the Graduate Student Council would have a context for the dual degree program we present in this letter.

The fields of veterinary medicine and public health have changed significantly since September 11, 2001. Additionally, we have entered a new era of globalization and comparative medicine that requires both professional medical training and graduate public health education. Accordingly, the OSU College of Veterinary Medicine and the College of Health and Human Sciences will work together to provide a dual degree (DVM & MPH) program for a limited number of select students. The policy and administrative processes are in place to support the program, although we will need to walk through this novel process carefully to avoid communication errors.

The attached documents outline the planned dual degree program in further detail. The need to use professional courses for masters degree credit is very minimal. The DVM and MPH degrees both prepare practitioners rather than researchers as would a PhD degree. Our aim is to make OSU a more competitive contributor in our professions and to better serve the academic needs of Oregonians.

Thank you for considering this innovation at OSU. We request and look forward to the Council’s advice, support and endorsement in this effort.

Sincerely,

Sue Tornquist, DVM, PhD    Tom Eversole, DVM, MS, MS  
Associate Dean for Student    Director of Strategic Development for a College  
and Academic Affairs    of Public Health and Human Sciences  
College of Veterinary Medicine    College of Health and Human Sciences

cc: Cyril Clarke, Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine; Tammy Bray, Dean College of Health and Human Sciences; Carolyn Aldwin, CHHS; Katy O’Reilly, College of Veterinary Medicine
Professional Background
The World Health Organization as well as the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Public Health Association (APHA) ascribe to the “One Health” approach to world health problems. One Health posits that human and animal health in a shared environment cannot be separated – as evidenced by pandemics of AIDS, swine flu and MRSA or epidemics such as SARS and Ebola. Increasingly, health education will become transdisciplinary, involving medicine, pharmacy, public health, veterinary medicine in dual degree programs to solve new and emerging global health problems. OSU is positioned to be a key player in that future.

The landscape for professional and graduate education has changed. Since 9/11 and the anthrax attacks, there has been an increasing awareness of the role of veterinary public health in emergency preparedness and bioterrorism response. The threats of avian flu and swine flu underscore the importance of surveillance for animal-to-human (zoonotic) diseases. Oregon Congress member and veterinarian, Kurt Schrader, is a co-sponsor of the Veterinary Public Health Workforce Enhancement Act, slated to provide resources to universities that train veterinarians in public health. If passed, the bill would provide scholarships, faculty salary, laboratories and teaching facilities for schools of public health and veterinary colleges offering dual degree (DVM-MPH) programs. CHHS has already activated two new MPH tracks in epidemiology and biostatistics, seen to be the primary focus of students interested in our dual degree program.

OSU Specific Background
The DVM/MPH dual degree program has value for OSU’s strategic initiatives, specifically: (a) the OSU Strategic Plan, (b) establishing an accredited school of public health, (c) increasing health sciences research and d) addressing the national focus on comparative medicine through an enhanced veterinary public health workforce. OSU is committed to enhancing the public health workforce.

As part of its strategic plan, Oregon State University has identified Improving Human Health and Wellness as one of three signature areas for investment and development. The College of Pharmacy, College of Veterinary Medicine and College of Health and Human Sciences (CHHS) now comprise the Health Sciences Division. The CHHS has undertaken to become an accredited college of public health and human sciences (CPHHS) in 2014, advancing it to the stature of the other two professional schools in its area of excellence. Oregon currently has no accredited school of public health, which excludes it from a variety of research and service funding opportunities.
Importance for Oregonians
The workforce that Oregon needs now and for tomorrow requires dual degree options combining professional training and graduate education. OSU requires this program to be competitive and ensure that it attracts outstanding students, who wish to complete two degrees in a timely fashion.

The trend to offer combined DVM /MPH degree programs has expanded rapidly in the last few years. Twenty of the 28 veterinary colleges in the US offer public health degree options for veterinary students. OSU does not. OSU is one of the few land grant universities with a co-located accredited college of veterinary medicine and public health program. OSU is well positioned to be competitive as an academic institution, to contribute to global health research and to produce tomorrow’s work force, if it fully supports dual degree programs.

DVM/MPH Curriculum
The proposed curriculum for the dual degree program is attached, using the epidemiology track as a model. See Attachment 1. Admission requirements for both the graduate program and the professional program apply. For coursework to apply to both degrees, students must be enrolled in the dual degree program. We anticipate only 1-2 students per year enrolling in the program. The MPH graduate student’s committee will retain accountability and authority for assuring quality and rigor of academic studies applying to that degree.

Operationally, the program allows students to complete both degrees in five years. Veterinary students move through their curriculum as a cohort, making it possible to position one year of public health coursework either between year three and four of the veterinary curriculum or following year four but prior to degree award. In the future, some core public health courses will be offered during summer sessions, which will increase convenience for dual degree students wishing to matriculate then.

Only three professional courses are required for credit toward the master of public health degree in any track: Veterinary Medicine and Public Health (VMB 766), Epidemiology (VMB 767) and Preceptorship (VMC 780.) See Attachment 2. The College of Veterinary Medicine has submitted category II proposals for VMB 766 and VMB 767. We are currently submitting VMC 780 to be approved for graduate credit.

This program has the support of deans of the respective colleges as well as university administration. Drs. Tornquist and Eversole will coordinate administrative efforts to assure compliance with the program’s national accrediting bodies as well as the OSU Registrar’s and Finance Offices.