State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories in Alabama

By Dr. Fred Hoerr

Dr. Redding S. Sugg, former state veterinarian and dean of the Auburn College of Veterinary Medicine (AUCVM), and Dr. Charles Roberts are credited with the development of the Auburn diagnostic laboratory in 1947. Veterinarians were asking the school for diagnostic assistance, and Dean Sugg needed a coordinator of laboratory testing and reporting. The program became associated with the hog cholera and brucellosis laboratories at the school, with growing involvement by the Alabama Livestock and Sanitation Board and the Department of Agriculture and Industries. The laboratory expanded into the old serum plant near Cary Hall. Dr. Roberts continued in a leadership role with the state diagnostic laboratory for thirty years. As director of the laboratory and professor of Pathology and Parasitology, he held a joint appointment with the AUCVM. His retirement coincided with the transition of the dean’s chair from Dr. James Greene to Dr. J. T. Vaughan and the opening of a new state facility, the Charles S. Roberts Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in 1978.

To serve the growing poultry industry in North Alabama, the Department of Agriculture and Industries opened a poultry diagnostic laboratory in Albertville in 1957. In 1961 a swine diagnostic laboratory was established in Elba.

In 1978 the department built a new laboratory at Auburn University near the relatively new College of Veterinary Medicine complex south of the main campus. Dr. Frank E. Mitchell became the second director of the laboratory, serving until 1987. With his leadership and the support of the state veterinarian, Dr. J. Lee Alley, the staff increased from six to thirty employees to meet the growing demand for services from veterinarians and the livestock and poultry producers of Alabama. Although a formal contractual relationship existed between the Department of Agriculture and AUCVM, a spirit of cooperation and interaction by faculty and diagnostic laboratory veterinarians yielded advances in animal and poultry disease diagnosis and surveillance.

The new laboratory in Auburn significantly expanded the role and the expectations of the diagnostic laboratories in Alabama. This full service laboratory and its support of the branch laboratories provided Alabama for the first time with comprehensive services for agriculture, companion animals, and animal-related public health. The Auburn laboratory provided in-depth diagnostic testing and became the reference laboratory for the branch laboratories. As agriculture in Alabama has changed, the diagnostic laboratories have adapted to meet the needs. At the swine laboratory in Elba, more than 90 percent of the cases are now poultry. In 1995 a third branch laboratory opened in Hanceville to meet the needs of livestock and poultry producers in northern Alabama.

Dr. Frederic J. Hoerr became the laboratory’s third director in 1987 and serves to this day. In the 1990s, a partnership of veterinarians and livestock and poultry producers secured funding through the Agricultural Bond Issue to construct the Thompson Bishop Sparks State Diagnostic Laboratory, which opened on May 9, 2006. This new laboratory, located on the AUCVM campus, has biosafety level II and III facilities designed to meet the global challenges of emerging animal and zoonotic diseases. The Department of Agriculture and Industries, under the leadership of Commissioner Ron Sparks, opened a new diagnostic laboratory in Elba in 2006. The Albertville laboratory was moved to Boaz in 1983, and is scheduled for replacement by a new facility in 2007.

In addition to the directors, veterinary diagnosticians who have worked at the Auburn Laboratory include: Drs. George D’Andrea, Susan Lockaby, Leland Nuehring, Sara Rowe, Doris Oliveira, Lloyd Lauerman, Jack Rhyan, Robert Porter, Price Stone, and Robert Matthews. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) veterinarians have included Drs. J. Lee Alley, Curtis Christenberry, Don Cheatham, O. W. Hester, Ken Angel, and others associated with federal-state cooperative programs.
The first veterinary technology program in Alabama originated in 1975 at Snead State Community College (then a junior college), in Boaz, Alabama, and was initially accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) in 1979. The program at Snead State had two directors during its existence: Dr. Mike Creel for the first ten years and Dr. Glenn Sexton for the last twenty years. The program was the only accredited veterinary technology program offered in the state of Alabama. Some of the instructors during that time included these Licensed Veterinary Technicians: Kenneth Munn, Diane Rooke, Dedra Wilson, Debbie Whitten, Tammie Adams, Mikky Campbell, Tammy Robinson, and Guyanne Harris.

For the first nine years, the Veterinary Technology Program (VTP) was housed in the basement of the men’s dormitory. Large animal training consisted of clinic rotations with a local veterinary practice. In the fall of 1984, the program moved into a new facility on campus which consisted of classrooms, laboratories, nursing, and surgical areas. Small animals were housed at this facility for training purposes. In the fall of 1986, the Department of Veterinary Technology secured a lease agreement with a farm located approximately six miles from the college where large animals (horses, cows, pigs, sheep, and goats) were housed for training purposes and where clinics were conducted on a regular and continuing basis by the veterinary technology faculty and staff. This agreement continued until the fall of 2002 when a new farm lease agreement was made at a location approximately one mile from the campus.

The Veterinary Technology Program was initially on the quarter system, with six quarters on campus and a one quarter preceptorship at a veterinary practice facility. In the fall of 1998, all junior and community colleges in Alabama converted to the semester system. The VTP then consisted of four semesters on campus and a one semester preceptorship at a veterinary practice facility.

The major objective of the Veterinary Technology Program was to provide a complete training and educational program for veterinary technology students according to AVMA guidelines. It was the purpose of the program to educate and train individuals capable of providing the necessary technical support for veterinarians in all fields of veterinary medicine, including private practice (large, small, and mixed), research, teaching, and regulatory medicine.

Secondary objectives included...
providing continuing education for graduates, educating veterinarians in the use of veterinary technicians, providing information to technicians and veterinarians concerning employment opportunities, and fostering public relations for both the veterinary technician and veterinary professions.

The Veterinary Technology Program at Snead State maintained full accreditation by the AVMA during its entire existence. Upon successful completion of the prescribed course of study (a two year curriculum), students are awarded the Associate Degree in Applied Science (A.A.S.) and are eligible for licensure by the Alabama State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners as Licensed Veterinary Technicians (LVTs). The board constructed their own examination for licensing veterinary technicians from 1975 to 1984. Then the Professional Examination Service (PES) became the provider of the Veterinary Technician National Exam (VTNE) until 2005, when the American Association of Veterinary State Boards took over the exam responsibilities.

After thirty years, the Veterinary Technology Program at Snead State closed in the spring of 2005 with the last and largest class of twenty-nine graduates. Throughout its existence the VTP was supported by the Alabama Veterinary Medical Association (ALVMA). In the early years, the ALVMA assisted with expenses by allowing some of its space and speakers at the summer meetings to be used by the Alabama Veterinary Technician Association for continuing education. The ALVMA also established two scholarships awarded annually; one to a first-year student and one to a second-year student. The establishment of a Veterinary Technician Liaison Committee by the ALVMA further strengthened the communication between the ALVMA, the VTP, and practicing veterinary technicians.

The Alabama Academy of Veterinary Practice (AAVP) also established a scholarship awarded to a second-year student on an annual basis. This scholarship continued as long as the AAVP was in existence.

In June 2005 Jefferson State Community College began structuring a distance education program in veterinary technology, with Michelle (Mikky) Campbell, LVT, as the interim director and Dr. Glenn Sexton as a consultant. In August 2005 the first class began with fifty-two students, and Kristi Rodas, LVT, was hired as an instructor for the program. In May 2006 Dr. Christie Wallace was hired as the director.

There are two parts to the distance education program. One is the computerized didactic part through Web CT, in which students take classes, complete course work, and take on-line examinations. The midterm and final exams are taken and proctored at a college site near the student’s home base. The exams are then mailed back to the instructor for grading. The second part is the clinical portion, in which students are required to work in a veterinary clinic for at least twenty hours per week, in order to gain clinical experience and complete clinical tasks. The tasks are video taped and evaluated by a clinical supervisor, either an LVT or a veterinarian. The video tapes are then mailed with the evaluation forms to the Veterinary Technology Program for final review and evaluation.

To qualify to sit for the state board examinations in Alabama, students must be graduates of an AVMA accredited program or a program approved by the board. At the 2005 summer meeting of the ALVMA, the Alabama State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners voted to allow graduates of the Jefferson State Distance Education Program to sit for the examination. Upon passing the exam these graduates are licensed. A big round of thanks should go to the board for their vision and support of the veterinary technology profession and program in this state. The initial accreditation site visit by the Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities (CVTEA) of the AVMA is scheduled for March 14-16, 2007.

According to the Alabama State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, the first act incorporating the tasks and duties of “Registered Animal Technicians” into the Alabama Veterinary Practice Act was act No.1224 Regular Session 1975. Then in 1986, by Act No. 86-500, the section was revised to “Licensed Veterinary Technicians” and the first detailed version of essential tasks required by the AVMA were included. There are currently 207 active veterinary technicians in Alabama, with 16 maintaining inactive licenses. The first veterinary technician license was issued to Janet Blackstock on December 13, 1976. She was a 1976 graduate of Abraham Baldwin Baldwin College in Georgia. The first license issued to a Snead State graduate was to Phyllis Zoe Abston on July 11, 1977. Since then there have been 516 licenses issued. License # 516 was issued on May 16, 2006.

The veterinary technology profession has made monumental strides in the last thirty years, both nationally and in Alabama. There are now more than one hundred programs nationwide. Veterinary technicians are an important link in providing the advanced health care the veterinary profession gives to its patients.
The Auxiliary to the Alabama Veterinary Medical Association held its organizational meeting on February 25, 1949, at the Lyons hotel in Decatur, Alabama. The president of the National Women’s Auxiliary to the American Veterinary Medical Association attended. Eleven Alabama veterinarian’s wives were present at this meeting, asking to be recognized by the national organization. Recognition became official in 1950.

The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association (ALVMA) Auxiliary has been active for 57 years and now includes active, affiliate and support memberships. Auxiliary members have been faithful in recognizing and carrying out the objectives of the organization:

1. To assist the ALVMA in advancing the science and art of veterinary medicine, including its relationship to public health and agriculture.
2. To assist selected veterinary students with loans and awards.
3. To strengthen communications among those associated with the veterinary profession.

The state auxiliary has engaged in numerous activities through the years to raise funds for veterinary student scholarships and awards, for the national Student Loan Fund, for donations of veterinary textbooks to Alabama libraries, for state science fair and 4-H club projects, for the Congressional Fellowship Program, and for promotion of National Pet Week. Some of these fund-raising activities have included raffles for jewelry, sales of cookbooks, tee-shirts (for many years), and mulligans for the association golf event at the annual meeting.

The first assistance to a veterinary student was in 1950 when twenty dollars was sent to Dean Sugg to be given to a needy veterinary student at Alabama Polytechnic Institute, now Auburn University. This award has continued annually, and in 1958 was named the R.S. Sugg Memorial Award. At that time an I.S. McAdory Award was also established. The T.S. Williams Honorary Award and the Tuskegee Dean’s Award, (Tuskegee University School of Veterinary Medicine) also have been established. The monetary amount has increased through the years, and all of these awards continue today.

The auxiliary has added other awards and recognitions through the years, rewarding individuals who have performed exceptional work in promoting the profession throughout the state. Members who have worked effectively with the auxiliary projects and outstanding members of the student chapters of the AVMA Auxiliary are recognized annually with awards.

The annual meeting of the auxiliary has normally been held in conjunction with the association’s annual meeting. In addition to the usual business, fundraising, recognitions and presentation of awards, each annual meeting includes excellent social activities. Those attending through the years have participated in tours, lectures and craft or other demonstrations. Entertainment in the past has included music, comedy, dances, teas, etc.

The ALVMA Auxiliary will continue to work with the association to promote the profession. The auxiliary views veterinary medicine to be a very caring profession and believes that its support is worth the work.
Constituent Associations

of the Alabama Veterinary Medical Association
The College of Veterinary Medicine at Auburn University and the Alabama Veterinary Medical Association both stand as shining tributes to the vision and unstinting efforts of a handful of souls who, before the turn of the nineteenth century, saw the need and the opportunity to establish and legitimize the veterinary profession in the southern United States.

History records that rapid advances in science and industry are often borne on the wings of war. It is noteworthy that the Civil War coincided with the proof of the Germ Theory in the laboratories of Louis Pasteur (1860), making the beginnings of modern medicine and ushering in the Golden Age of bacteriology. Wound infections and contagious plagues had been the bête noire of civilization from the beginnings of time. Following Pasteur’s momentous revelation, discovery of the true etiology of these infections followed in rapid-fire order. About the time that Charles A. Cary was graduating in veterinary medicine at Iowa State University (1887), Robert Koch had identified the cause of tuberculosis and incorporated the findings of Theobald Smith of the U.S. Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) to test infected cattle and require compulsory pasteurization of milk products. Also of note at the time was the discovery of the piroplasm causing Texas tick fever and its mode of transmission. In so doing, Frederick Kilboune and Cooper Curtice, working under Theobald Smith in the laboratories of the BAI, demonstrated for the first time the role of insect vectors of both human and animal contagion, opening the door to elucidation of the causes of malaria, yellow fever, plague, typhus, and innumerable other arthropod-borne diseases.

Two other events occurring in the same time frame (1860-1890) were seminal in the birth of veterinary medical education in Alabama. In 1862, a year after Lincoln was elected president, Congress passed the Homestead Act, the Morrill Land-Grant College Act, and the act establishing the United States Department of Agriculture.

By

Dr. Tom Vaughan ’55,
Dean Emeritus

College of Veterinary Medicine, Auburn University
Agriculture, all aimed at assisting the family farmer. The Morrill Act, in particular, provided for agricultural and mechanical colleges throughout the country. The Methodist Church had a well-established college in Auburn with no funds to operate it. So in 1872, the East Alabama Male College, under the administration at that time of Dr. B. B. Ross, chairman of the faculty board and with the support of the governor of Alabama, made a successful bid for Alabama’s land grant college, transferring ownership of the church college to the state of Alabama. The second Morrill Land-Grant College Act in 1890 provided annual appropriations to each state to support its land-grant college. It also provided funding for publicly supported black institutions (including Tuskegee Institute) which became known as the Colleges of 1890.

The second major event occurred in 1887 with the passage of the Hatch Act which provided for a yearly grant to each state for the support of an agricultural experiment station. This coincided with the administration of William Leroy Broun, president of the Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College.

Up until the turn of the century, Germany and France had been fountainheads of medical and comparative (veterinary) medical knowledge. It was into this exciting period of discovery in 1891 that Broun and Cary, a University of Missouri graduate student of Dr. Paul Paguin’s — himself a student of Louis Pasteur — had a chance meeting on a train. President Broun, intent on emphasizing the sciences at Auburn, recognized the potential in Cary and persuaded him to join the faculty at Auburn as professor of veterinary science and physiology in the Agricultural Experiment Station. The rest, as they say, is history.

In satisfaction of his agreement with President Broun, Cary pursued his graduate studies further in the laboratories of Robert Koch in Germany, returning to Auburn in 1893. An immediate benefit of Cary’s first-hand acquaintance with the work of Pasteur and Koch was that Alabama was one of the first states in the nation to institute the use of tuberculin for detection of tuberculosis in cattle and the application of public meat and milk inspection and the pasteurization process. This was the finest example of the practice of one medicine. Applying the findings of Kilborne and Curtice, Cary tackled the South’s problem with tick fever which had effectively paralyzed the cattle industry. But to execute these multiple responsibilities, there needed to be a formal structure to use as a base of operations. So, in response to his fifteen years of efforts statewide, as well as a number of national offices and with the support of then-President Charles C. Thach, Cary succeeded in establishing the College of Veterinary Medicine — the first in the entire southern United States below 40 degrees north latitude, with the exception of Kansas and Colorado. (Auburn is tied with Colorado for seventh oldest in the United States.)
Cary was, of course, appointed its first dean. In the same year, with the urging of President Thach, the Alabama Legislature made Cary the state veterinarian. Before the year’s end, together with eleven Alabama veterinarians who were graduates of approved veterinary colleges, Cary organized the Alabama Veterinary Medical Association. The purpose of establishing standards of professional ethics, education, public health, and licensure. This greatly increased public recognition of accredited graduates of professional colleges and sharpened the distinction between the practice of veterinary medicine by licensed graduates and the all-too-common laymen and farriers on whom the public had had to rely. Cary served as the association’s secretary-treasurer for twenty-eight years until his death in 1935.

Covering all bases during that inaugural year, Cary also organized a student veterinary medical association. His recognition of the importance of organized veterinary medicine and his unflagging support at the national as well as the regional levels earned him the presidency of the American Veterinary Medical Association in 1920.

The original veterinary department boasted a three-story building with independent gas, water, and sewer system. It included classrooms, museums, and laboratories for physiology, bacteriology, pathology, and photography. Separate facilities provided housing for laboratory animals, anatomical studies, and a hospital for livestock. Paddocks and sheds had sufficient capacity for 125 cattle or other large animals as well as isolation quarters for contagious diseases. The department had close relationships with the departments of animal husbandry, pharmacy, chemistry, botany, and physics.

Requirements for admission were: 18 years of age, of good moral character, and passage of a satisfactory examination on: (1) geography and history of the United States, (2) English (grammar and composition), (3) reading (an extensive booklist of the classics of literature), and (4) mathematics (through algebra and geometry). Transfer students had to supply certificates of honorable discharge from previous colleges. It is interesting that, although Cary reinforced Broun’s desire to emphasize science, he also retained significant elements of the old liberal arts curricula. Cary himself was multilingual and continued to follow the professional literature in German and perhaps French. The three-year course leading to the DVM degree consisted of three terms per year that covered an impressive array of subject matter ranging from physics, chemistry, botany, pharmacy, and livestock management to all the basic and clinical sciences taught in a modern curriculum today. In addition, a thesis was required in all three terms of the last year. Suffice it to say the graduate was deserving of a professional degree.

Nineteen students were registered in 1907, increasing to fifty-one by 1909 at which time five qualified for their professional degree. These numbers continued to rise to seventy-four registrants and twenty-three graduates in 1916. World War I intervened and the student population experienced a sharp decline which extended through the next decade. This could be attributed to several factors incident to the war. An infestation of boll weevils from Mexico swept across the South early in the twentieth century; a virtual embargo was imposed on southern cattle due to tick fever; a large segment of available labor moved north to work in factories; and the reliance on the horse and mule for draft and transportation was being replaced by the use of steam- and gasoline-powered internal combustion engines. A farmer’s depression in the South hit in the 1920s before the Great Depression enveloped the country. It was 1932 before student numbers regained their pre-war strength, and then of course the Great Depression had to be dealt with.

In less than another decade, World War II arrived. At the cessation of hostilities in 1945, veterans returning to school under the GI Bill accounted for a sharp rebound in numbers with students matriculating from as far away as New England. By the time the Southern Regional Education Board was established in 1948 (which incidentally was the brainchild of Dean Redding Sugg, 1940-1958), Auburn was providing contract spaces for students from a nine-state area of the Southeast, and at one time boasted an annual enrollment of nearly five hundred students.

Proceeding apace with the growth of the young school during these uncertain times were aggressive programs to eradicate tick fever, tuberculosis, hog cholera, and rabies. These consumed the energies and perennially outstripped the resources of the college, the state association, and the office of the state veterinarian. However, they persevered, and by 1935 the BAI and USDA certified that tuberculosis in Alabama cattle had been reduced to less than 0.05 percent; tick fever was under control...
bicentennial, the college and the profession of veterinary medicine stand at the forefront of the ranks of one medicine.

For a profession that had languished in the shadow of European science for the first 350 years of its existence in the New World, to have emerged to its current stature in the twentieth century is the finest tribute that can be paid to these dedicated men and women who have gone before, and the sternest challenge that can be made to those who carry the torch today. Perhaps Goethe (1749-1832) said it best:

“What you have as heritage, take now as task; For thus you will make it your own!”

Goethe, Faust

Graduating under Dean Cary in 1933, Dr. James Etheridge Greene joined the faculty of Small Animal Medicine and Surgery in 1937. After four years of military service in World War II, he returned as professor and head of his department until he succeeded Dean Sugg in 1958. Dean Greene served with distinction until his retirement in 1977. He was succeeded in turn by John Thomas Vaughan ’55, who served until his retirement in 1995. The current dean, Timothy R. Boosinger (Purdue ’76), is completing his eleventh year at the College’s helm following a decade of impressive growth.

It may be said that the institution’s stability throughout periods of national conflict, economic reversals, and sea changes in science and technology is a reflection of the fact that it has experienced only six changes of leadership in one hundred years. Listing the accomplishments of each of the administrations and of the faculties and their graduates worldwide would require many volumes. May it suffice for the purposes of this too brief account to say that, at the commencement of its

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Tuskegee University

College of Veterinary Medicine, Nursing and Allied Health

History

The School of Veterinary Medicine at Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) was established in 1944. It was the first new veterinary medical program to be started in the United States in twenty-five years.

The idea for the program at Tuskegee was the brainchild of Dr. Frederick Patterson, a veterinarian and president of the institute. The desegregation of public education in the state of Alabama did not take place for another twenty to twenty-five years. President Patterson believed it was timely to seek opportunities for “Negros” to pursue his profession, and especially at a historically black college in the Deep South.

In planning and developing the School of Veterinary Medicine at Tuskegee Institute, Dr. Patterson sought out the advice and counsel of Dr. E. B. Evans, the college veterinarian at Prairie View A & M College in Texas. These collaborators were both graduates (Dr. Patterson, 1923, and Dr. Evans, 1918) of the School of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State College (now Iowa State University). Having been a student of Dr. Evans at Prairie View A & M, Dr. Patterson gives credit to Dr. Evans for his decision to study veterinary medicine.

Dr. Patterson joined the faculty at Tuskegee Institute in 1928 as the college veterinarian. “Dr. Pat”, as he was affectionately known, followed in the footsteps of an Ohio State veterinarian who came to Tuskegee upon completion of his studies in 1910.

At that time there was only one school of veterinary medicine in the Southeast and ten in the United States. Higher education was not well supported in the South. Furthermore, support for southern historically black colleges was minimal. Segregation resulted in the lack of opportunity which led to the paucity of African-American veterinarians throughout the United States. Few schools accepted these students; consequently, the number of graduate African-American veterinarians was low.

At the invitation of Dr. Patterson, who was then president of Tuskegee
Institute, Dr. Evans took leave of absence in 1943 from Prairie View A & M to assist in planning the new veterinary program. The two men recognized early that the shift in southern agriculture away from one-crop (cotton) farming to livestock production would result in the need for more trained veterinarians.

Drs. Patterson and Evans initiated discussions with the deans of several of the existing schools and with the Bureau of Animal Industry and the U.S. Department of Agriculture about the need for such a program, particularly one to be launched at a predominately black institution. Drs. Patterson and Evans identified four major obstacles to this new undertaking: (1) the funding for such a venture would be a major barrier; (2) the program accreditation and acceptance of these graduates by the veterinary profession was problematic; (3) the demand for the professional training of African-American veterinarians had not been ascertained; and (4) the ability of Tuskegee’s School of Veterinary Medicine to recruit the appropriate number of African-American veterinarians as faculty was yet to be determined. In spite of these issues, Drs. Patterson and Evans embarked upon this venture with great passion.

The charter for Tuskegee Institute provided the mechanism for a cooperative arrangement between the college and the state of Alabama. In 1942 President Patterson approached the Honorable Chauncey Sparks, then governor of Alabama, seeking increased levels of support for Tuskegee Institute to begin graduate-level and professional training in veterinary medicine. President Patterson also approached the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation for funding assistance to construct facilities and purchase equipment for the proposed School of Veterinary Medicine. Both the state of Alabama and the Rockefeller Foundation agreed to provide start-up funding.

“Regionalization” was another critical element in the development of the school. In 1948 Tuskegee Institute became a charter member of the Southern Regional Educational Board. The institute was responsible for improving regional service in veterinary medicine in the southeast. Through this arrangement, Tuskegee Institute’s School of Veterinary Medicine was officially designated to train students for twelve southeastern states. Because of the segregation of the races in that era, these states contracted for the training of African-American students at Tuskegee. This became an important additional source of financial support for the fledgling program.

In the fall of 1946, Dean Evans was appointed as president of Prairie View A & M College. Dr. T. S. Williams (KSU ‘35) was named dean of Tuskegee’s School of Veterinary Medicine. As graduation approached for the four students who had survived the many growing pains of such an enormous undertaking, the Council of Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association was sent a formal request...
for an accreditation site visit. In May 1949, following the initial site visit, the council granted the school probationary accreditation. The school became fully accredited during a subsequent site visit and has maintained full accreditation status to this date.

With an initial primary focus on teaching, the school has slowly implemented major program activity in graduate education, leading to a very active research program and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Integrative Biosciences. Today, the school continues its mission to provide an environment that nurtures students and promotes a spirit of active, independent and self-directed learning. The school takes pride in having a very diverse faculty, staff, and student body where research and service in veterinary medicine and related disciplines actively occurs.

In 1995 the School of Veterinary Medicine combined with the School of Nursing and Allied Health. The College of Veterinary Medicine, Nursing and Allied Health promotes a “one medicine” concept, and continues its record of being on the cutting edge of advances in science and medicine.

As testimony to an avant-garde status, Tuskegee University’s School of Veterinary Medicine has a long history of commitment to veterinary service. Limited resources have necessitated unique approaches that partner strong organization with creative funding and non-traditional partnerships. With its targeted strategic plan in place, the Tuskegee University School of Veterinary Medicine is well prepared for the challenges of the twenty-first century. The forceful and steady leadership of Dean E. B. Evans (ISU ‘18) has been followed by that of Deans T. S. Williams (KSU ’35) [1946-1972]; Walter C. Bowie (KSU ’47) [1972-1990]; James A. Ferguson (TUS ’66) [1990-1995]; Alfonza Atkinson (TUS ’73) [1996-2004]; and the current Dean Tsegaye Habtemariam (CSU ’70) [2006 – present]

Several notable program advances were recorded at the school during this era. These include, in collaboration with Howard University and other institutions, pioneering biomedical research on the cardiovascular system using the equine as a model. Three new additions to the physical infrastructure also took place: (1) Patterson Hall, which houses the dean’s office, an auditorium, a library, classrooms, offices, and an audiovisual media center; (2) a teaching hospital, with classrooms, offices, a pharmacy, animal surgical and treatment areas, and housing facilities for large animals; and (3) Williams-Bowie Hall, a state-of-the-art research and information technology center.

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The Alabama Animal Hall of Fame (AAHOF) was started in 2003 by a vote of the executive board of the Alabama Veterinary Medical Association. It was to be a part of the Human Animal Bond Committee chaired at that time by Dr. Faith Drumheller. Dr. Drumheller was in fact the organizer behind the recommendation, the subsequent adoption of the AAHOF, and the development of its charter. The initial induction was held at the annual convention of the Alabama Veterinary Medical Association (ALVMA) in Orange Beach, Alabama, in June 2003. The first inductee was Dakota, a golden retriever owned by Michael Klingfelter. Dakota became Klingfelter’s protector and his best friend, saving his life many times by forewarning him of oncoming heart crises. Dakota was selected by the first AAHOF Committee, chaired by Dr. Drumheller and comprised of Dr. Caroline Schaffer of Tuskegee, Dr. Ann Daves of Mobile, Dr. Belinda Hataway of Montgomery, Dr. Robert Gaddis of Birmingham, Dr. Alvin Atlas of Birmingham, and Dr. Dan Kuykendall of Auburn.

The first committee also in large measure determined the requirements and the protocol necessary for consideration and induction into the hall. Nominees are required to be companion or working animals from the state of Alabama demonstrating extraordinary loyalty, courage, service, or intuitive abilities in their relations with humans. Successful nominees will have demonstrated exceptional ability when compared to similar animals in similar conditions. Documentation of those abilities is critical for consideration and could include written testimony, media coverage, eyewitness accounts, or documentation from a sponsoring organization. Reasons for nomination vary from single events demonstrating extreme courage to lifetime achievement. Nominations can be taken from veterinarians, clients through veterinarians, humane groups within the state, or constituent veterinary associations. Nominees may be living or dead but must have the permission of the owner, trainer, or representative to be nominated. Nominations must include at least one photograph if available, two or more letters supporting the nomination, and the
appropriate documentation. Each nominee is placed in a pool of nominees and considered for three years or until it is elected into the hall. The animal is not considered again if it does not achieve the required number of votes in any of the three years. To be elected into the hall, three quarters of the committee vote for the candidate.

Due to time and space constraints at the annual convention, the initial induction ceremony did not appropriately present the complete attributes of the inductee, but it certainly demonstrated the need for such a ceremony and emphasized the power of the human-animal bond. In late 2003 Dr. Drumheller asked Dr. Michael Newman to chair the committee. At the following executive board meeting of the ALVMA, Dr. Newman presented a proposal to redesign the induction ceremony to be a “black tie” dinner and a stand-alone event so that it would not be part of the annual meeting. The proposal would allow expansion of the ceremony to include more inductees, selected speakers, and entertainment, making the ceremony more appealing each year and demonstrating our profession’s great respect for those individuals who nurtured these extraordinary animals. In addition, the committee opted to rotate the ceremony among the four major metropolitan areas of the state which include: Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, and Montgomery.

The second induction was held at the Wynfrey Hotel in Birmingham on January 17, 2004. That induction included: Pioneer, a gentle hippotherapy pony who did his work at the Marianne Green Henry Special Equestrian Program at the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind in Talladega; Red Dog, a working bloodhound with incredible tracking skills from the St. Clair Correctional K-9 unit in Springville; Paxton, a service guide dog who heroically saved his owner’s life and who at the time lived in Anniston; and Fred, a world famous character of a mixed breed dog who adopted the town of Rockford, Alabama. All four animals were nominated by veterinarians: Dale Lowery, Charles Payton, Paula Thorne, and John Christian, respectively. Local publicity in both print and electronic media outlets was generated, especially in that activity she has been unsurpassed and deserving of her award.

Between the second and third induction ceremonies, the AAHOF Committee introduced an award to be given to individuals who have performed work benefiting people and...
The committee named these awards after two men who dedicated their lives to human and animal welfare through their careers and by their example. Dr. Walter C. Bowie was the dean at Tuskegee School of Veterinary Medicine for eighteen years and was a leader in developing pet-facilitated therapy programs for people which are models for use today. Dr. M. K. Heath had a general practice in Birmingham for years but returned to Auburn where for many more years he helped turn students into learned, compassionate colleagues through his demeanor and teaching ability. The award was appropriately named the Bowie-Heath Humanitarian Award (BHHA).

The first BHHA was given to Nina Beal from Huntsville whose long history of animal care included helping to start the Greater Huntsville Animal Shelter and later her own shelter called the Ark. Her efforts to educate the public about animals were extraordinary as was her dedication to homeless and unwanted companion animals. Nancy Pett from Decatur, also dedicated to the care of homeless animals, showed impressive interest in teaching people about animals and their care, particularly at-home pet care and training. Mimi Bynum and Connie Gates together started a pet therapy organization in Huntsville, which grew from two people and their two pets (Connie’s Annie and Mimi’s Natchez) to an organization with some 50,000 annual visits to people in need of the unconditional love only animals can give.

The fourth induction ceremony was held in Montgomery on September 9, 2006. The date was chosen to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, tragedy because of a special keynote speaker, Michael Hingson. Hingson, who has been blind from birth, worked in the World Trade Center in New York in an office located on the seventy-eighth floor below the plane impact area. On that fateful day, he and his guide dog, Roselle, were able to escape the building. He shared their inspiring story at the induction ceremony and in numerous media interviews while in Montgomery.

The inductees of 2006 include Gucci, Matilda, and Muffin. Gucci was terribly abused and maimed as a puppy, but he survived thanks to Dr. Douglas James of Mobile. Gucci’s plight eventually prompted the Alabama Legislature to pass a new and stronger animal abuse law, appropriately called the “Gucci Law.” Gucci was nominated by Dr. Laurie Green from Mobile. Matilda, the oldest chicken on record and a national entertainer, was also inducted. She was owned and handled by Donna Barton and was nominated by Britt Animal Hospital of Birmingham. The third inductee of 2006 was a brave little Boston terrier named Muffin, who saved her owners from a fire in their home in Hueytown. She was owned and loved by Bobby and Judy Wall and was nominated by Dr. A. David Hayes also of Hueytown.

The fourth ceremony honored three BHHA recipients. Lynne Fridley was chosen because her work in humane shelters and for the Maddie’s Fund has had great influence in animal care across the state. Jama Singley won the award because of her care and diligence as the chief animal cruelty investigator with the Department of Animal Protection Services, a division of the Lee County Humane Society. Dr. Janet M. Haslerig received the award because of her commitment to the humane care of animals as the first and only president of the Macon County Humane Society.

Through the first four years of the Alabama Animal Hall of Fame, the association has seen great strides in growth and awareness across the state. While the first induction was barely noticed, the second was attended by 86 participants. Attendance of the third ceremony rose to 142, and the fourth was attended by 166 interested individuals. Media attention has more than doubled between the third and fourth induction, and the number of nominations has also increased. The A A HOF truly reflects the strength of the human-animal bond and the relationship we have with animals.

It has been said that people would never have become civilized without animals. The emotions generated by stories highlighted at the Alabama Animal Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony strongly support that statement.
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