February 24, 2009

Dear Constituents of the OSU Center for Veterinary Health Sciences,

You may be unaware of a recently published article in the *Daily O'Collegian* which criticized some alleged teaching practices at the OSU veterinary center. As a graduate of our college and dean of the veterinary center, I want to correct the many false allegations contained in that article.

First, the gift that Madeleine Pickens gave to Oklahoma State University was undesignated and was never earmarked for the veterinary college. Therefore, there was no gift to be taken back by Madeleine Pickens as was stated in the article. Each and every gift that is proposed for the OSU Center for Veterinary Health Sciences is carefully reviewed to determine if the donor's stipulations fit with the mission of the veterinary college. In certain instances, some well intended gifts must be refused when they do not fit the mission or best interests of our academic programs.

Second, all veterinary colleges are under strict guidelines regarding the use of animals in teaching and research. At OSU, our animal facilities and protocols are regularly reviewed by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), industrial partners, and the Council on Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association. Inspection reports are public information and are made available for outside review. Our academic programs have maintained full accreditation for the past 25 years. Our faculty regularly review curriculum content and practices, seeking always to provide the best available options for training veterinary students.

Third, our faculty believes that live animal surgery is essential for the training of competent and confident primary care veterinarians. All surgical protocols are reviewed annually by faculty and all are approved by the IACUC. Our animals are acquired from brokers who purchase dogs from animal shelters and other approved sources. These dogs are already marked for euthanasia by these shelters and we believe it is better to use existing animals that are scheduled for euthanasia than to use purpose bred dogs. Proper anesthesia and care are given to the animals throughout all procedures. No more than two surgeries are ever performed on any one animal, and of these, only one involves recovery from anesthesia.

Students who desire not to perform surgical training on live animals are allowed to train on cadavers. This latter method, in our opinion, does not provide the level of training that live animal surgery will, but is allowed. The quote in the article that "bones are broken and organs such as kidneys are removed" is totally and unequivocally false. The only organs which are removed include the uterus and ovaries in females and testicles in males. Both procedures are basic for learning proper spay and neuter surgeries.

In closing, we are proud of the 3,165 competent, confident, practice-ready veterinarians who have graduated from this program and gone on to be some of the most successful veterinarians in the world. Our veterinary students are highly sought by employers upon graduation. It is common for these students to have many employment options when they graduate. As veterinarians, we take an oath to protect animal health, relieve animal suffering, conserve animal resources, promote public health and advance medical knowledge. We teach our veterinary students to practice conscientiously, with dignity and in keeping with the principles of veterinary medical ethics. It is a lifelong obligation to continually improve our professional knowledge and competence and we take this very seriously. Our faculty and staff work extremely hard to make our program one of the most successful in the country, even with the challenge of limited state financial support and resources and limited faculty numbers.

As our constituents, we assure you that we are conducting our teaching program with the most professional, ethical, compassionate, and humane standards possible. It is important that you continue to respect and value the mission of the OSU Center for Veterinary Health Sciences and we invite you to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Lorenz, DVM, ACVIM
Professor and Dean