



**Royal  
Veterinary  
College**  
University of London

Annual Review 2008–09



Expanding horizons

# Annual Review 2008-09

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## Introduction from Professor Quintin McKellar

*The evolution of the RVC*

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Darwin would undoubtedly have approved. The College has evolved in a very competitive environment; in every aspect it has adapted to external pressures and embraced the opportunities made available to it. The most significant opportunity has been for growth; in thirty years the College has grown from one which graduated approximately 60 veterinary students, to one which graduates 240 veterinary students (the percentage of those which are women has changed from 40% to 80%!). Thirty years ago we produced exclusively veterinary surgeons, we now educate the full veterinary team – nurses, scientists and vets, together with related postgraduates. The College had an income of £2m, it is now £62m. The Queen Mother Hospital had not been dreamt of, and we now see 14,656 dogs and 10,683 cats with almost 1,000 other small animals each year.

We had fewer than 60 academic members of staff, we now employ more than 200 out of a total of 800 staff. There had never been a woman Professor of the College, we now have eight! We have moved from the obligatory three surgery and three medicine residents to 74 Clinical Training Scholars. In the last year the College has appointed the first Professor of Veterinary Nursing, the first Professor of Veterinary Business and Enterprise, and the first veterinary Senior Lecturer in Agricultural Economics in Britain and are leading in these areas globally. Furthermore the College has been awarded its own Degree Awarding Powers, although it will remain an integral member of the University of London and will continue to award University of London degrees.

What of our future? We have truly moved from a small local veterinary school to a global player. Next year we shall begin teaching our Veterinary Nursing degree in Hong Kong and we shall attract more overseas

students than ever before to the RVC. These students will bring resource to the College but also much more; they will enhance the cultural richness of our learning environment. Our research is international and we have research partners in more than 30 countries and teach students from 56 countries. Our research is adapting with changes to target animal, human and pathogen populations, towards infectious diseases of global importance, and particularly those transmitted by arthropods. In companion animals our focus is embracing the changes which are occurring in man's living environment and behaviours, and which are being reflected in his pets and embraced by the term 'lifestyle disease'.

Our growth in numbers and activity will be reflected by growth in the estate. We are constructing a new Equine theatre and have plans for an equine rehabilitation centre. We are doubling the number of student beds in our accommodation at Hawkshead and are building a new Teaching and Research Centre and new refectory. We are also planning a new swimming pool and gymnasium. At Camden we are building a small gym and bar (these will no doubt contribute in equal and opposite measure to our lifestyle programmes!) and our most ambitious project is the cover in the south lightwell. This will become a learning resource centre and social amenity transforming the Hobday building into a campus.

Our contemporary curricula, cosmopolitan community and creative research will encourage competent, progressive and cultured graduates who will lead our Professions and make outstanding contributions to tomorrow's society.

*by Quintin McKellar, Principal*

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# Evolving the BVetMed

*Implementing the new curriculum*

*“Change is inevitable, Change is constant”*

Benjamin Disraeli

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I am sure this is a response familiar to anyone who has ever proposed changing something; particularly if what they were proposing to change was already a well established and successful formula.

The BVetMed course, like any course of study leading to registration as a veterinary surgeon, must enable a student to acquire the appropriate combination of knowledge and skills to bring them to the point where they can operate at the level expected of a newly qualified veterinary surgeon. With such a well defined end point and such clearly defined criteria for competency how can there be room for modification or variation?

What such an understandable reaction misses is the truth encapsulated in the above quote by Disraeli. Change occurs constantly; around us and sometimes despite us. If we do not adapt to change we risk becoming outdated. For a veterinary course the risk is that we will be educating graduates who are ill prepared for the world into which they will graduate.

There are two distinct arenas of change which affect the veterinary course. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, there is the growing amount, and changing type, of information that underpins the practice of veterinary medicine. There are whole scientific disciplines existing today which were in their infancy only 20 or 30 years ago; perhaps the best illustration of this is molecular biology. Despite their relative novelty these disciplines already have a profound impact on our ability to manage health and disease in animals. The development and success of these new disciplines mandates their inclusion in any veterinary curriculum; if change only led to the incorporation of new material the net effect would be a continuous growth in the size of the course and amount of material that students were required to master before graduation.

We thus have to face the problem of “content overload”. In order to avoid overwhelming students with factual content it is necessary to focus on core principles that enable understanding and application of knowledge, rather than simply acquisition of knowledge. We cannot “future-proof” our graduates for any further developments that will occur during their careers but if we develop their ability to source, understand and apply information we can help them to cope with the changes that they will inevitably encounter.

This leads on to the second arena of change which affects our course; improved understanding of teaching and learning leads us to question the assumptions inherent in traditional methods of instruction and assessment. Is the best preparation for the diverse career paths that can be followed by veterinary surgeons really attending lectures, memorizing information and passing tests which primarily assess factual knowledge? On a daily basis veterinary surgeons work in teams with other professionals and are faced with problems that require solutions. These are not only clinical problems but may be problems that fall into the broader realm of professionalism, such as ethics and welfare. How can we develop undergraduate students as team-workers and problem solvers if all we do is provide information for them to learn?

We believe that our new curriculum goes a long way to addressing some of the problems described above. There are a number of explicit stated aims of the curriculum. These include reduction of factual content (of the order of 25% reduction in lectures) to avoid “content overload”. We explicitly concentrate on teaching and applying the principles which underlie many aspects of veterinary work. We are developing students’ sense of team-working through group work. From the first year of the course we develop our

undergraduates’ sense of professionalism through the teaching of professional studies including ethics and communication. Through directed learning exercises we ensure that students are able to gather and apply information and avoid simply providing them with information that they must learn. We cannot lose sight of the fact that we must also develop students’ practical skills in addition to their intellectual skills, and a focus on the “Day One Skills” outlined by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons is also at the heart of the curriculum. The change in our methods of teaching and learning must be matched by developments in the way we assess students so that we can test whether or not students are acquiring the knowledge and skills we wish them to develop. At the same time we must be able to assure the public that the veterinary surgeons we train are competent at the skills expected of them.

So how will we know if our new curriculum is a success? If ultimately our aim is to provide undergraduates with an education that better prepares them for a successful career, we will not be able to fully judge its success for many years i.e. until they are part-way through their careers. We are, however, closely monitoring the progress of cohorts of students as they advance through the course and regularly obtaining feedback from them. Three spontaneous (and representative) quotes from students, who had recently completed a section of the course which included clinical case-based problem-solving exercises, provide encouraging evidence that what we are trying to do is working.

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The sessions were described as:

- “complementary to lectures, allowing a more problem-solving approach ... rather than purely learning information”.
- having “allowed us to start to develop critical thinking skills and apply information given in lectures”.
- (perhaps most importantly) having “made you think like a vet”.

The first intake to the new curriculum occurred in 2007 and this group of students has now reached the halfway point in the course. There are promising signs of their development as independent learners and we look forward to following their further successes in future.

*by Professor Adrian Boswood*

## Evolving the BVetMed

*Transforming pre-clinical tutoring of BVetMed students*



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The RVC has run an effective and valued pre-clinical tutorial system for its students for many years, but the format has been changed significantly over the last five years. Since the introduction of the Personal Development Portfolio (PDP) and subsequently, with the development of the new BVetMed curriculum, an academic-based tutorial system has now been instituted. We now run a dual support system covering pastoral, professional and academic issues.

It was thought student support mechanisms should be standardised and professionalised as students were seeking advice on increasingly complex issues. Thus, student support officers (including learning, finance, disability and counselling) were employed. These changes freed the tutorial system of its primarily personal support role and allowed it to best support learning and scholarship. Whilst PDP remains a focus along with pastoral care, the new system of partially scripted subject-based tutorials, which is now running for its third year, has encouraged better student engagement. I consider that it can be counted as a real success, the tutees still appreciating the “point of contact”, and the tutors enjoying the opportunity to have meaningful discussions about science and its applications.

The typical tutorial for me starts with general conversation about the course, tutee issues and concerns. This may be followed by discussion of PDP portfolio entries, with time for thought about the issues raised (tutees are prompted to review an aspect of their learning before each tutorial). Often there are placement reports to mention, and there may be discussion of progress towards meeting targets. There may be a recent assessment to reflect on as well (tutors get sent results), although one has to be sensitive about individual performance, especially during early tutorials before tutees know and trust each other. Tutorials are

also an opportunity to discuss College procedures; identify and address any current student issues and correct misapprehensions. For the majority of the time, tutees lead a discussion on the topic for the session, with a small amount of input from me as tutor, aimed at developing the students’ points, inviting them to make connections and develop their understanding.

It is creditworthy that the RVC has been able to maintain and even improve its small group tutoring, even as student numbers have grown. The new tutoring system expands the students’ education, but also maintains the best of previous systems (the academic contact point). So what of the future for tutoring? Its crucial role as a staff-student interface should be maintained and improved through mutual trust and benefit. The possibilities for near-peer tutoring are exciting, providing real opportunity for effective contextualisation of their education and vertical integration. Perhaps a role in delivering valued feedback will be expanded upon. There is no doubt its continued success will be ensured by further adaptation and the crucial participation and enthusiasm of tutors. Regardless of any additions to the system, the RVC aims to maintain the true academic aim of our tutorials to be that of mutual exploration rather than teaching.

*by Dr Nigel Goode, Senior Lecturer*

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*“Learning in a tutorial is much more enjoyable as it is an interactive process which I believe aids my learning. I like that we get set work which is relevant to the current subject that we are learning which I can then discuss at length with my tutor and the rest of the group. If we are not set questions relating to the current subject, we are set work to get us ready for upcoming events at Uni.*”

*“I think my favourite aspect of tutoring is the fact that you are with the same group members throughout the year. The group becomes a mini support system with whom you can talk about loads of different matters. You also form close friendships, which I think is vital, especially when living away from home.”*

*BVetMed Year 1 Student*

In August 2009 the Privy Council, the section of Her Majesty's Government which advises on the exercise of prerogative powers including approving an institution as competent to grant degrees, informed the College that it had been successful in its application for Degree Awarding Powers (DAP).

From 1949, since becoming a constituent College, the RVC has conferred degrees of the University of London. So why did we feel the need to apply to award degrees in our own name?

The Council of the University of London asked all the constituent colleges, including the RVC, to secure our own Degree Awarding Powers. If each college demonstrated fitness to award degrees, then collectively the standard of the London degree could be assured. The College also judged that it would be a valuable process to inform ourselves that our systems and procedures are robust as we reach a position of maturity as an institution.

The QAA were asked by the Privy Council to report on our suitability to award degrees and appointed an audit team who undertook a series of observations, scrutiny of documents and meetings with staff and students at the College between January 2008 and February 2009. They then compiled a report for the Privy Council, recommending that we be awarded DAP. Running concurrently with the DAP scrutiny the QAA also conducted an Institutional Audit, which we came through successfully.

Following the success of our application the RVC is now the only vet school in the UK with Degree Awarding Powers. Although we do not intend to use these powers in the immediate future it shows how we have matured as an institution and can be judged against much larger institutions. It also shows that the QAA has confidence in the RVC as an institution.

*by Mrs Eve Pomerantz, Quality Assurance Manager*



The RVC is not only a provider of typical undergraduate and postgraduate education. It provides several well-recognised learning programmes from CPD to Distance Learning, all of which are being developed and delivered with the latest and most flexible technology. This enables the RVC to adapt quickly to changes in the way its learners are studying, the economy or even to government policy.

To follow are three programmes currently running internationally and in the UK which demonstrate the broad range of the RVC's educational impact.

### **Distance Learning**

The RVC's Distance Learning programme has been operating since 1998, when the first MSc in Livestock Health and Production was launched. The second MSc course in Veterinary Epidemiology and Public Health started in 2004 and the entire programme now has over 250 students, either studying for the MSc, the Postgraduate Diploma, the Postgraduate Certificate or taking a short course.

Distance Learning is evolving to become a learning mode of choice, giving people from all over the world the opportunity to access training that they would not be able to access under normal circumstances. The world is an increasingly inter-connected place and the huge leaps in technological advancements over the years have allowed people to communicate, work and study with colleagues from other countries without having to physically re-locate. Education providers worldwide are fast-recognising the changing nature of education provision and there is a move towards more flexible approaches to delivering courses. The RVC has seized upon this changing global trend and our programme has allowed professionals interested in pursuing postgraduate studies in the broad veterinary field to do so without the difficulty of giving up their positions or leaving their families – as they would have to do with traditional postgraduate training. With representation from close to 50 countries, our Distance Learning student body boasts a unique global community; this international reach firmly places the RVC among the leading global providers of veterinary education.

*by Dr Christine Thurairaja-McKeever,  
Distance Learning Director*

# RVC Education in a changing world

*Adapting our delivery*

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## Continuing Professional Development

Traditionally, veterinarians and veterinary nurses have fulfilled their continuing professional development needs by attendance at face-to-face courses ranging from small seminars to large congresses. However, delivering CPD by this method has disadvantages for some participants. Participants must physically attend a course which is often located some distance from their home or place of work. In addition to the cost of the course, there are travel and accommodation costs to consider. This is of particular concern for those located in regions of the UK or the world not well served by CPD providers. There is a cost to the practice when staff are away and sole practitioners often have difficulty finding locum cover to permit them to attend courses, and even if they do, such cover adds to the cost. Veterinarians and nurses who have responsibilities for the care of children or family members can find it difficult to get away to attend CPD – this is becoming an increasing issue with the greater proportion of women in the profession who work part time. And finally – there is usually not a lot of opportunity to reflect and embed knowledge gained at courses that only run for a few days at most.

As a result of these diverse issues, online CPD has become increasingly attractive for many professionals as they seek to fulfill their CPD requirements. The RVC CPD Unit has developed several forms of CPD that not only reach out to veterinarians and veterinary nurses practising in the UK, but also to the international veterinary community. RVC online CPD does far more than passively deliver learning materials to the end user. Our online e-cpd courses run for between six and nine weeks and allow veterinarians and veterinary nurses from around the world to participate in interactive and in depth online learning. The courses are structured learning opportunities moderated by expert clinical staff

and provide a wide variety of learning materials such as case presentations and assessments, radiographs, downloadable reference sources (notes, text book references and relevant journal articles), quizzes, weblinks and online discussions. In addition, we also run online interactive two-hour lectures; these allow a participant anywhere in the world to hear the lecturer and see slides, radiographs and videos and allows interaction between participants and the lecturer. For those participants who cannot “attend” the live lectures, recorded versions are available online for convenient viewing. Online learning support is also provided to our Certificate of Advanced Veterinary Practice candidates who may use the Blackboard virtual learning environment to access learning material that supports their individual study program for the certificate as well as the RVC library and discussion boards.

The growth of the RVC online learning community has been significant – in 2007 and 2008, 20% of our delegates participated in online CPD, by 2009 the percentage had increased to 31%. There was a 61% increase in online participants between 2008 and 2009. We anticipate that this growth will continue as more and more veterinarians and nurses access online resources to enhance their CPD experience. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, perhaps summed up best by the following comment from a recent participant – “Probably the most useful and most likely to ‘stick’ CPD I have ever experienced!”.

*by Dr Jill Maddison, Director of Professional Development*

## Veterinary Education

Many veterinary teaching institutes around the world are recognising the need to adapt and change their curricula and modes of delivery to match student needs and societal demands. This is particularly important with the rapidly mounting threat of trans-boundary diseases and global environmental changes on the supply of meat and milk, which need to be increased to meet the demands of an expanding global population. Increasing numbers of pet populations in many developing countries are forcing these countries to train veterinarians with different skills and the need to adapt and change curricula and teaching methods is urgent. The RVC has joined forces with other leading veterinary schools in recognising this need.

2009 saw the launch of a new programme leading to an MSc in Veterinary Education which is designed to train those involved in the teaching and training of veterinary professionals. This has been the result of several years of planning and research on teaching, assessment and skills training in the veterinary and paraveterinary fields. The need for a specific programme for the veterinary and paraveterinary sector on competency-based training and assessment has been emerging gradually. Until now there have been no postgraduate programmes in Education specifically designed for veterinary educators. The RVC has a unique academy in the LIVE Centre, which will be leading the field in veterinary education through the development of this new qualification.

To be a successful educational institute it is necessary to develop teachers and maintain a community of practice. Teaching is a professional skill. This skill can be learned and practised to the highest standard by understanding the principles of teaching, assessment, student support and using relevant teaching technologies to provide the best learning experiences to the students. Through this unique MSc in Veterinary Education we can sustain the changing needs of the veterinary professional.

*by Dr Ayona Silva-Fletcher, Course Director*

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# The ORBIS Project

Tackling employability in the new reality

## ORBIS Interns

From Left to right:

Farzad Ahmad Khayrzad, Jayanie Meinerikandathevan, Nick Sawers



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The past two years have been tumultuous for all sectors and have affected graduates especially badly. The ORBIS project is a fine example of how the RVC is responding to the new economic reality and tackling employability issues head on.

The ORBIS (Overcome Recession: BioScience Investment in Skills) Programme is a graduate internship scheme led by the Royal Veterinary College and The London BioScience Innovation Centre (LBIC). In May we received £493,000 from HEFCE's Economic Challenge Innovation Fund; a rapid response grant targeted at the "graduate recession". ORBIS will place 60 unemployed graduates with a variety of companies including human and veterinary focused biotechs, medical device companies, clinical research organisations and global pharmaceutical giants. The interns are paid £220 per week for 26-weeks as a tax free training bursary, and receive 12-days of bio-business training at LBIC whilst also benefitting from an inter-company mentoring support network. To date we have placed 42 interns with companies. The final cohort will start in early 2010. Over 40 distinct graduate-level internship placements have already been offered by companies; due to a freeze on graduate recruitment the funded ORBIS Programme has been warmly received across the commercial bio-science sector.

by Ms Rochelle Symons, ORBIS Project Manager

## Hypha Discovery Ltd

Hypha Discovery Ltd is a university spin-out with less than 10 employees and has been running for nearly five years. The company provides contract research services to pharmaceutical and bio-science companies and employs proprietary technology to produce patentable, novel molecules with pharmaceutical and industrial potential. Having now reached a point in its development where the company has proven the discovery potential of its technology, it is beginning to work collaboratively with the pharmaceutical sector to find novel drug development compounds in other therapeutic areas. The company's CEO, Liam Evans, needed a qualified person but would have been unable to fund someone of graduate calibre in the current financial climate. This would have meant re-directing resources and delaying research which would have had a negative impact on their business. Liam feels strongly that graduates need to be trained so that they have industrial experience. By taking on an ORBIS intern Hypha's research work has progressed at a good pace. The intern has been in place for several months. He is in a role that follows on from his PhD studies but as it is on a larger scale and involves commercial deadlines and accuracy, he is better able to appreciate the demands required of a bio-science business. As the intern moves through the ORBIS training programme it is hoped that he will apply his new knowledge and skills in his working practice and enable Hypha to develop further.

Nick Sawers, an ORBIS intern placed at LBIC, describes the challenge faced by new graduates in the current economic climate, and the opportunities provided by the ORBIS Programme.

## Life as an ORBIS intern – Nick Sawers

Graduating from university was a daunting prospect. No longer was I reassured that my imminent future was planned out, big decisions needed to be made. I was glad to finish university, but was feeling both excited and nervous about the "big wide world". My last year as a Genetics student at Nottingham University was spent mainly in a laboratory working on my 10,000-word dissertation. After completion I knew the lab was not for me. For my career, I wanted to keep my interest in science, but have the challenge and diversity of business. Proud of my achievement to narrow down my career path, I soon realised how broad business is and that getting experience was going to be the key in finding my niche.

Almost immediately I found the Catch 22 in the job world; you need experience to get a job, but you can't get experience without a job – particularly during a credit crunch and global recession! The ORBIS internship provides the solution for this; an opportunity for talented graduates who want to develop their skills and gain valuable experience. It gave me the perfect opportunity to try out different aspects of business like market analysis, operations, business development and energy management. I have been given varied independent projects to work on whilst knowing I have the support of my supervisor and mentor. Learning how to interact in business, acting in negotiations and meetings, has all been great experience for me. Mix this with 12 days of high quality business training and I will have gained essential skills for success and have a platform to aim high.

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We recently had our first business training day on networking skills which were then put to the test at a London Biotechnology Network event. Talking to business professionals in the bio-science sector at the event and during my day-to-day job has given me an insight into the business environment and what employers want. This was also a chance to get to know the other ORBIS interns at various other companies like GSK, Novartis Animal Health and Hills Pet Nutrition. With so many backgrounds and career ambitions, it was great to find out about the other interns and hopefully make some friends and potentially useful contacts for life.

The ORBIS internship is giving me a great opportunity to develop skills and make myself marketable. I hope to land a graduate training programme starting next year, in which my ORBIS internship will be the unique selling point on my application.

by Nick Sawers, ORBIS Intern

For more information on the ORBIS Programme email [orbis@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:orbis@rvc.ac.uk), go to [www.rvc.ac.uk/enterprise/orbis](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/enterprise/orbis) or pop over to LBIC and have a chat to Nick or ORBIS Project Manager, Rochelle Symons.

## The Research Assessment Exercise

*An excellent result*

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The Royal Veterinary College's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) outcome was a fantastic result. Overall the RVC is now ranked as England's best school in the Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science unit of assessment, for institutions whose research is exclusively veterinary related. Additionally the RVC is now ranked 3rd out of a total of 30 other institutions in this unit of assessment based on the number of academics returned (102.7fte) and the quality profile we achieved. Given we returned 75% of our academic staff it is extremely pleasing to see that 55% of our research was viewed as internationally excellent (3\*) or world class (4\*). This positive result is indicative of the quantity and quality of research taking place at the RVC. When this is viewed in light of the RVC's incredible growth since the last RAE return (we returned 67 fte academics in 2001, the 2008 return was an increase of 54%), and the fact that some of the metrics favour organisations with a much more stable growth rate, it makes our success all the more impressive.

The RVC has been expanding its research function since the RAE 2001, with an increase of 45 active research staff taking up positions during this time. A large percentage of these new researchers are young academics at the start of their career – a fact reflected by the RVC returning 37 academics aged between 30-40 years in the RAE 2008, and that 28 of these staff had completed their PhD within the last five years. Much of the funding that new and younger researchers had recently attracted was yet to be spent when we submitted our RAE data, meaning that the RAE results do not reflect the full scope of the RVC's research ability and potential. In addition, a significant proportion of the number of academic researchers that we included in the return spend half their time, or more, providing clinical service (30%) and doing research involving the clinical caseload. The RAE methodology of assessment does not work successfully for those

researching the clinical caseload – as their research assistants are residents rather than PhD students, who could not be included in the RAE return.

To illustrate the previous points our spend from externally funded research grants and contracts has increased by 50% since 2004-05, after adjusting for inflation and the increase in academic staff numbers. This shows our newly appointed researchers are working with established academics to increase our success in attracting funding to undertake research. Indeed, 2009 was our most successful year to date in attracting external grant funding with awards totaling £13.1m being made, including our first BBSRC LoLa grant.

The research strategy launched as part of our Corporate Plan in 2009 aims to build on this recent success and establish multi-disciplinary research programmes that address questions from molecule to the patient or population level drawing widely on academic expertise across the College. Because of our success in the RAE 2008 and the additional funding it has brought, we have been able to build on our quantitative biology strength by appointing a full time statistician devoted to supporting postgraduate training and research. We have also been able to attract two new research professors, with complementary expertise in Muscle Biology (bioinformatics and gene therapy) who will be key players in the future of our Lifestyle research programme. No doubt the next few years will be challenging in terms of attaining funding for research. Nevertheless, because of our excellent performance in the RAE 2008, the RVC is in a strong position at the present time.

*by Professor Jonathan Elliott, Vice Principal, Research*

## International Research at the RVC

*Making connections across the globe*

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The Wellcome Trust has awarded Professor Joe Brownlie £149,909 for a period of 60 months as collaborator of the Southern Africa Centre for Infectious Disease Surveillance (SACIDS) of £6.09m. The new director of this centre will be Professor Mark Rweyemamu who is currently a visiting Professor at the Royal Veterinary College.

The Grant has been awarded as part of a wider programme which aims to build a critical mass of sustainable local research and capacity across Africa, by strengthening African universities and research institutions.

The RVC is part of a consortium which comprises Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania), National Institute for Communicable Diseases (South Africa), University of Zambia (Zambia), Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique), Universite de Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo), Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (Tanzania), National Institute for Medical Research (Tanzania), Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute (South Africa), University of Pretoria (South Africa), Stellensbosch University (South Africa), International Livestock Research Institute (Kenya) and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The consortium is known as the Southern Africa Centre for Infectious Disease Surveillance (SACIDS). It will be implementing a programme known as "One Medicine Africa-UK Research Capacity Development Partnership Programme for Infectious Diseases in Southern Africa".

This new initiative has created consortia focused on building a critical mass of sustainable local research capacity across Africa, by strengthening universities and research institutions and developing research networks. The aim of the initiative is to ensure that African universities become more centrally involved in health research endeavours in Africa. By bringing teaching, service commitment and research together, the aim is to develop the next generation of African researchers. Each consortium will focus on the needs of African universities to become platforms that can sustainably support internationally competitive scientific research.

SACIDS will be a virtual centre linking national institutions involved in the surveillance of infectious diseases underpinned with research by a consortium of academic and research institutions in Southern Africa. SACIDS brings together human, animal and plant health sectors in five pilot countries: Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Zambia and South Africa.

The vision of SACIDS is to protect Southern Africa from devastating infectious diseases affecting the health of humans, animals (i.e. both terrestrial and aquatic) and plants (i.e. crop, forest and ornamental), thereby promoting livelihoods, socio-economic development including market access across the environment.

*by Professor Joe Brownlie, Professor of Veterinary Pathology*



Claire Wathes (front row, left of centre) and Geoff Pollott (left of Claire Wathes) with the RVC Research Team at Huazhong Agricultural University.

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Fertility in dairy cow populations worldwide is declining. There is strong circumstantial evidence for an association between this fall in fertility and the rapid genetic selection for increased milk production which has occurred over the past 40 years. It is therefore important for the development of a sustainable dairy industry to design selection criteria which place increased importance on fertility and longevity whilst maintaining an adequate production of milk.

The Chinese Government is keen to expand dairy production to meet the rapidly increasing demands of their population. This has presented the RVC with an opportunity to collaborate and we have started to work with Huazhong Agricultural University (HZAU, one of the premier agricultural institutes in China) on a project entitled "Identification of genetic markers associated with fertility and longevity traits in dairy cows". The initial "Proof of concept" award from ICUK enabled Professor Claire Wathes and Dr Zhangrui Cheng to visit HZAU in 2008 and meet our main collaborator, Professor Shujun Zhang. We have since received additional funding through an ICUK Partnership Grant and a BBSRC China Partnering Award, which have facilitated further exchange visits and been used to initiate the scientific programme. Dr Geoff Pollott has also joined the RVC team to add expertise in genetics.

Rapid recent developments in sequencing the bovine genome have led to the development of a commercially available 50K single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) chip. This can be used to genotype populations of cattle and to link this genetic data with phenotypic information. This technology is still very new, but can potentially be used to develop genomic selection criteria for traits which are difficult to measure, such as fertility. In this project we are obtaining relevant phenotypic and management data on a population of Chinese Holstein dairy cows and collecting samples from the same animals for DNA analysis. These will shortly be analysed on the chips to identify SNPs which are associated with relevant traits. Data from the Chinese cows will also be compared with results from UK animals. The long-term goal of this programme is to breed dairy cows for the differing environments in China and the UK which combine good health and performance.

*by Professor D Claire Wathes, Professor of Veterinary Reproduction and Dr Geoffrey Pollott, Senior Lecturer in Bioinformatics and Genetics*



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The Veterinary Epidemiology & Public Health (VEPH) Group is a partner in a DfID funded project aimed at the development of policies for the control of avian influenza in south-east Asia and Africa. The other partners are the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and University of California, Berkeley. The project work has provided the VEPH Group with exciting opportunities for conducting epidemiological field studies and risk assessments in selected Asian and African countries in partnership with local government veterinary authorities and universities. A key concept of the project is the integration of epidemiological, economic and institutional aspects for dealing more effectively with the challenge of infectious disease outbreaks. Amongst its wide range of advisory and research work, the VEPH Group also has extensive research activities on African Swine Fever (ASF), funded by the Wellcome Trust and the European Union. This work relates to understanding the epidemiology of ASF in various African countries which is complicated by the regional variation in transmission cycles of the ASF virus, some of them involving populations of different wild pig species. A key element of the activities for the Wellcome Trust and the EU project is the development of risk assessment models which will allow identification of tailored locally relevant and sustainable control programmes. Recent introduction of ASF virus into eastern Europe and its subsequent regional spread has demonstrated that this infection is a significant threat also for European countries and gives additional relevance to the work of the VEPH Group on this topic.

*by Professor Dirk Pfeiffer, Professor of Veterinary Epidemiology*

Meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) are an increasing public health problem in hospitals and health care facilities. The PILGRIM project ([www.fp7-pilgrim.eu](http://www.fp7-pilgrim.eu)) uses a specific, pig-adapted strain of MRSA to investigate the epidemiology, ecology, pathogenicity and evolution of MRSA. The key objective of the project is to develop and evaluate new intervention strategies against resistant bacteria. A technology testing platform will be developed and made available to industry partners to assess the efficiency of control methods for MRSA and other zoonotic pathogens. The PILGRIM consortium consists of 12 partners from six countries and is coordinated by the RVC.

*by Professor Katharina Staerk, Professor of Veterinary Public Health*

Increasingly the challenges for veterinary science and animal welfare require global solutions. Thus it is seen essential for the College to develop its influence beyond UK shores, particularly through new partnerships in Hong Kong and mainland China.

The College's international strategy aims to promote RVC's international relations, global profile and international competitiveness, specifically:

- Positioning RVC as a leading international teaching and research institute.
- Attracting the best staff and students from all corners of the world.
- Providing an international education and experience for students and staff, to enable them to succeed in their chosen areas.

Much has happened over the past twelve months; Hong Kong's first degree in veterinary nursing is being developed in partnership with the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and will admit its first students in September 2010.

The new degree programme will address the shortage of professional veterinary nurses in a city where the boom in demand for veterinary services has driven demand for trained manpower in the profession. Poly U is the ideal partner for the initiative, being one of Hong Kong's major providers of professional education in health and applied social sciences, including many health disciplines that are unique in Hong Kong.

Although the provision of veterinary services has grown in Hong Kong in recent years, there is still a lack of public awareness and recognition of the vital role veterinary nurses play in animal care and

welfare. In the long run, both institutions hope that the programme will also serve to acquaint the people of Hong Kong with the concept of professional veterinary nursing, which, in many other countries, is a registered profession.

RVC and Poly U are organising exchange events such as seminars, workshops and visits. Over time, the two institutions will also arrange reciprocal student exchange programmes to enable their students to learn about different veterinary clinical practices and research in Hong Kong and the UK.

In mainland China, the Innovation China UK (ICUK) initiative has led to the strengthening of relationships with key agricultural universities. For example, the first Sino-British Conference on Cattle Farming and Disease Prevention was held in Wuhan, a major city in central China. This event followed the awarding of a BBSRC Partnership Award to the RVC and its collaborators at Huazhong Agricultural University. Major research collaboration is also being forged with the Lanzhou Institute of Animal Sciences and Pharmaceuticals in North West China.

Veterinary public health is of major concern in the region following outbreaks of SARS and influenza: RVC staff have assisted through delivery of short postgraduate training programmes the development of skills in epidemiology at the National Epizootic Centre in Qingdao and in emerging disease diagnosis and control at Fudan University in Shanghai.

Running in tandem with these developments, is the College's requirement to further internationalise its student body, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level. This is where we need to draw upon the enthusiasm and motivation of colleagues, many of

whom are influential players within their respective specialist areas. Postgraduate students in particular, are drawn to the College's specialist expertise and the opportunity to progress their own international careers. We need to ensure that we all play a part in engaging with potential students and making the most of opportunities to showcase what we have to offer.

Our aim is the fostering of selected links overseas that both enhance the reputation of the RVC and allow two way opportunities for research and training. Although our strategy is focused on Asia, the College has active programmes in other areas, e.g. Africa and South America, and the challenge in the forthcoming year will be to develop these into academic platforms as part of a strategy that enriches both the student experience and broadens the horizons of RVC staff.

*by Professor Colin Howard, Vice Principal,  
International and Strategic Development*



## RVC Student Ambassadors

*Delivering the right messages*

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I applied to be a student ambassador to help me get more involved in university life, meet some new people and learn some new skills. But my main motivation was to give something back to the people pursuing a career in veterinary medicine and science; as veterinary students we all remember the people that helped us in applying for veterinary college!

I joined the ambassador scheme in my first year here and it has helped me to grow in confidence. I have developed my communication skills speaking to groups of people, whether it is formally or in an informal setting. Other skills I have acquired include the ability to man a stand at a busy convention and to deliver teaching to young people.

In my eyes it's the perfect job, we get to show people how passionate we are about veterinary careers and work with fantastic young people who are always appreciative of our time and efforts. It never ceases to amaze me how enthusiastic the people we work with are about their future, whether it be in the veterinary profession or other science careers.

As an ambassador I have been able to meet a lot of new people and travel to new places as part of the job. That's perhaps what I enjoy the most. My favourite event of the year is returning home to Ireland to attend the Belfast UCAS convention and careers fair. People are always surprised to hear the accent at a London University stand!

The work we do is varied and there are always exciting events to get involved with. The work is flexible which is ideal with such a busy timetable and it often provides a nice break and helps remind you how lucky you are to have a place at veterinary college.

Some of the things I have done in the past three years include careers fairs, the RVC on tour (where the college travels to various places in the country, allowing students to see what the RVC can offer them), and afternoon anatomy classes with primary school children helping them to identify interesting bones and to see how these all work together in sessions with live animals. The residential courses the RVC holds over Easter and in the summer give young people the chance to experience university life, staying in halls of residence, going to seminars and socialising in the evenings. I have helped deliver mock interviews to sixth form students and run science clubs in primary schools. I also help to lead monthly afternoon tours of the Camden campus where prospective students can speak to current students and see facilities.

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Some of the widening participation work involves delivering activities to young people of different socio-economic backgrounds. Hopefully we make them aware of the doors an education can open for them and our support encourages some of them to think about higher education and university as an option.

I think the people we come into contact with benefit greatly from the work that we do. As we are still students, young people can relate to us and in turn we can help raise aspirations by sharing our goals. I hope that we do act as role models and through this motivate people to pursue their goals. Many of the activities we deliver equip them with transferable skills that will benefit them no matter what path they choose. I like to think we help them realise what their full potential is and encourage them to seek opportunities that will help them achieve it.

*by Rachel McQuaid, BVetMed Student*



## Going Global

*Growing our international student recruitment*

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The last 12 months have been a period of substantial growth and development with regards to the RVC's international student recruitment activities. The College has a long history of welcoming undergraduate students from North America, and will continue to do so. In fact, from 2011 we will be widening access to the BVetMed for students from North America, allowing exceptional high school graduates, with a minimum of four Advanced Placements (equivalent to UK A Levels), or a Canadian Secondary High School Diploma to enter the five-year programme. From September 2010, applicants from North America with a high GPA in their undergraduate science degree will be automatically considered for the four year Accelerated BVetMed, bringing the RVC in line with vet schools in both the US and overseas. To help new overseas students to fit in to life in the UK and at the RVC, the College will be running short pre-session courses over the summer to provide advice and guidance on the UK education system and to make sure that students get the best possible start to their studies.

We will also be working actively in additional countries from 2010 onwards to ensure that the College's reach extends globally and that we truly attract the best students from around the world. Extensive market research, conducted over the last two years, has identified a number of Asian countries with a large pool of highly talented students interested in the veterinary field. In 2010, the College's efforts will initially focus on Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, where we will be attending British Council events, running RVC information sessions and visiting schools and colleges across the region.

To implement the RVC's ambitious programme of international student recruitment, the College has appointed its first International Student Recruitment Manager, Julia Hewett. Julia will work with Nina Davies, Head of Undergraduate Student Recruitment, to establish and further develop relationships in North America and Asia to ensure that the RVC's reputation for excellence is displayed on the global stage.

*by Miss Julia Hewett,  
International Student Recruitment Manager*

## Developing our Human Resources

*Constantly adapting*

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2009 was a busy year in HR with new developments in many areas.

Further improvements in IT led to the introduction of an HR information system which will soon allow employees to manage their own staff record; and an internet website providing access to HR services from inside and outside the College. Delivery of a fully integrated electronic recruitment process was successfully completed, permitting job applications to be made on-line, and enabling managers to short-list them electronically.

Despite the difficult position nationally, important enhancements to reward structures were introduced following feedback from consultation across the College, boosting our ability to attract and retain talent, and to recognise achievement and contribution at all levels. These include discretionary extended scale points at the top of each grade, and a quarterly special award scheme. Another scheme was introduced for staff on Grades 1-5 to provide an immediate 'thank you' for a job well done. As a further benefit, individual financial planning sessions were made available to all staff and were heavily over-subscribed.

There was more consultation with staff and students on the College's diversity agenda, following the establishment of a new Equality Strategy Working Group chaired by the Assistant Director of Clinical Services. New policies were introduced covering Religion & Belief and Sexual Orientation. An Equal Pay Audit was undertaken with the trade unions and work began on a Single Equality Scheme.

£15,000 was shaved off the cost of temporary administrative staff, and the use of commercial temp agencies substantially reduced, with the introduction

of a 'casual staff bank' of over 130 people, including many RVC students.

There were some major initiatives in staff development, including the introduction of an individually tailored Induction Programme comprising customised handbooks, workbooks, toolkits, personalised websites and video, all of which were designed to help new staff become quickly integrated into RVC organisation and culture.

A scheme was introduced to provide a coherent framework for those wishing to take part in, or benefit from, a structured mentoring process; and another for new probationary lecturers to help enhance the quality of teaching and better inform academic probation decisions. Training, advice and guidance to support both schemes was also delivered.

In response to the national Research Concordat, which sets out a framework for the management and development of Early Career Researchers, a Code of Practice was developed to help contract research staff integrate with the wider College and achieve their full potential. In support of the Code, HR have assisted in establishing a Researcher Association as well as providing dedicated training to this group of staff.

Looking forward to 2010, these developments leave RVC well placed to significantly extend the range of HR services available to all groups of staff.

*by Mr Ian Darker, Director of HR*



# Adapting the Environment

Improving the Estate for the 21st century

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The College continues to invest significant sums of money in upgrading its estate to provide a state-of-the-art learning environment for students and research staff. In the period 2005-08 the College invested over £16m in capital projects, and since 2009 it has invested or committed funds of over £37m. The schemes that follow are either in construction or detailed planning stage.

### 1 Teaching and Research Centre at Hawkshead

Construction of the new Teaching and Research Centre is due to commence in Spring 2010 and will be completed in Spring 2011. It will provide a new main entrance to the College, social learning spaces, offices and six new teaching and research laboratories and associated spaces. The funding for the project has come from the HEFCE capital infrastructure fund together with some top-up funding from the College.

### 2 Equine Surgery Centre at Hawkshead

The existing Sefton Equine Surgery building is being relocated with new state-of-the-art facilities. The building will adjoin the existing Large Animal Clinical Centre and will provide new examination rooms, two new operating theatres, standing surgery and recovery areas together with associated ancillary and support spaces. The project is funded from College funds and is due for completion in spring 2010.

### 3 Replacement for Northumberland Hall student residences at Hawkshead

The replacement for the old 46-bed Northumberland Hall will be the single largest project that the College has ever invested at £18m. The new pavilions will provide 191 en-suite bedrooms in clusters of six with a large social space per cluster. The accommodation will be provided in three and four storey pavilions built around courtyards.

In addition, a new 200 seat refectory with a dedicated 100 person CPD training room and four meeting rooms will adjoin a single pavilion offering 14 overnight stay en-suite bedrooms.

The project will commence in Spring 2010 and will be completed for occupation in August 2011.

### 4 Lightwell Project at Camden

The current major project at Camden will be the completion of the roofing over of the south lightwell to provide new café and social learning space. The space will link through to the existing Museum and will provide an opportunity to extend these valuable learning facilities.

The project is funded from College funds and is currently in construction due for completion in Spring 2010.

by Mr Ian Mehrthens, Vice Principal, Operations

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# Timeline 2009

## January

Visit of HRH the Princess Royal to the Camden Campus to meet young people from Academy Schools



## February

CEED officially opened



## February

QAA complete their Degree Awarding Powers scrutiny of the College



## April

Inaugural Fellows Dinner at Saddlers' Hall

## May

The RVC annual Open Day attracts over 1,300 visitors



## June

Jon Parry wins the LEPA Award for Individual Professional Contribution to Widening Participation



## July

Graduation ceremonies return to Guildhall. Three ceremonies in one day. Conferment of Honorary Degree of DVetMed on Professor Pierre-Louis Toutain of the University of Toulouse and Honorary Fellowship on The Rt Hon. The Lord Ballyedmond OBE JP

## July/August

Work begins on the new East Lightwell Social Space at Camden

## August

Professor Quintin McKellar begins a second term of office as RVC Principal



## October

Sarah Baillie wins inaugural Times Higher Award for Most Innovative Teacher



## October

Structure & Motion Lab Opening, with inaugural lecture by Professor Alun Wilson



## November

Autumn Ceremony for Graduation and Prizes at the new multi-arts complex Kings Place

## People

### Starters



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#### Professor Colette Henry

Colette Henry joined the Royal Veterinary College in November 2009 as the Norbrook Professor of Business & Enterprise and Director of RVC's new Centre for Veterinary & Bio-veterinary Enterprise. She will be working alongside the RVC enterprise and LBIC teams to further develop the College's teaching and research agendas, both nationally and internationally, in the business and enterprise field. Formerly, Colette was Head of Department of Business Studies and Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship Research at Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland. Her research interests include entrepreneurship education & training, programme evaluation, incubation, gender & enterprise and creative industries entrepreneurship. She is currently President of the Institute for Small Business & Entrepreneurship (ISBE), the UK's leading network for those involved in the teaching, research and support of entrepreneurship. When she is not working, Colette simply enjoys spending time with her family – her husband and two children.



#### Dr Sally A East

Our new Assistant Financial Director – Financial Accounting, Sally East, graduated from University College London with BSc (Hons) in Pure Physics (1990) and in 1993, a PhD in Atmospheric Physics (utilising NASA weather rockets). She lived and worked abroad, returning from Canada to become a trainee accountant with Howarth Clark Whitehill; where she qualified in 1999 and specialised in the Charity Sector.

On leaving practice, Sally worked for a number of large charitable organisations, often overseas, dealing with a broad spectrum of challenges – business continuity planning, change management, implementing new financial systems, risk management, strategic planning models, training non-financial staff overseas (often where English was not their mother tongue), and the hurdles incurred when dealing with group account preparation.

Pursuing her interests in finance and management, Sally gained her MSc in Finance and Accounting, and MA in Management. Sally takes pleasure in working with her team and the day-to-day challenges that arise through her course of work here at the RVC. She enjoys new projects and has recently introduced the Government Procurement Card, and is actively working on the BenefitsPlus scheme. Moreover, Sally has just completed the compiling and consolidation of the annual financial accounts for the University and the current subsidiaries.

Looking to the future, Sally is keen to establish her role accommodating the inevitable economic changes and ensuring that her team are skilled to deliver an excellent service to both our internal and external stakeholders.

## People

### Movers



#### Professor Cheryl Scudamore

Cheryl graduated in veterinary science in 1988 from the University of Liverpool and went on to gain a PhD for studies on reproductive physiology at Aberdeen University in 1991. She continued her postdoctoral research career in immunology funded by the Wellcome Trust at The University of Edinburgh from 1991 becoming a Lecturer then Senior Lecturer in Veterinary Pathology. While in post she developed her interest in anatomic pathology becoming a Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists in 2001.

From 2001 she worked in the pharmaceutical industry as a toxicological pathologist and manager for both a major pharmaceutical company (GlaxoSmithKline) and a contract research laboratory (Covance). During her time in industry she maintained her links with academia and was heavily involved through work with the British Society of Toxicological Pathologists. Here she worked to provide postgraduate education in toxicological pathology and encouraging veterinary undergraduates to consider a career in veterinary pathology.

Cheryl has returned to academia as Chair of Toxicology Pathology with the aid of a strategic grant from the MRC, unique in the UK veterinary schools. Her remit is to find ways to address the skills gap that is recognised in the provision of laboratory animal pathology support for industry and academia.



#### Professor Fiona Cunningham

Fiona, a pharmacologist by training, joined the Royal Veterinary College as a lecturer in 1988 having spent the previous eight years since obtaining her PhD working on the pathogenesis and treatment of human inflammatory diseases. Her research now focuses on investigating the role and regulation of inflammatory cell function in animals, primarily in relation to inflammatory and allergic conditions of the horse.

Fiona is an enthusiastic and committed teacher who is the recipient of two James Bee teaching awards. She also has a keen interest in student welfare and has contributed to the provision of student support through a range of activities. In August 2009 she was appointed to a Chair in Pharmacology in the Department of Veterinary Basic Sciences and in October 2009 became Head of the Graduate School where one of her primary interests is the development of postgraduate and researcher training.

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### Evolving the RVC executive

The Senior Management Group (SMG) at the Royal Veterinary College is the senior executive decision making body at the College. It deals with strategic and management issues and ensures that academic initiatives are adequately resourced. In 2009 I undertook a review of the structure and function of the SMG to ensure that it had the most appropriate composition and working methods. In the five years since the current SMG was established the College has doubled in size (student and staff numbers and financial turnover), a new curriculum has been introduced for the Undergraduate BVetMed Course, we have developed an international strategy and our estate has increased in size and complexity. Against this background management issues must be dealt with efficiently and effectively and if we wish to continue to develop the strategic direction has to be considered carefully and appropriate initiatives embraced and implemented.

Two specific issues textured the outcome of the review; firstly, it was clear that a single body considering management and strategy together was not optimal – it too easily became dominated by issues of urgency such as car parking! Secondly, the growing importance of the student experience and our failure to communicate to the student body what we were doing, why we were doing it and to emphasize to them that they were our primary concern (without acceding to unrealistic expectations) became apparent.

The new appointment of a Vice Principal for Academic and Clinical Affairs (Professor David Church) is specifically to address the second issue relating to the student experience (although David will do much more than this – the student experience will be his primary concern).

The new management structure now has a Vice Principals' Group (the VP's group) comprising the Principal, Vice Principals and the Assistant Principal, which meets fortnightly and limits its discussion to strategic issues. The full management group comprising the VP's group, together with Heads of Department and directors of non-academic divisions (Clinical Services Division, Finance and HR) meets on alternate fortnights and considers management resources. The whole group has two "Away Days" each year at which it discusses both management and strategy.

The minutes of the SMG (redacted to preserve individual privacy and organisational commercial sensitivity) will continue to be published and I would very much appreciate receiving comment on issues from both staff, colleagues and students which colleagues feel would enrich our debate.

by *Quintin McKellar, Principal*

**The Vice-Principals' Group (opposite, clockwise from top left):**  
 Professor Stephen May – Deputy Principal and VP Teaching  
 Mrs Elaine Acaster – Assistant Principal and Secretary to Council  
 Professor David Church – Vice-Principal, Academic and Clinical Affairs  
 Professor Jonathan Elliott – Vice-Principal, Research  
 Professor Colin Howard – Vice-Principal, International and Strategic Development  
 Mr Ian Mehrtens – Vice-Principal, Operations



# Expanding the RVC Students Union

*The origin of a species*

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The last academic year has seen a great deal of work on the RVC's long term goals and it also marks the start of my second term in office as RVC Students' Union (SU) President. There are several things that have altered dramatically since beginning my first term in August 2007.

The first is that there has been a change in attitude towards the Students' Union and the student body. This term has seen several examples, the most obvious being the beginnings of the College's "MASTERPLAN"; though in its infancy it appears that the entire process is due to be built on the foundations of, or at least heavily influenced by, student views and opinion. Another change is communication; which now happens between the SU and the student body, staff and RVC. This is being led by regular "Open Forums" held by Professor David Church and myself that seek to invite comment, suggestion and query in order to address rumour and discontent in a constructive and relatively speedy manner.

The redevelopment at both campuses is my final point of particular interest. In the space of three years we have witnessed both ends of the spectrum, from the near consolidation of both campuses at Hawkshead in 2007, to the sudden growth and evolution of two campuses with very different characteristics and personalities. The Social Learning Space/Lightwell Project, forthcoming bar, gym and new Common Room facilities are examples of such at Camden and indicate that, for the time being, it is here to stay. Hawkshead is soon to be the subject of a large amount of construction with the replacement of Northumberland Hall and the refectory (a project that has consistently been referred to students' opinion), as well as the consequent loss of the swimming pool and squash courts and the start of the TARC build. Although this is clearly not all good news the College's management have made it very clear that it will endeavour to replace such losses in the near future and have been consulting the SU and student body in order to reach a situation where staff and students are able to access local facilities (at a much reduced rate) via the new, free hourly bus route in the interim. In my opinion if such trends are to continue the SU and the student body can look forward to working within and alongside an HE institution that not only acts on the views and opinions of its students, but is actually using such views as the engine driving its future development.

*by Mr Ben Stileman, SU President, 2009-2010*

**Left:** The final rugby match between Dublin (Leprechauns) and RVC (Mexicans).  
**Far left:** Some of the students enjoying themselves at Hawkshead campus!



## Sporting achievements

All RVC teams have put in an amazing effort this year. It is impressive when you realise that these teams have been competing against universities with huge student bodies and our teams have to work hard to recruit and train new people to keep the sports going. Also, all these people have been out on Wednesday afternoons and most weekends in rain, hail, snow and ice representing the RVC and having a great time.

### RVC Mens Football

The 2nd's came top of the ULU league this season, winning 14 of the 18 matches played, drawing three and only losing once!

### RVC Mens Hockey

The team almost came top of the BUCS league; drawing on points and ahead on goal difference.

### RVC Womens Hockey

The 2nd's came top of the BUCS league by nine points and 2nd place in the ULU league!

### RVC Womens Rugby

Top of ULU league by six points with a point difference of +181(!) and, once again, reached the final of the ULU cup.

### RVC Mens Rugby

The Men's Rugby 7s team reached the UH final for the first time ever! The tournament, hosted by Imperial Medical School, saw 12 teams (medical schools and the RVC) battle it out to see who would be crowned UH 7s Champions 2009. Against the odds, the RVC won four out of their five group matches to reach the final against Imperial Medics 1st's. A distinct numbers advantage, as well as the tired RVC bodies ultimately led to an Imperial victory; however the boys made the club and



**Above:** Nicky Reynolds (AVS Sports 2009 Committee Co-Chair) and William Hersey (AVS Sports Committee) get in the spirit traveling to the club night at SeOne.

**Left:** Co-organisers Alice McCutchan and Nicky Reynolds making the most of backstage passes at the Saturday night band night, supporting 'The Dirty Birds'.

the College proud and have finally shown the medics what vets are capable of! As well as the 1st team's fantastic success, the RVC 2nd's team finished higher than any other medical school 2nd's team. A heroic effort all round!

### RVC Riding

Rosina Page has led the riding team to numerous successes and has qualified for the individual regional finals herself.

### RVC Polo

The team equalled their best ever position at the SUPA Winter Championships with one RVC beginners' team coming 3rd nationally out of 18 other teams. Went on to field three teams at the Summer Championships resulting in similar successes and won a closely called RVCSU Team of the Year Award.

### RVC Rowing

08-09 saw the RVC captaining the United Hospitals' Boat Club and possibly the busiest fundraising year of any so far for the club as well as the first RVCBC Christmas Fancy Dress Fun Run. Already this year the club has competed in the Novice Regatta (22nd Nov 2009) where the men won every race by at least 2 lengths (including beating Queen Mary's who train six times a week) and the Allom Cup (29th Nov 2009). The Women's 1st and 2nd teams reached the quarter finals, the Mens 1st's lost in the final by a length to Queen Mary, and the Novices won again beating ICSM, LSE and Royal Holloway in the process.

*Jon Parsons, RVCSU Sports 08-09 &  
Chris Hoey, RVCSU Sports 09-10  
Daniel Preece, RVC Rugby Men's Captain  
Martin Eaton, RVCBC Men's Captain 09-10*

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## Expanding the RVC Students Union

*The origin of a species*

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### Other Societies & Enrichment

Among others the Languages Club has seen an impressive demand for various courses (ranging from Arabic to Spanish) from both staff and students this last year.

- A combined force of LIVE, the ACT and the RVCSU is currently working to promote staff and student involvement in the arts through many channels including the new “Artist in Residence” programme.
- The newest RVCSU Executive member Hannah Hobbs-Chell (Campaigns Officer 09-10) has already been ruffling feathers in the name of environmental awareness and the RVCSU, and the Camden campus will be playing host to the student action group People & Planet for their annual “Forum” in the spring term of 2010.
- 2009 was also a year of frantic fundraising with the Animal Care Trust’s Challenge Fund proving a great success, one of the highlights being our newly acquired floodlights thanks to the plight and ingenuity of many of our Hawkshead based sports teams, in particular our rugby lads.
- The Buttery had a makeover over during Summer 2009. A lovely beer garden and sorely needed new front doors and signage have been built. An official re-opening will be held in the Spring term 2010.
- Newly affiliated clubs include: the RVC Choir, Wakeboarding Society and the Pirate Society.
- The Camden Bar (The Haxby) has reached the critical stage of license application, and is due to open in the spring term (subject to license and completion).

### AVS Sports 2009 at RVC – The Vet Olympics

This year the annual AVS Sports Weekend, a weekend of inter vet school fun, frolics and friendly competition, was hosted by the RVC. The weekend began as visiting vet schools arrived on the Friday for a club night at ‘The SeOne’.

After a late night, the sports tournament started early on Saturday morning and saw students competing in rugby, football, hockey and netball, as well as the grand opening of the beer tent run by the RVC’s very own Buttery Bar. Entertainment for those not competing was provided in the form of a bungee run and also some rather unusual wacky races which included a pathology suit relay and a clinical waste bag sack race! The scores were totalled and it was revealed that RVC would triumphantly be taking home the gold from ‘The Vet Olympics 2009’! After the sports concluded students were taken back into London to begin a bar crawl from Camden to Kentish Town, which finished at ‘The HMV Forum’ for a band night headlined by the RVC’s own Dirty Birds. On Sunday morning students, both hosting and visiting, met to have breakfast together and say their goodbyes in Camden before the visitors departed to their own universities. The weekend was a huge success and was enjoyed by everyone who participated. The final figure raised was £1700 which will be split between the committee’s chosen charities, The Mental Health Foundation and The Blue Cross.

*by Nicola Reynolds, RVCSU AVS Senior Officer 09-10*

## Graduation 2009

*Establishing our ceremonies*



2009 has been an eventful year for RVC graduation ceremonies. For the July graduation ceremony, the College returned to the Guildhall after its closure for several years and increased the number of ceremonies to three in one day in order to accommodate the greater number of students, their guests, VIP honoraries and RVC staff. The Autumn Ceremony took place at an exciting new venue in Kings Cross and was also a great success.

The planning of the July graduation was a logistical challenge but was worth the effort to see the delight on people’s faces as they entered the majestic architecture of Guildhall, in all its newly renovated splendour. Steeped in history, the Great Hall has several splendid monuments to national heroes, including Admiral Lord Nelson, William Pitt and Sir Winston Churchill. It is also home to the colossal figures of the giants Gog and Magog, the legendary guardians of the City of London. Rumour has it that they haunt the Great Hall but I have my suspicions that the security guards were just trying to scare me!

We accommodated around 2,000 people over the course of the day at the July graduation ceremony. Foundation, BSc and Postgraduate students enjoyed a Buck’s Fizz breakfast in the morning. In the afternoon the BVetMed students were divided into two ceremonies, with both groups able to mingle between ceremonies over afternoon tea.

Having re-established ourselves at historic Guildhall for the summer ceremonies, the quest was now on to find a suitable location to accommodate our growing student numbers for the Autumn Ceremony for graduation and prizes.

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The new venue is a striking, modern development: Kings Place, overlooking Regent’s Canal and walking distance from the Camden campus. I had seen the building’s development over three years whilst traveling between Islington and Camden every day, and was struck with the idea that this exciting new landmark would be ideal for our smaller November ceremony.

There are many significant aspects to the building, but perhaps the most important is that Kings Place houses a new public concert hall. It is the first public concert hall to be built in central London since the completion of the Barbican over 25 years ago. The entire oak veneer inside Hall One is from one 500-year old German oak tree. The modern interior provides a very different ambience when juxtaposed with the medieval grandeur of Guildhall.

This November, we successfully adapted to our new surroundings, with 400 people attending the latest location. The students graduating were from the BVetMed, the Foundation Degree in Veterinary Nursing and the MSc taught degrees, alongside several PhD graduates. Prizes were also awarded to students in lower years. The ceremony was preceded with the RVC Autumn Service of Thanksgiving and Renewal, organised by the Reverend Pippa Turner in the nearby ancient St Pancras Old Church.

The reception afterwards was held in the splendid Battlebridge Room on the waterfront.

When organising high-profile events such as these, location is everything. Hopefully the RVC will remain at these exceptional venues for many years to come.

*by Mrs Maggie McEvoy, Executive Officer and Ceremonies Coordinator*

# Student Achievement

*RVC students making an impact*



Victorious BSc Bioveterinary Sciences students with their prizes.

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## **Holly Claridge, 2009 BVetMed graduate Won the Eqvalan Duo Equine Thesis of the Year award for 2009**

This award is made by the Royal Agricultural Society of England each year, to recognise academic achievement in the equestrian field and to showcase the best academic research to the equestrian industry, it is a very prestigious achievement by Holly. The competition is open to every agricultural and equine university and college in the country and as a result the standard and quality of entry is exceptionally high.

### **Hobbs-Chell et al.**

## **RVC Victory at 9th International Animal Welfare Judging and Assessment Contest**

On the 18th November, four Royal Veterinary College BSc (Hons) Bioveterinary Science students stepped forth with trepidation aplenty onto a plane destined for Michigan State University. It was the first time the UK had taken part, and the RVC supported a team to compete in the 9th International Animal Welfare Judging and Assessment Contest. The standards were high and expectations for first time contenders guarded. However the UK team triumphed over all universities winning a grand total of five categories, even beating the postgraduate entrants to the award for overall highest scoring team. The prizes awarded to the RVC were highest score overall, highest team assessment score, highest individual questioning score, 1st place individual (Umaymah Hewitt), and 2nd place individual (Rebecca Fisher).

The competition took place over two days in November and was hosted by Michigan State University. The contest is intended to provide a forum for aspiring animal welfare scientists from the United States, Canada and the UK to meet and critically practice their skills in assessing animal welfare in a variety of practical and theoretical settings. There were three classes for entry: science undergraduate, veterinary undergraduate and postgraduate. Judges this year included Professor Richard Reynnells (USDA Plant and Animal Systems programme leader), Dr Joe Stookey (University of Saskatchewan), and Professor Ian Duncan (University of Guelph).

Led by Hannah Hobbs-Chell, the team trained hard and bonded well, especially as they only had four weeks in which to prepare, when most of the other competitors had previous contest experience and were in training for at least two months. The team; Hannah, Rebecca Fisher, Emily Bill and Umaymah Hewitt, were grateful for academic support provided by Professor Christopher Wathes, Dr Angela Wright and Dr Charlotte Burn.

On the first morning, all contestants were given a series of short seminars by the judges on current welfare issues relating to the specific species of interest. The contest proper began in the afternoon with a live walk-through team assessment of a sheep-farming unit. Each team was taken to a working sheep farm in the local Michigan area and given 30 minutes to walk around the unit and take notes on the welfare state of the farm. Each team then had 45 minutes immediately after that in which to prepare a 10-minute oral presentation to be given in front of a panel of three judges. The teams were assessed

on their ability to identify the positive and negative aspects of welfare on the farm and recommend changes aimed at ensuring improved welfare at the farm.

The second day was structured around individual assessment and judging the welfare of the three remaining species: farmed meat goats, laboratory rats and captive white-tailed deer. The morning began at 8.45am; everyone was seated in a lecture theatre and given a computer presentation detailing two different environments in which the species were being kept. These included such subheadings as housing, nutrition, animal handling, breeding programs, morbidity and mortality, transport and slaughter, and prevalence of stereotypic behaviour. All contestants and judges were asked to individually determine the better of the two environments in terms of welfare, and contestants were then asked to prepare and orally present their reasoning for the choice of environment. For each species, contestants had 20 minutes in which to prepare their reasons, and 3 minutes in which to present them to the judges – not an easy task!

It was recognised by all the team that there was a distinct lack of animal-based indicators of welfare included in the presentations. The focus tended to be on the resources provided to the animals and any evidence of negative behaviours and experiences. It was here that the team felt they could excel as much work has recently been done in the UK and the rest of the EU on the need for a shift in thinking in the science of animal welfare. More attention is now being paid to the experience of the animal in its environment and how it uses the resources provided, rather than the resources that it is provided with alone. This was

where the assistance in our preparation from Professor Christopher Wathes, the author of a recent report for the Farm Animal Welfare Council on the progress of farm animal welfare over the past 20 years and for the future 20 years, came to the fore. The report looks at this very issue and predicts that, in future, farm animal welfare science will be focussed around the idea of an animal having a 'life worth living', as determined by its positive 'iceberg' indicators. The UK is currently leading the field in terms of farm animal welfare science, with projects being funded by DEFRA, for the first time, on positive states and emotions in farm animals.

Our visit was not all work, there were also a few social highlights. The competition was held over the same weekend as a college football game between Michigan State Spartans and Pennsylvania State Nittany Lions, which made for an exciting and lively atmosphere on campus. The teams were also kindly provided with dinner at a local diner on the Saturday evening, courtesy of Michigan State University, and celebratory home-made ice cream and cake at the end of the contest.

The 9th International Animal Welfare Judging and Assessment Contest has been heralded as a positive and significant event in the RVC calendar, for the Centre for Animal Welfare, the Bioveterinary Sciences degree programme and for the College as a whole, in recognising the quality and importance of animal welfare teaching and learning.

*by Hannah Hobbs-Chell*

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## The Development Office

*Investing in the RVC's future*

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When asked to think about the world they are leaving for their children, many people express concern that it will not be as comfortable, as stable or as happy a place as the one they grew up in. Globally we face many problems and the solutions can seem elusive, but in a world of few certainties, one remains; that we should invest in education. Education provides successive generations with the means to resolve the challenges they face; the challenges we leave them. That is why investment in education must be such a priority.

Universities face a huge task to inspire the public to understand that education is a legitimate charitable cause. But, in the UK, the RVC is more successful than most in beginning to make its case. And that is why the general public will make extra investments in our work through voluntary donations in addition to the funding we receive from the public purse.

The RVC has always fostered the excellence that is so needed. For the RVC to prosper and to continue to make its remarkable contribution to the wellbeing of animals and of people, we need to make further extraordinary investments in our students, staff and facilities.

For this we need the support of visionary donors: donors who recognise that making a difference will start with investing in individuals who have the capacity to make extraordinary contributions. Voluntary support will make a real difference and will advance animal and human welfare through the biological and veterinary sciences.

The careers of tomorrow's graduates will be fulfilling, but they will be very different from those of yesterday's:

- Veterinary practice is restructuring itself with changes in primary care, the specialisms found in referral centres and the professionalisation of veterinary teams.
- Clinical options for treating small animals are expanding to include such tertiary procedures as cardiac and neuro-surgery and advanced cancer treatments accompanying developments in pharmacology and gene therapies.
- In equine medicine our appreciation of bio-mechanics is revolutionising both health management during training, and acute care following injury.
- Farm animal practice will respond to increased intensification of production accompanied by a renewed focus on animal welfare and food quality.
- Animal protein will have its role in feeding the world as economies develop but its production needs to be managed to avoid compromising the environment, degrading habitats and exacerbating global warming.
- Climate change and movement across borders will increasingly impact on the incidence, detection and management of endemic and emergent zoonotic diseases that threaten food security and human health in all parts of the world.

The challenges are legion but the opportunity to deliver solutions is truly vast and no apology is needed for painting the RVC's role on such a broad canvas. These are issues that affect and matter to all people and they are issues the RVC is beginning to put across in order to recruit support for the work of our academic and clinical community.



Jonathan Forrest

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Our new approach to fundraising makes these connections between our work and issues that reach into the lives of all people, regardless of whether or not they own animals. As an example, there are few of us who will not benefit at some stage in our lives from medical treatment and increasingly the RVC's translational comparative medicine research, undertaken collaboratively with medical schools, is throwing up genuinely valuable insights into a wide spectrum of serious human medical conditions.

Man's relationship with animals is a close one. Their welfare, whether they are domesticated or wild, contributes to human well-being in a host of ways because we are so dependent on them for our economic, environmental and emotional well-being.

If you would like to learn more about how you can help the RVC and in so doing help animals and help us all, then please get in touch with the Development Office.

*by Mr Jonathan Forrest, Development Director*

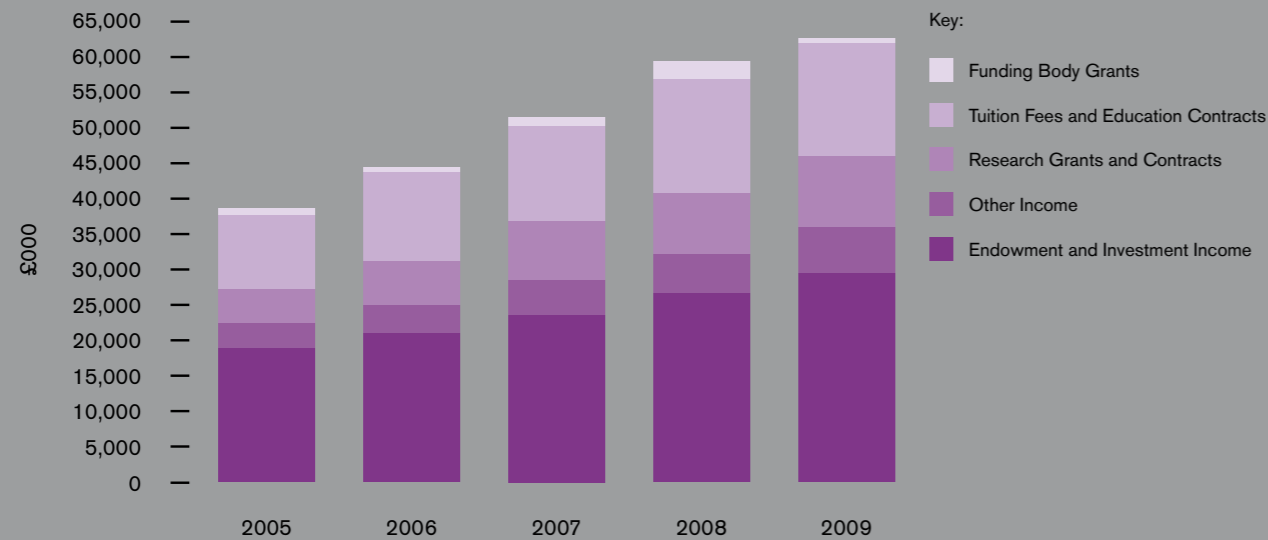
# Financial Report

Balancing the books in the new economy

Andrew Dyer, Director of Finance

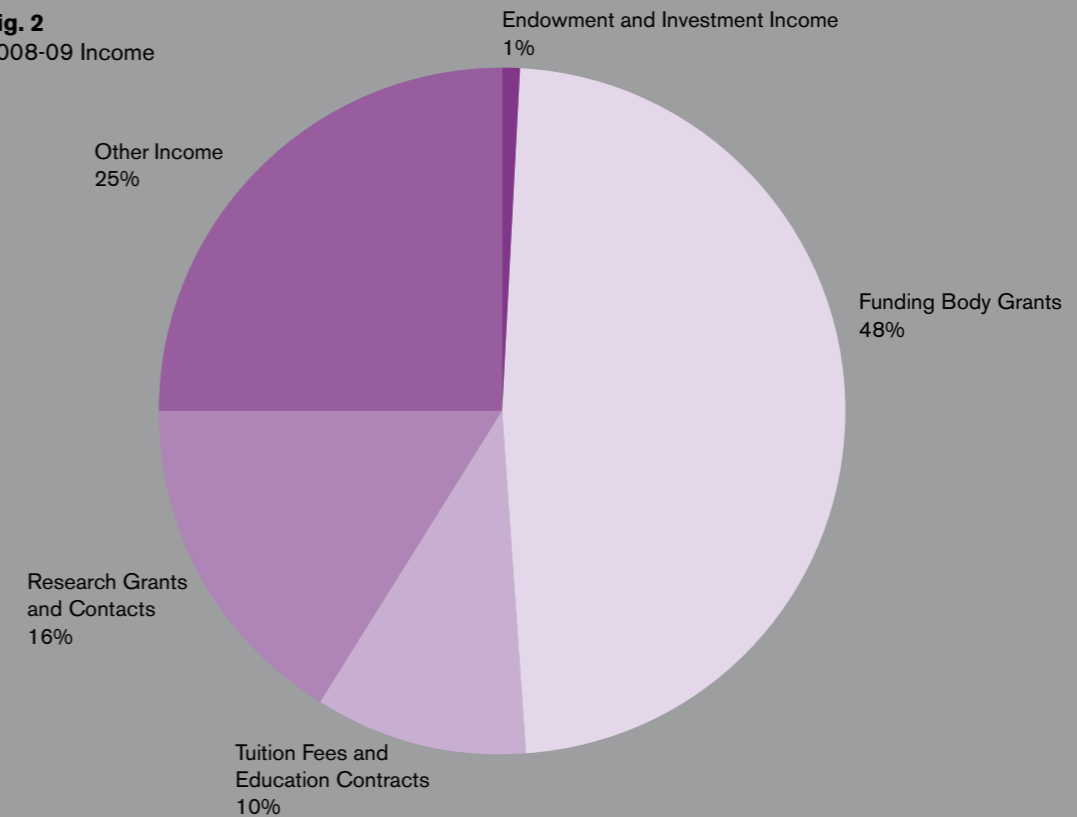
1 Turnover has increased by £4.3m (7%).

Fig. 1  
Total Income for 5 Years + Percentage Increase



2 Income from Funding Council grants has increased by £2.8m and represents 48% of Total Income (45%, 2007-08; 46%, 2006-07; 47%, 2005-06).

Fig. 2  
2008-09 Income



3 Income from Research Grants and Contacts has increased to £10m, mainly as a result of activity on collaborative EU funded projects.

4 Income from Other Operating Income has increased by £0.8m (5%) as a result of increased activity in the small animal and equine hospitals. LBIC and the BSUs have also performed well.

5 Staff costs have increased by £3.4m (11%) as a result of a 5% pay award in October 2008. The award was based on the RPI for September, which coincided with its peak. Staff numbers increased from 775 FTE to 819 FTE.

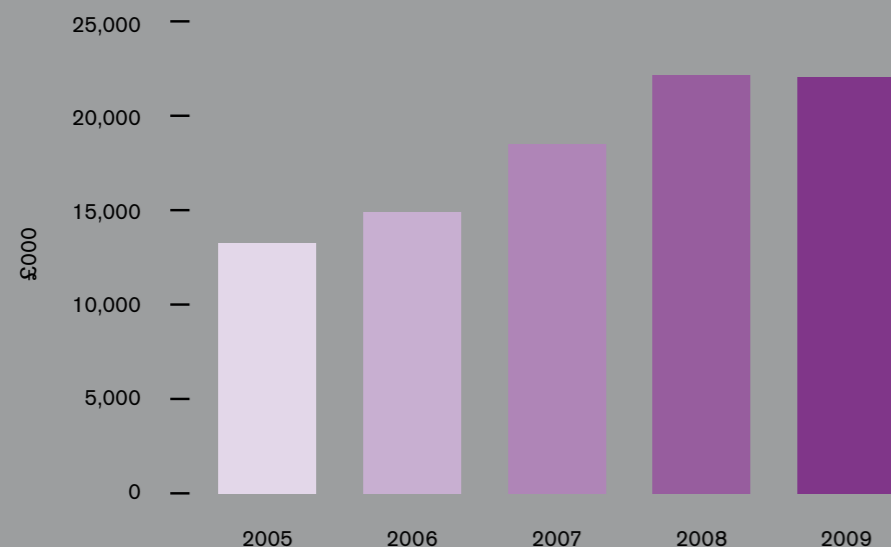
6 Other operating expenses, excluding the release of a provision for VAT, have increased by 3%. The VAT matters have now been fully settled with HMRC. More significant increases were recorded in student and educational expenditure (27%) as a result of increasing means-tested bursaries. Utilities costs also rose due to increases in prices and the expansion of the College's estate.

7 Depreciation has increased by £0.6m (19%) due mainly to the completion in the year of Phase 3 of the Queen Mother Hospital for Animals and the completion of the Centre for Emerging, Endemic and Exotic Disease (CEEED).

# Financial Report

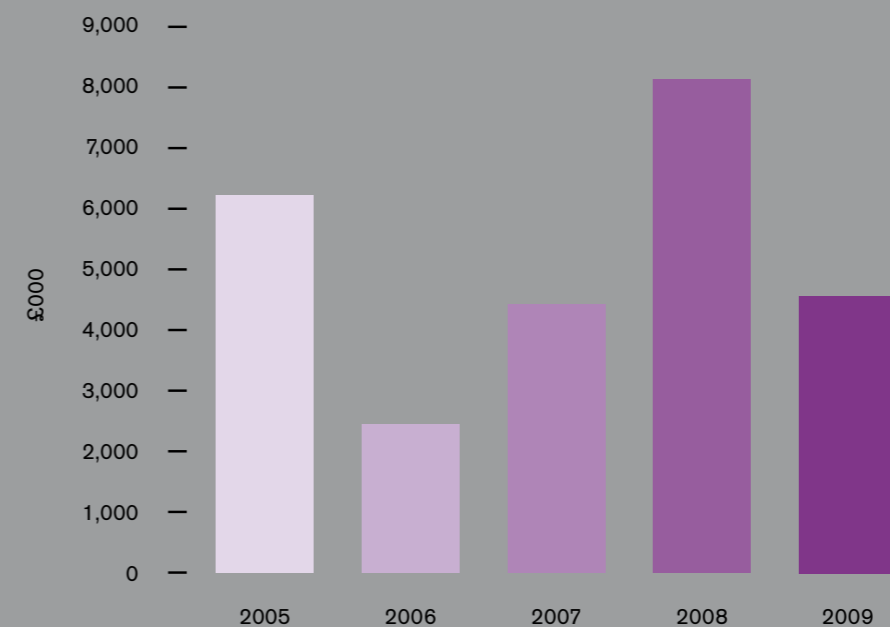
Balancing the books in the new economy

**Fig. 3**  
Other Operating Expenses for 5 Years + Percentage Increase



- 8 The surplus from continuing operations for the year is £857k (1.4% of turnover). After transfers from endowments this figure is £1,011k (1.6%).
- 9 The College continues to invest in its estate. Over the past 5 years a total of £25.8m has been spent. Authorised and committed capital projects to be undertaken over the next three years total £30.0m.

**Fig. 4**  
Capital Project Expenditure for 5 Years



- 10 Total donations and legacies received by the College and Animal Care Trust during the year was £1.0m (£1.3m 2007-08). Donations income was comparable to the previous year, however the economic climate had a negative impact on the value of legacies, many of which are related to stock market holdings or property values.
- 11 The College's endowment investment portfolio during the year was heavily cash based, and this helped to protect the College from the worst of the falls in equity markets.
- 12 The Group is now holding £26.7m in deferred capital grants (£27.7m 2007-08). These are released over the life of the assets funded to offset depreciation charges.
- 13 A net cash inflow of £1.7m from operating activities has been offset by significant capital expenditures, resulting in a decrease in cash for the year of £0.1m.

## Patron

His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh KG KT OM GBE

The Council, under the terms of the Revised Charter and Statutes, approved by The Privy Council, November 2007 (as at 31 July 2009)

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Mr C Woodhams (SUS President 2008/09)

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## Secretary to the Council

Mrs E C Acaster

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W Plowright CMG FRS DVSc FRCVS (1987)

Miss W M Brancker CBE FRCVS (1989)

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The Right Hon The Lord Prior PC (1999)

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The Most Hon The Marquess of Salisbury PC DL (2007)

## Honorary Fellows

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Mrs Jessie Nye (1994) \*\*

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Professor Ken Goulding BSc PhD HonDSc CBiol FIBiol (2001)

Mr Christopher Sporborg CBE (2001)

Mr Richard Carden (2003)

Brigadier Andrew Parker Bowles OBE (2003)

The Rt Hon The Lord Ballyedmond of Mourne (2009)

\* Died - February 2009

\*\* Died - March 2009

- The purpose of this statement is to enable readers of the College's Annual Review to obtain a better understanding of the governance and legal structure of the College.
- The College endeavours to conduct its business in accordance with the seven Principles identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, namely selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. It also acts in accordance with the guidance provided by the Committee of University Chairs in its Guide for Members of Governing Bodies of Universities and Colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of the College.
- The College is an independent corporation, whose legal status derives from a Royal Charter granted in 1956, although the College can trace its history as a corporate body back to 1791. Its objects, powers and framework of governance are set out in the Charter and its supporting Statutes. The latest amendments to the Charter and Statutes were approved by The Privy Council November 2007.
- The Charter and Statutes require that the governance of the College shall be vested in the Council, which has management and control of the College and administers all its property and income. The Council has a majority of members from outside the College (known as independent members) from whom the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer are elected. None of the independent members receives any payment for work done for the College, apart from the reimbursement of expenses.
- The Statutes also require that there shall be an Academic Board, members of which are the Professors of the College and representatives of the teaching staff, and of which the Principal is Chairman. The Board advises the Council on all academic matters.
- The principal academic and administrative officer of the College is the Principal who, under the Statutes, is responsible for the conduct of the College. Under the terms of the formal Financial Memorandum between the College and the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Principal is the designated officer of the College and in that capacity can be summoned to appear before the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons.
- Although the Council ordinarily meets three times a year, much of its detailed work is initially discussed in Committees, in particular the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Audit Committee, the Nominations and Fellowships Committee and the Remuneration Committee. All Council Committees are formally constituted with terms of reference and specified membership. Many include a significant proportion of independent members. All Committees report formally to the Council.
- As Chief Executive of the College the Principal exercises considerable influence on the development of institutional strategy, the identification and planning of new developments and the shaping of institutional ethos. Senior academic and administrative officers all contribute in various ways to these aspects of the College's work.
- The College maintains a register of interests of members of the Council.
- Any enquiries about the constitution and governance of the College should be addressed to the Secretary to Council.

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The College has charitable status.



Established in 1791, the RVC is the UK's longest-standing veterinary college – with a proud heritage of innovation in veterinary science, clinical practice and education.