



CVM Students Benefit from Professor's International "Real-World" Experience

By Shoshana Brackett

This year's recipient of the Carl Norden-Pfizer Distinguished Teacher Award says he is the luckiest person in the world because he teaches what he loves.

Australian by birth, Dr. Andrew Mackin has, in his own words, "worked and trained in quite a few places across the world."

These places include Australia's Murdoch University Veterinary School, several universities in Canada, and the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. He has been with MSU-CVM for eight years. Mackin also holds specialist board certification in Australia, North America, and Britain.

Mackin said he chose a university career because of his desire to teach.

"I've always liked teaching and wanted to be in an environment where I could do that," Mackin said.

Mackin calls himself an academic clinical specialist, a person who both uses his knowledge and training every day in the workplace and teaches new veterinarians in a clinical environment.

Dr. Ronald McLaughlin, associate professor in CVM's Department of Clinical Sciences, said Mackin has always been a dedicated teacher.

"He always makes sure the students are learning and that learning is enjoyable. He makes sure they get the best education possible while they're here," McLaughlin said.

An internal medicine specialist, Mackin spends at least two hours a day in small-group sessions with students.

"We're training the next generation of specialists and teachers," he said.

A professor at MSU since 1998, Mackin said the program has steadily grown since he first came to MSU. "We've been trying very hard to build up the program to train clinical teachers," he said.

"Last year, proportionately more MSU students matched in the internship and residency program than any other school," Mackin said. "These are pretty competitive positions, and it says a lot about our training that our students have about a 75 percent acceptance rate."

Mackin said his job is relatively easy.

"I'm one of the lucky few people because I'm teaching stuff that's inherently interesting," Mackin said. "The students are about to graduate, so theory becomes interesting to them when they realize how they are going to apply it to real work."

Mackin said his favorite teaching trick is simple: "I use real-life cases that students are interested in and invested in since they are caring for the patients."

As for lecturing, Mackin said he has to be very quick on his feet to handle the unprepared case discussion rounds he must give as many as five times each week. He is unable to prepare specific material for rounds because he does not know what cases he and the students will discuss until the day starts.

He said he also helps students reveal their knowledge through discussion in the daily small-group sessions. Mackin said these interactive sessions teach the students a valuable skill necessary for veterinarians—"that when something new comes through the door, you have to be well-informed and apply theory right now."

Even when he is presenting "normal" lectures, Mackin said he tries to make the material interesting by showing photographs and relating it to real-life, relevant cases. "Students are very motivated when they can see the relevance of material," Mackin said.

Mackin said teachers must exude passion and enthusiasm because they are the role models students aspire to emulate.

"One of my basic rules is I don't volunteer to give lectures on boring material," Mackin said with a laugh.

In addition to his duties on campus, Mackin travels statewide, nationally and internationally to lecture to practicing veterinarians, sometimes even running into MSU graduates.

Mackin received his doctor of veterinary science degree in veterinary clinical studies from the University of Guelph in 1994. He received a master's degree in veterinary clinical science in 1989 from the University of Melbourne. He received bachelor's degrees in veterinary medicine and surgery (his veterinary degree) in 1983 and veterinary biology in 1981, both from Murdoch University.

Mackin completed a two-year small animal internal medicine internship, followed by a two-year residency in medicine at the University of Melbourne from 1984 to 1988. He completed a three-year small animal medicine residency at the University of Guelph between 1990 and 1994.

Mackin is specifically interested in small animal hematology, hemostasis and immunohematology. His work in animal blood banking has the potential to help human blood transfusions become safer.

Mackin is the Dr. Hugh G. Ward Endowed Chair of Small Animal Veterinary Medicine. He also is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine, a fellow of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists, and immediate past-president of the Association of Veterinary Hematology and Transfusion.