

The Sir Richard Stapley Educational Trust

Newsletter Autumn 2006

General Issues

The past year has been a particularly successful one for the Trust. Due to generous donations, successful grant applications to GlaxoSmithKline and to The Garfield Weston Foundation and judicious movement of our funds to income generating portfolios, we have been able to make awards totalling almost £170,000 compared with £150,000 during 2005.

In brief, a total of 239 awards were made to 104 students taking undergraduate (medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine) degrees as a second undergraduate degree, 58 to students taking taught Masters and 77 to PhD students.

Our website is proving popular and accounts for the increased number of applications we receive each year. On average there are 30 visitors a day!

There have previously been informal meetings between the administrators of various charitable grant-giving organisations to discuss application procedures, closing dates for applications and any undeclared recipients of awards. In March 2006 The London School of Economics and Political Science hosted a one day Student Finance and Higher Access Seminar with presentations by representatives of the Universities, Trusts, Schools and the Media Sector and by the Department for Education and Skills. Some 40 representatives from various charities attended including your chairman and administrator. From the perspective of The Stapley Trust it is clear that first undergraduate courses are reasonably well supported but those taking a second degree including taught masters and research students are significantly disadvantaged. Certain charities that have hitherto supported only undergraduate degrees are now looking at providing postgraduate provision. It is planned to explore this in greater detail in a meeting to be hosted by University College, London. One of the aims of the conference will be to encourage additional Government and charitable funds for postgraduate students.

Mark Spurdens who has been a Council member for the past ten years and has acted as our Honorary Treasurer for the past four years, has retired from the Trust. Mark graduated in 1984 with an honours degree in Physiology from the University of Liverpool and with support from the Stapley and other trusts completed the Bachelor in Veterinary Medicine degree in 1988 at the Royal Veterinary College, London with several distinctions. After working in veterinary practices in Malpas, Cheshire and Maidstone, Kent he joined a mixed animal practice in Ellesmere, Shropshire in 1991. He is now managing partner of a five-vet mixed practice and mostly undertakes dairy and equine work. He has maintained his links with RVC and is a member of their undergraduate selection committee.

Mark has written a piece on the issues currently facing veterinary students, especially those taking the course as a second degree. We are particularly grateful to Mark for his contributions to the work of the Trust and his wise counsel as treasurer. We plan to keep in touch and wish him well in the future.

Sir Richard Stapley was a member of the Corporation of London for over 30 years and Master of one of the Livery Companies. We are exploring the possibility of renewing the links with one of the Livery Companies possibly involving the appointment of a Treasurer. Recently the son of a

former Secretary of the Trust, Richard Groves, has located the family's possession of an oil painting of Sir Richard Stapley and we are looking for a suitable home for the portrait. Any suggestions would be gratefully received.

Stapley Trust Meets the Prime Minister

We were excited to hear from one of our students, Armineh Soorenian from Iran that she was the winner of the regional title of the Yorkshire and Humberside region in the British Council's International Student of the Year competition. Having progressed successfully through three rounds of judging Armineh was just one of 12 students to be named as a regional finalist from 2000 students who entered the awards, winning a grant of £1000. The awards celebrate the achievement of international students in the UK, attracting entries from over 125 different countries. A special reception for all 12 finalists was held at Downing Street in April with the Prime Minister, Tony Blair (pictured above with Armineh).

Following an accident in 1990 in Tehran Armineh became disabled, acquiring visual, speech, mobility and manual impairments. Arriving in England in 1996 Armineh went to the Royal National College for the Blind for four years. She then studied for a degree in History of Art, Architecture and Design at Staffordshire University, graduating with a 2.1. She continued her education at the University of Leeds where she studied, very successfully, for an MA in Disability Studies. Armineh was awarded a grant by this Trust for the academic year 2005-6 for the first year of her PhD at Leeds – her subject being – “An investigation into the experience of international disabled students in UK higher education”. She has been awarded a further grant for the academic year 2006-7. Timothy Peters and Christine Ford had the great pleasure of meeting Armineh, very briefly, when she was in London at the finals of the British Council's competition. She spoke then of her hope to make a career improving the lives of disabled overseas students in the UK. We have no doubt that this strong, able, and charming young woman will succeed!

Graduate Entry to Veterinary Medicine – by Mr Mark Spurdens MRCVS

Twenty years ago it was unusual for graduates to begin a second undergraduate degree in medicine or veterinary medicine. The Royal Veterinary College and some of the Cambridge graduate colleges were possibly the only UK vet schools to accept graduates and this was on a very small scale. In RVC's case, graduates were only accepted into the second year of the course to replace any students leaving at the end of year one. This limited the number of places to the number of students failing their first year examinations (generally 0-4) and limited the number of applicants to those with the most relevant first degree as many of the pre-clinical subjects normally taught over two years would have to be covered by the graduate in a single year. Funding was also an issue because whilst LEA grants were still in existence, further funding was entirely discretionary and was generally limited to 2 of the 4 years of the course. Graduates would therefore have to self-fund the course for at least two years and whilst tuition fees were modest by today's standards at £500 p.a. when combined with living and other expenses still represented a major financial commitment.

Unless graduates had access to savings or private funding, they had to rely heavily on either family loans or loans from a bank (who were much more reluctant than they are now to lend money to students), limited assistance from college hardship funds or else from the generosity of charities.

In my own case I was fortunate enough to receive financial help in the form of grants or interest free loans from a number of charities – most notably The Worshipful Company of Leathersellers, The Thomas Wall, Trust, Lawrence Atwell's charity, The Drexler Ofrex Foundation, Sir Richard Perry Foundation and of course The Sir Richard Stapley Educational Trust.

The expansion of the UK vet schools throughout the 1990s, the removal of constraints by Higher Education Funding Authorities on the number of full fee places which could be offered, and the

tightening financial position of all universities, made the prospect of accepting graduate entrants at full fees much more attractive to the UK vet schools. At RVC, an expansion of home fully funded places from 70 to around 130 was accompanied by a further 70 full fee places for UK graduates or overseas undergraduates.

Whilst the expanded number of places meant that there was a greater prospect of graduates being accepted on to the course, the financial implications became much more significant. The reduction in the value of maintenance grants and introduction of student loans and the significant rise in fee levels meant that graduate entrants would probably be obliged to fund all five years of the course with fee levels of around £11,000 p.a. for the pre-clinical years and up to £15,000 for the clinical part of the course. Coupled with student loans taken up for their first degree, it became not uncommon to see students facing total debts of up to £100,000 by the time they qualified as veterinary surgeons. With starting salaries in general practice around £25-£30,000, this level of debt was for most very difficult and for some impossible to contemplate.

Nevertheless, a number of students decided to attempt the near impossible and where private funding was not available from friends or family, an increasing reliance on commercial loans and grants from individuals, sponsoring companies and charities has become the norm.

The Sir Richard Stapley Trust with its modest funds can at best only support the best students to a level of around £1000 per annum and against fees of £15,000 the sum seems insignificant. However, a little help from a number of sources can combine to have a significant effect on finances and the Trust receives many letters of thanks each year highlighting the significant difference that its relatively modest award made to both the student's morale and finances.

Ironically, the introduction of £3000 p.a. top-up fees in 2006 may actually be to the benefit of graduate entrants. At the time of writing at least two of the UK vet schools have decided to cap tuition fees for home graduate entrants at £3000 and this should hopefully reduce the total fee levels for graduates from around £60,000 to a more realistic £15,000. It remains to be seen if all of the colleges follow suit or indeed if any will reduce the fees for graduates already registered on the course.

What remains clear however (despite the reduced fees) is that the financial and academic inputs required by graduate entrants to a veterinary medicine course mean that complete and un-swinging dedication to the course is required if graduates hope to become Members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and enjoy a fulfilling career as a veterinary surgeon in practice, academia or research.

The Sir Richard Stapley Educational Trust will no doubt continue to support graduate students to the best of its ability and to do its best to raise further funds to allow it to increase the value of the awards it can offer.

Recent Letters of thanks received from students throughout the year include:-

I was awarded one of your scholarships for my postgraduate degree in International Conflict Analysis at the University of Kent. I graduated successfully and am now working in London for the charity the United World Colleges. I would very much like to stay in touch as I am very thankful for your support in the past. *MA, Kent, £500 2003-4*

Thank you very much for your support. I received the Stapley grant for 2 years running. I am now about to complete my PhD. I am very grateful and would be very happy to contribute to the Trust as soon as I get my first job. I wish to thank every member of the Trust for their assistance and my deep appreciation goes to those responsible for awarding the funds. Thank you. *PhD Geography, Lancaster £500 2004-5, £700 2005-6*

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to you all for the grant and for your

help to me in my very hard financial circumstances. I assure you that I will keep in contact with you all the time. With my best thanks. *PhD Linguistics, University of Central England, £700 2005-6.*

Thank you for your continuing support of my studies here at Oxford. My paediatrics attachment in South Africa is at Somerset Hospital in Cape Town. Last summer I spent 3 weeks in the Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa for an attachment in Gynaecology and Obstetrics – a very unique and rewarding experience. I have also written to GlaxoSmithKline to thank them for supporting my studies. *Medicine, Oxford, £550 2004-5, £1000 2005-6*

Many thanks for awarding me a grant for my ongoing PhD research programme at the Institute of Aquaculture, Stirling. I am sure it will much support me to successfully carry out the rest of my research programme. Besides, your support would certainly make a notable achievement in my academic career. I am very much thankful to the Trust for your great support. *PhD Aquaculture, Stirling University £500 2004-5, £700 2005-6*

I write to thank the Trust for the very generous offer of a grant to help with my tuition fees for the doctoral study in Accounting and Finance. I really do appreciate all of the support that I have received from the Trust and this grant will go a long way toward helping me to achieve the most I can from this period of my education. *MA and DBA, Northumbria, £1000 2005-6, £1000 2006-7*

I have passed my final examinations and am now a doctor. I have also been nominated to take part in the Gold Medal examinations. This involves subjecting myself to yet more examinations, which takes the form of a viva. The Gold Medal is awarded to the top student across all London Medical schools so it is wonderful to be nominated for it. Without the funding I received from organisations such as yourselves it would not have been possible for me to do this course. Thank you once again. *Medicine, St George's, £650 2002-3, £300 2003-4, £300 2004-5, £500 2005-6*

So far my singing career has been all I have dreamed of and more, and hopefully with a lot of hard work and sheer determination my career will continue to go from strength to strength. However, none of this would have been possible, had you not backed me and my potential when I was starting out at the Royal College. For this I cannot thank you enough. Thank you for all the support the Sir Richard Stapley Educational Trust gives other struggling students as they try to forge a career in the arts. *PG Cert and PG Dip. (Performance) Royal College of Music, £1000 2000-1, £1000 2002-3*

I very much appreciate your most generous award. It will be an immense help towards the successful completion of my studies. I am very much enjoying the course and the challenges it presents. Despite the huge debt I will incur through pursuing this course I feel truly committed and look forward to graduation to embark on a fulfilling career. *Vet. Med. Glasgow £550 2004-5, £700 2005-6*

Gifts to the Trust

We continue to be extremely grateful to **GlaxoSmithKline** for its continued and generous support of Healthcare and Medical students. In addition this year we were delighted when the **Garfield Weston Foundation** gave us a £5,000 donation to support applicants studying Nutrition. We have also been fortunate in being the recipients of a legacy of £1,000, and two former recipients of awards from the Trust have set up standing orders of £50 per month each – these alone enabling us to invest a further £1200 per year to increase our ability to meet the needs of those applying to us. We cannot stress strongly enough how much these donations mean to the Trust. If you have received a grant in the past and are now at a stage in your career when you could make a small regular payment (or even a one-off donation) to help today's students realise their ambitions we would be enormously grateful. Please get in touch with the Trust's Administrator, Christine Ford, at North Street Farmhouse, Sheldwich, Nr Faversham, ME13 0LN and she will ensure that you have the correct information to make your donation tax

efficient. Should you consider leaving the Trust a legacy we can provide a Pledge form. This form is not legally binding, but its completion and return to the Trust does help in our forward financial planning. We believe we are an excellent organisation in which to invest so please help us if you can!

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL from MAY 2006

Professor Timothy Peters PhD, DSc, FRCP, FRCPath, FRSA (Chairman & Trustee)

Dr Mary Wheeler MA, PhD, MRCP (Deputy Chairman)

Professor Colin Seymour-Ure MA, DPhil

Dr Muriel Buxton-Thomas MBBS, MRCP, MSc, FRCP

Professor Ralph Penny MA, PhD

Mr Jeremy Jackman

Professor Keith Smith BSc.,PhD

NON-COUNCIL TRUSTEES ADMINISTRATOR

Professor Henry Arnstein PhD, DSc, FIBiol

Mrs Christine Ford JP

Mr Michael Bushby BA

For further information about the Trust please visit our website : www.stapleytrust.org

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