

Op-Ed

Reformation without explanation?

For 17 years, the University's seemingly invisible animal committee secretly reviewed extensive proposals for live vertebrate animal research.

In November 1986, Vice President for Research John Moseley wrote a letter to the president of the local chapter of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, stating that: "Although we do not agree that the IACUC (Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee) is a 'governing body' of a 'public body,' which would make the Oregon Public Meetings Acts applicable, we do agree to give you notice of these meetings, and allow you to attend." Fourteen months later, no such notice has yet reached PETA.

By Nickolas Facaros
Emerald Columnist

Cornball vegetarians with Bambi complexes do not perpetuate the animal rights movement. The members of Congress, for example, became activists in enacting the Animal Welfare Act, requiring IACUCs to review practices involving animals so as to "minimize pain and distress to animals."

Similarly, the Public Health Service took action by requiring IACUCs to develop, implement, and review animal research programs that will "avoid or minimize discomfort, distress, and pain to animals."

The University is supposedly devoted to animal welfare by way of a policy statement: "When animals must be used (in biological research), projects must be of sound design and offer every practical safeguard to the animals."

At the trial of Roger Troen, a man convicted of burglary and theft charges at the University animal laboratories, witnesses testified under oath that in University labs mother cats ate their kittens and researchers cut eye muscles of insufficiently

anesthetized kittens. This slice of (laboratory) life does not exhaust the Edgar Allen Poeticism at the trial.

The IACUC seemingly is subject to Oregon Public Meetings Act if it has "the authority to make decisions for or recommendations to a public body on policy or administration."

Public Health Service Policy requires the IACUC to "make recommendations to the Institutional Official regarding any aspect of the institution's (PHS-supported) animal program." The University is an institution as well as a public body. An "institutional official" is an individual who makes "a commitment of behalf of the institution that the requirements of PHS policy will be met."

Complacently accept IACUC secrecy. Don't give a hoot about animal welfare on campus. Was that the University's implicit message?

On March 9, 1988, President Paul Olum issued the following statement: "It seems clear to me that when the IACUC has a meeting of its members to review a research proposal involving animal research protocols, or any other activity or condition over which the committee has action authority, that meeting is required by Oregon law to be an open meeting."

"There is a possibility that during the meeting the committee may be involved in the consideration of records that are exempt by law from public inspection, and in such a case, the committee would presumably go into executive session. Even when an executive session is used, certain rules govern the convening of such an executive session and the taking of minutes in such a session, even though material discussed in those meetings might necessarily be excluded from disclosure," Olum wrote.

Because the IACUC and relevant Oregon law have not changed since November 1986, it seems clear to me that the University has some questions

to answer.

For instance, who does Moseley mean by "we" in his letter dated November 18, 1986? Did Moseley consult with Olum on the open meetings issue?

Olum said Peter Swan, his assistant on legal affairs, advised him that the IACUC is subject to the Oregon Public Meetings Act. The Moseley letter, however, takes the opposite position on the issue. The letter is copied to Swan. Has Swan's legal stance changed? If so, why?

Does any of this have anything to do with Roger Troen and his trial?

Make no mistake, the University deserves credit for opening IACUC meetings to the public. A step toward reform is better late than never.

The IACUC will soon schedule its first public meeting.

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