Entrepreneurialism, Donor Match Create Ocular Pathology Professorship

In the field of comparative ocular veterinary pathology, he has literally written the book.

Authoring more than 20 book chapters, nearly 300 research papers, and 400 published abstracts, Richard Dubielzig, a professor emeritus of pathology at the UW School of Veterinary Medicine (SVM), has played a seminal role in advancing veterinary ophthalmology. Perhaps his most significant contribution to the field was co-authoring *Veterinary Ocular Pathology: A Comparative Review* (2010), an indispensable guide for diagnosing eye diseases in animals.

Now, thanks to a recent pledge from Dubielzig and his wife, Doris, his legacy will continue with the Richard R. Dubielzig Professorship for Comparative Ocular Pathology. The new professorship will support the director of the Comparative Ocular Pathology Laboratory of Wisconsin (COPLOW), a mail-in ocular histopathology service and information bank that Dubielzig founded in 1983.

The Dubielzigs’ decision to fund COPLOW was easy for them. And how to structure their gift—an annual cash donation or endowment—was something they were contemplating last November when Doris read of John and Tashia Morgridge’s $100 million gift to fund endowed professorships, chairs, and distinguished chairs at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. The Dubielzigs used the Morgridge’s one-to-one matching gift to establish the $1 million endowed professorship.

To fund their $500,000 pledge, Dubielzig employed the same entrepreneurial spirit that has historically helped support COPLOW, a laboratory financed exclusively by service fees and corporate-sponsored consulting fees. Dubielzig had always donated his revenue from Ocular Services on Demand (OSOD), a vision scientist consulting consortium that Dubielzig and three other scientists founded. In 2013, Dubielzig sold his interest in OSOD. A year later, he decided to use the entire seven-year buyout to fund the new professorship.

When the SVM opened in 1983, Dubielzig returned to Madison, his hometown, and joined the new faculty. “Maybe I was lucky,” says Dubielzig. “The Department of Pathobiological Sciences is a fantastic department that produces quality research and builds collaborations that are unique to the University of Wisconsin. I don’t know if that is available at every university.”

Those collaborations, ultimately leading to OSOD’s creation, took root in 1993 when UW vision scientists founded Comparative Ophthalmic Research Laboratories (CORL), a group that provides vision science expertise to companies developing new products. In 2001, a relationship formed with Madison-based Covance, Inc., and eight years later, OSOD was founded as the commercial entity to help pharmaceutical industries meet their development goals.

Dubielzig credits Chris Murphy, currently professor of comparative ophthalmology at the University of California, Davis, for the vision and the business savvy that made it all happen. Murphy was a professor of ophthalmology at the SVM when the initial business plans were developed and CORL and OSOD were created.

Today, that same vision scientist network has welcomed another member with COPLOW’s new director, Leandro Teixeira, who has large plans for the laboratory’s future.

“You don’t need much time around Dick and Doris to realize that generosity is an integral part of their life, and that fact is reflected once again in their gift to COPLOW,” says Teixeira, assistant professor of pathobiological sciences. “This professorship will allow us to redirect funds to invest in new areas of research, teaching, and training students and veterinarians, and improving our diagnostic service to the veterinary community even more.”

For the Dubielzigs, their passion for vision science continues in retirement. Doris, a former Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) science teacher, volunteers with the McPherson Eye Research Institute, connecting its experts with MMSD faculty, staff, and students.

Meanwhile, her husband continues to consult and enjoys a new honor truly fitting for a comparative ocular pathologist—he recently became the namesake for a newly identified species of tiny round worm (see sidebar below) that infests the head and eyes of Ball Pythons called *Serpentirhabdias dubielzigi*.

Jane Pruhs

![Professor Emeritus Richard Dubielzig and his wife, Doris, sit near the entrance to the Veterinary Medicine Building. Their pledge of $500,000, along with matching funds from UW–Madison alumni donors John and Tashia Morgridge, will fund the Richard R. Dubielzig Professorship for Comparative Ocular Pathology.](image)

Worm’s Eye View

In addition to funding a named professorship, Richard Dubielzig recently became the namesake for a newly identified species of tiny round worm that infests the head and eyes of Ball Pythons, *Serpentirhabdias dubielzigi*. Read about how our faculty and staff collaborated with researchers at Cornell University on this fascinating project at [www.vetmed.wisc.edu/worm-species-named-for-professor-emeritus](http://www.vetmed.wisc.edu/worm-species-named-for-professor-emeritus).