Dr. Robert S. Dunbar, Jr. was born in Providence, Rhode Island. He joined the West Virginia University College of Agriculture and Forestry in July of 1952 as an associate professor of Dairy Husbandry with teaching and research responsibilities. In 1957, he also became the statistician for the Agricultural Experiment Station. In 1960, he was promoted to Professor of Dairy Science and continued his work as statistician.

When the Department of Animal Industries and Veterinary Science was formed from the old departments of animal science, dairy science, poultry science and veterinary science, he became the first chairman. In 1964, he became the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Forestry and served in that capacity until July of 1974.

In 1971, he was appointed director of the West Virginia Agricultural Experiment Stations and continued until 1974.