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Editorial Notes

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Editorial Notes

I remember in undergraduate being strongly discouraged from entering the profession of veterinary medicine. I was told repeatedly that there were too many veterinarians and livestock numbers were declining so veterinarians would not be needed in a few years. I cannot count the number of times I was told, “there is no future in veterinary medicine, there is no money in it.” My response was “I’m not doing it for the money, I’m doing it because it is what I WANT to do.” I have always enjoyed caring for animals and since third grade I have set my goals in that direction. Besides, like everything in life, I knew the high number of veterinarians was just a trend. Likewise, I knew trends always cycle and the situation would change. I was not sure when this would come about. It might not be right away, but someday I knew I would see the opposite of what they were telling me. So I went ahead with my plans and with what I knew would make me happy.

Today I am extremely glad I never took the above advice as fact and that I proceeded into vet school after three years of undergraduate study. I am looking forward to the endless opportunities for preceptorships and the growing list of job opportunities before me as a senior. Food animal practices are especially plentiful. A negative point for the already practicing veterinarian looking to hire, but the answer to mine and other vet students dreams. We will be entering the professional world at an ideal time. Not only are job opportunities blossoming but wages are taking a positive direction as well. And no, I did not enter the profession for the money but after acquiring a debt of roughly $45,000 (maximum I hope) I won’t say it isn’t a factor in my mind. I try not to think about it most days, my debts will be there to greet me when I graduate. And until then my philosophy is sign the loan on the dotted line and do not worry about it. Instead I spend my “spare?” time like many other vet students, thinking about various activities and things I want to do and have to get done each day.

Similar to the endless opportunities for seniors, activities of the average first, second, and third year veterinary student are likewise increasing and widely diversified. There is just about a club for every species of interest from avian to feline to small ruminants to bovine to swine. Too many to belong to them all so choices must be made as to which organization will benefit each individual the most. Primary interests become very important in this decision. Dairy has been my main interest so I chose to belong to AABP.

There is also Vetrospect (the vet school yearbook), the ISU Veterinarian Staff, Christian Veterinary Fellowship, SCAVMA, and the Student AVMA as well as individual class positions. With each of these come leadership positions, committees and various offices. I have had my share of these and though they have all been positive and rewarding I can say I am looking forward to fulfilling my responsibilities and handing them to the next vet student. Then I can proceed with new goals.

In addition, students can volunteer to be part of the Large Animal Intensive Care Unit, the Wildlife Care Clinic and the Aviary. Again choices must be made in the student’s area of interest and desired experiences. As a member of the Large Animal ICU team, the wee hours of the night have not been the most ideal but the experience has proved very valuable. This is especially true for me, since I have not been around foals much at all.

Then add in the health kick of today’s world, the vet school now has its own Recreation Stress Relief Program, in addition to the Weight Room Facilities. These too are run by vet students in their spare time. They add activities like: aerobics three times a week, VAGBRAA (Veterinarians Annual Great Bike Ride Around Ames), horse back riding, sailing, weight lifting, and many other activities. The new recreation center at Iowa State has also opened the door to many physical sports for students to explore. I have tried raquet-
ball at the new center and enjoy aerobics at the vet school.

There are also co-chair positions for the major events hosted by the vet school -- SCAVMA Scamper, Winterfest, dog washes, Spring fling and the list goes on. With the decrease in class size, there are many "jobs" for fewer people. I know when every one pitches in the events not only run smoother but are also more successful.

Electives are now a wide open field, too. Last fall for the first time electives began to count towards grade point average. Vet students can take any classes at the university as electives. This allows students who enter before they complete their Bachelor's degree the chance to obtain it during vet school if they so desire. Research projects can also be used as elective credits. There are many electives I would like to take but I find myself limited to those of utmost importance, i.e. those required for my undergraduate degree and those along my main line of interest.

As if all these opportunities are not enough, many students also hold part-time jobs throughout vet school. With the increasing cost of tuition many times the student cannot borrow enough money. Others do it just for the extra cash or to keep their loans from getting so high. These jobs may be as a waitress, in a convenience store, with one of the research centers in town, or at the vet school (to name just a few). They require a commitment of their own and take considerable time out of studying and activities. I worked at the National Animal Disease Center this past year and it meant giving up many weekends as well as evening activities.

The trend growing toward specialization -- be it a single species or just production animal medicine versus companion animal medicine -- has made it necessary for the average vet student to focus in one area while trying to retain the basic core knowledge. By selecting clubs, activities, electives, and maybe even jobs related to a student's primary area of interest, each student has the opportunity to mold their education around their goals.

Somewhere in the midst of all this opportunity, the veterinary student attempts to learn time management. They manage to find time for school, for a job, for activities, and for additional elective loads. I know from experience that these don't always come in that order -- there are days when I wonder what my priorities are and why I get myself in to so many things. But for the most part I look at each experience as one of the plentiful opportunities that the veterinary medical profession has to offer. The vast array makes veterinary medicine an exciting place to be!