Planning for Veterinary School

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Here to help you get ahead.

NOTE: Requirements can change at any time. Check application service and school web sites often for changes that may occur.

VETERINARY MEDICINE SCHOOLS

There are presently 30 schools of veterinary medicine in the United States graduating about 3,000 students a year, with more than 12,500 students enrolled. Approximately 75% of entering students are women. To view a searchable list, go to: http://www.avma.org/education/cvea/colleges_accredited/colleges_accredited.asp. Most veterinary schools and colleges are located at state universities and give preference to applicants who are residents of that state. Many states without veterinary colleges contract with one or more colleges for the admission of a prescribed number of their residents each year. Many veterinary schools accept out-of-state residents. Only one school is located in Texas: College of Veterinary Medicine, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843-4461, http://vetmed.tamu.edu/dvm/future/application-information

PREPARATION ADVICE

Students interested in a career in veterinary medicine should have taken a strong science, math and biology program beginning in junior high and continuing through college. To be considered for admission to a college of veterinary medicine, a student must first complete undergraduate pre-veterinary medical coursework, which usually includes three to four years of college study, with specific course requirements. Each college of veterinary medicine establishes its own pre-veterinary requirements. Typical requirements include basic language and communication skills, social sciences, humanities, mathematics, chemistry and the biological and physical sciences.

PRE-VETERINARY COURSEWORK

Pre-veterinary coursework can be completed at many colleges and universities, including those at which the veterinary medical schools are located. Students should check with the veterinary college to which they plan to apply to be sure they take all required courses. They should also be certain that credits from the pre-veterinary courses they take at the school of their choice are acceptable to the veterinary colleges. Completion of a pre-veterinary program does not guarantee admission to a college of veterinary medicine. Admission to veterinary school is highly competitive. Applicants usually have grades of "B" or better, especially in the sciences. Applicants must take the Veterinary Aptitude Test, Medical College Admission Test or the Graduate Record Examination. Most colleges give preference to candidates with animal- or veterinary-related experience. The number of qualified applicants who are admitted to veterinary colleges nationwide varies from year to year, but the average acceptance rate is approximately 43%. There is no pre-vet "major." While at Southwestern University, students should select a curriculum in which they can fulfill the pre-professional course requirements for the vet schools in which they're interested while pursuing a major in ANY area they wish. Choose your major with care since it may prove to be the deciding factor for your future career should you not enter a veterinary school. Successful applicants have come from all majors!

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Exact requirements for each school's application process vary. Visit school websites for the most recent directions for application. Generally, vet school applications, like other applications to graduate and professional schools, require several components, including an actual application, transcripts of undergraduate coursework with strong GPA, entrance exam scores, letters of recommendation, personal statement and experience. For example, formal applications for Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine (TAMU-CVM) must be filed between May 1 and October 1 through the Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS). A score for the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is required as part of the application. All scores must be submitted for the revised GRE. All required pre-professional courses in progress at the time of application, or to be completed by the end of the spring semester prior to entrance into TAMU-CVM, must be passed with a grade of "C" or better.

For the 2013 entering class, 148 students were offered admission. The average GPA for Texas residents was 3.65 overall and 3.68 on the last 45 hours; the average GRE score was 155.86 verbal, 155.61 quantitative, and 4.1 analytical.

APPLICATION TIPS

- **Apply early!**
- **Research schools**
  Research the schools you want to apply to thoroughly. Get a copy of the Veterinary Medical School Admissions Requirements book (available from online suppliers like Amazon) for the year you are applying. This book will give you all the information you need on application statistics, number of out of state applicants who get are accepted average GPAs, what pre-requisites you need, etc.
- **Contact admissions offices**
  Don't call them every day with updates, but let admissions offices know who you are and that you are applying and ask any questions you may have. Surprisingly, people who work in these offices will remember you! It might come in handy later on.
- **Letters of recommendation**
  If allowed by the school to which you're applying, send in more than three letters of recommendation. Get a letter of recommendation from each animal experience you list on the application. The letter supports your experiences and lends credence to your application. In general, an above-and-beyond mentality may help your candidacy: take more than the pre-req classes, have more hours of experience than average, have more letters, etc. Make sure you ask the prospective recommenders if they are willing to write you a positive letter of reference – don't assume! Also, ask for people to write you letters of recommendation early. Check in with your letter writers weekly, until they physically hand you the letter or assure you they mailed it in. Give them documentation to help them write a detailed letter, such as a list of points to include in the letter, a copy of your resume and your personal statement. If your letter writer has seen you in animal-related experience, be sure to ask them to evaluate you on your ability to handle animals, and your confidence. Request that recommendation letters and transcripts be sent to you first, so you can send the information off to the schools directly (unless explicitly instructed otherwise by the schools to which you are applying). Having letters and transcripts all coming in separately increases the chance something will get lost along the way.

- **Personal statement**
  Have EVERYONE you know read your personal statement, including faculty, Career Services and the Writing Center. Be prepared to write several drafts of your statement, so start early. Spell everything correctly and watch for grammar errors and typos. Stick to the facts and don't ramble. Fewer than 1,000 words is a general recommendation for length.
- **GRE scores**
  Send your GRE scores early. Sometimes it can take a week or two and you want everything to get to the admissions office early so your file is complete and ready for review before a mad rush of papers comes in and documents are more easily lost.
- **Get experience**
  Get as much and as diversified animal experience as you can. Applying with only small animal (or only large animal) experience will probably not be beneficial. Lack of breadth of experience is a main reason why people are not accepted, above and beyond GPA and test scores. Keep track of every hour spent doing your work with animals, your clubs, your community service, etc. You must provide information even from high school. If you ever won an award, they want to know about it. Just be really compulsive about saving information early on, as it saves time later. Make sure the number of hours you write on the application matches the number your recommendation letter writer documents.
- **Visit prospective schools**
  Most vet schools have open houses, which provide a good time to meet students and admissions staff and ask questions. Take a look at the surrounding area and consider the location where you will potentially spend the next four years. Stay overnight with a student, or group of students, if you can.

THE VET MED ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Veterinary medical study is difficult. Students learn about many different animals and diseases and become skilled in surgical techniques and many laboratory and diagnostic procedures. A typical veterinary medical student spends about 4,000 hours in classroom, laboratory and clinical study. Because the time required for instruction absorbs most of a student's day, many evening and weekend hours are spent doing reading assignments, library research and independent study. In most colleges of veterinary medicine, the professional program comprises two phases. During the first phase, pre-clinical sciences, such as anatomy, physiology, pathology, pharmacology and microbiology are emphasized. Most of the students' time is spent in classroom and laboratory study. The second phase of professional study is principally clinical. Students learn the principles of medicine and surgery in the classroom and through hands-on clinical experience. Students learn to apply their knowledge in a clinical setting under the supervision of graduate veterinarians on the faculty. In the clinics, students treat animals, perform surgery and deal with owners who use the school's clinical services. The clinical curriculum includes study of infectious and noninfectious diseases, diagnostic and clinical pathology, obstetrics, radiology, clinical medicine, anesthesiology and surgery. Students also study public health, preventive medicine, toxicology, clinical nutrition, professional ethics and business practices.

AFTER GRADUATION FROM VETERINARY SCHOOL

Before graduate veterinarians can engage in private clinical practice in any state, they must acquire a license issued by that state. A license is granted only to veterinarians who pass state-required examinations. New graduate veterinarians may enter private clinical practice, usually as employees in an established practice or private industry, or become employees of the U.S. government as meat and poultry inspectors, disease control workers or commissioned officers in the U.S. Public Health Service or the military. New graduates many also enter internships and residencies at veterinary colleges and large private and public veterinary practices. Veterinarians do not have to complete an internship before beginning practice. However, many internship and residency programs do exist, and an increasing number of new veterinarians are taking advantage of them to sharpen their skills or to achieve advanced qualification or specialty certification. For positions in research and teaching, a master's or Ph.D. degree is usually required. Veterinarians who seek specialty board certification in one of the 20 specialty fields, such as ophthalmology, pathology, surgery, radiology or laboratory animal medicine, must complete two- to five-year residency programs and must pass an examination. Continuing education is important, even after veterinarians have completed their college studies and acquired the appropriate licenses. New scientific knowledge and techniques are constantly being developed, and veterinarians must keep up to date by reading scientific journals and attending professional meetings and seminars. Approximately half the states require veterinarians to attend continuing education courses to maintain their licenses.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC)
http://www.aavmc.org/
Pre-veterinary students should find the link to the Veterinary Medical Colleges Application Service to be particularly helpful. The site includes application tips, commonly asked questions and statistical information.

NetVet
http://netvet.wustl.edu/vet.htm
An incredible resource for anyone interested in veterinary medicine. Contains links to veterinary medical colleges, professional organizations, the Electronic Zoo and much more! Highly recommended.

Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service
http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas/
Applications for Texas A&M University vet school go through this service.

National Board Exam (NBE)
The NBE Committee provides national standardized licensing examinations for veterinarians. A set of sample questions for the Qualifying Examination is available on this site: http://www.nbvme.org/?id=60. A web-based practice version of the Qualifying Examination is available. All QE candidates should use the practice examination before they take the actual examination. The interface is identical to the actual web-based examination.

US News & World Report
http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-health-schools/veterinarian-rankings
The top three vet schools, ranked in 2015, are:

- University of California, Davis
- Cornell University
- Colorado State University

Texas A&M University ranked in 8th place. Additional rankings are available from the website.

**Information summarized from:*
http://www.avma.org/
http://vetmedicine.about.com/library/viewers/uc-apptips.htm