



CENTER FOR CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Planning for Veterinary School

Veterinary Medicine Schools

There are presently 30 accredited schools of veterinary medicine in the U.S., graduating about 3,000 students a year with more than 12,500 students enrolled. Approximately 80 percent of entering students are women. To view a searchable list, go to: <https://www.avma.org/ProfessionalDevelopment/Education/Accreditation/Colleges/Pages/colleges-accredited.aspx>. Most veterinary schools and colleges are located at state universities and give preference to applicants who are residents of that state. However, many states without veterinary colleges contract with one or more schools for the admission of a prescribed number of their residents each year and many veterinary schools accept out-of-state residents. The only Texas veterinary school is Texas A&M's College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences in College Station (<http://vetmed.tamu.edu/dvm/future>).

Pre-Requisite Experiences

There is no pre-vet "major." While at Southwestern, you can select any major while completing vet school pre-requisite courses. Choose your major with care—it may prove to be the deciding factor for your future career should you not enter vet school. Successful applicants have come from all majors!

Each vet school establishes its own requirements, though most schools require courses in chemistry, biological and physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, mathematics, and basic language and communication skills. Check with specific vet schools to which you plan to apply. Admission to vet school is highly competitive. The number of qualified applicants admitted to veterinary colleges nationwide varies, but the average acceptance rate is approximately 50%. Applicants usually have grades of "B" or better, especially in the sciences. Applicants must also take the GRE or MCAT, and most vet schools prefer candidates with animal- or veterinary-related experience.

The Application Process

Application requirements vary, so visit school websites for the most recent information on applying. Generally, vet school applications, like other applications to graduate and professional schools, require several components, including an actual application, transcripts of undergraduate coursework with a strong GPA, entrance exam scores, letters of recommendation, a personal statement, and documentation of experience in the field. For example, formal applications to Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (TAMU-CVMB) 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 a required part of the application (www.ets.org/gre/). You must pass all required courses with a grade of "C" or higher.

For the 2018 entering class at TAMU-CVMB, 166 students were offered admission out of 480 qualified applicants. The average GPA for Texas residents was 3.72 overall and 3.76 on the last 45 hours; the average GRE score was 154.87 verbal, 154.61 quantitative, and 4.53 analytical.

Application Tips

APPLY EARLY!

RESEARCH SCHOOLS

Thoroughly research the schools you want to apply to. Get a copy of the Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements (VMSAR) for the year you are applying (available from online suppliers like Amazon) for application statistics (such as number of out-of-state applicants accepted and average accepted GPA), what pre-requisites you need, etc.

CONTACT ADMISSIONS OFFICES

Don't call every day with updates, but let admissions offices know who you are and that you are applying. Don't be afraid to ask any questions you may have. Surprisingly, people who work in these offices will remember you! It might come in handy later.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

If allowed by schools to which you're applying, send in more than three letters of recommendation. Get a recommendation letter from each animal-related experience you list on the application. The letters support your experiences and lend credence to your application. In general, an above-and-beyond mentality may help your candidacy: take more than the required classes, have more hours of experience than average, have more letters, etc. Make sure you ask prospective recommenders if they are willing to write you a positive letter of reference—don't assume! Ask for letters early and check in with your letter-writers weekly until they confirm they've submitted the letter. Help them write a strong letter by supplying a list of points to include in the letter and a copy of your resume and personal statement. If your letter-writer has observed you in an animal-related setting, be sure to ask them to evaluate you on your confidence and your ability to handle animals. 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 chances of something getting lost along the way.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

Have everyone you know read your personal statement, including Faculty Pre-Health Advisor Dr. Maria Cuevas, other faculty, the Writing Center, and the Center for Career & Professional Development. Start early and be prepared to write several drafts of your statement. Spell everything correctly and watch for grammar errors and typos. Stick to the facts and don't ramble. Keep your statement to less than 1,000 words.

GRE SCORES

Send your GRE scores early. Sometimes it can take a week or two for them to be received and you want everything to get to the admissions office as early as possible 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 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 for non-acceptance by a school, above GPA and test scores. Keep track of every hour spent doing work with animals, student organizations, community service, etc. You must provide information, even from high school. If you ever won an award, they want to know about it. Make a habit of saving information early on to save yourself time later. Make sure the number of hours you write on your application matches the number your recommenders document in their letters.

VISIT PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

Most vet schools have open houses, which are a good time to meet students and admissions staff and ask questions. Take a look at the surrounding area and consider the location—you will potentially spend the next four years there. If you can, stay overnight with a student or group of students in order to get a better sense of the school.

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. In most vet med colleges, the professional program consists of two phases. During the first phase, most of your time is spent in the classroom and laboratory studying anatomy, physiology, pathology, pharmacology, microbiology, etc. In the second, clinical stage, you learn the principles of medicine and surgery in the classroom and through hands-on clinical experience, then apply that 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 grad 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 may also enter internships and residencies at veterinary colleges and large public or private veterinary practices. Vets 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 40 specialty fields, such as ophthalmology, pathology, surgery, radiology, or laboratory animal medicine, must complete a two- to five-year residency program and pass an examination. Continuing education is important, even after veterinarians have completed their college studies and acquired the appropriate licenses, and about half of U.S. states require vets to attend continuing education courses to maintain their licenses. New scientific knowledge and medical techniques are constantly emerging, and veterinarians must stay up-to-date by reading scientific journals and attending professional meetings and seminars.

Additional Information

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) (<http://www.aavmc.org/>): links to the Veterinary Medical Colleges Application Service, application tips, commonly asked questions, and statistical information.

Netvet (<http://netvet.wustl.edu/vet.htm>): Links to veterinary medical colleges, professional organizations, the Electronic Zoo, and much more.

Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDAS) (www.tmdsas.com/veterinary/homepage.html): Apply to Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine through this service.

U.S. News & World Report (<http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-health-schools/veterinarian-rankings>) Top vet schools, ranked in 2019, are:

- University of California, Davis (1st)
- Cornell University (2nd)
- Colorado State University (3rd)
- North Carolina State University (tied for 4th)
- Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine (tied for 4th)

**Information summarized from: <http://www.avma.org/>*