EXPOSING COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES TO ALTERNATIVE CAREERS IN VETERINARY MEDICINE; EXPERIENCES FROM A MEDICAL SCHOOL COMPARATIVE MEDICINE DEPARTMENT

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Abstract

Stanford University attracts some of the brightest undergraduate students in the country. The Department of Comparative Medicine (DCM) within the Stanford University School of Medicine has made it a high priority to encourage Stanford undergraduate pre-veterinary students to consider "alternative" careers in veterinary medicine, well before they ever apply to veterinary schools. By offering unique undergraduate classes, freshman and sophomore seminar courses, independent study, and research opportunities, we expose these highly motivated undergraduates to the careers of the DCM faculty whose credentials cover a broad range (i.e., ACVP, ACLAM, ACVA, ACVPM, ACVIM, MPH and Ph.Ds). The Stanford Undergraduate Pre-Veterinary Club (SUPVC) has been in existence since ~ 2003, and receives support from the DCM for student research, educational dinner meetings, honoraria for invited speakers, field trips, and an informational website. Past mentees have pursued combined DVM/Ph.D and DVM/MD degrees, and some have completed internships into clinical internships, ACLAM residency or combined ACVPh.D residency programs. Furthermore, the SUPVC participates in community outreach to regional high school and college students, academic counselors, and parents, in the form of day-long symposia (Pre-Vet Expos) that offer a glimpse into the diversity of the veterinary profession and insight into the "pathway" to veterinary school. It is in part these unusual opportunities provided to our undergraduate students that have resulted in an exceptionally high "first time applicant" acceptance rate to veterinary schools. It is the early and focused exposure of Stanford undergraduates to the Department of Comparative Medicine faculty in combination with existing undergraduate programs that presents a novel approach to address the future needs of the veterinary profession in the current climate of "One Medicine, One Health".

Since 2008, the SUPVC has hosted three day-long symposia (Pre-Vet Expo, Pre-Vet Expo II, Pre-Vet Expo III) with the intent of exposing the public to diverse career options in the field of veterinary medicine. These Expos offer high school and college students from the Bay Area a chance to hear from several veterinarians in different disciplines speak about their careers, to eat lunch with a vet, to hear from veterinary students at several vet schools, and to learn about volunteer opportunities.

Where are they now??

Since the inception of the SUPVC, 48 Stanford graduates (and a few post docs) have gone on to pursue careers in veterinary medicine. Students are enrolled in or have completed 15 different veterinary schools. Amongst these, 2 are currently in or have completed anatomic pathology residencies (1 already an ACVP diplomate), 1 student is in a DVM/Ph.D program, 1 student obtained a DVM/MA, 2 students joined the Army Vet Corps, several have gone on to do internships and clinical residencies, and 2 students are in Stanford’s Lab Animal Residency Program.