VET SCHOOL EDITION

By Erin Brannick, DVM, MS, DACVP
Pre-conceived notions, rumors and speculations abound about veterinary admissions and vet school.

Friendly “advice” from family members, friends, mentors, and complete strangers can increase anxiety over pre-vet track and veterinary admissions.
Inform future colleagues

Level or raise the playing field. Students who seek out early advisement are **MORE** likely to be successful in applications!

Lessen anxiety

Have some fun at my own, and my profession’s, expense

Presenting some of the most common vet school myths...
MOST PEOPLE WHO APPLY TO VET SCHOOL DO NOT GET IN

- TRUE NATIONALLY, FALSE LOCALLY
- National acceptance rate ~ 42% applicants
- UD ANFS major acceptance rate ranges between 77-91%!

VET SCHOOL

THE HARDEST PART IS GETTING IN
Many students who apply again and improve deficits between applications get accepted.

Have PLAN B, even if an excellent student.

Plan A is still an option, may just not happen immediately.

Decide how long you want to hold onto Plan A and stick with your plan.
Concerns by year-

- Yr 1: Adjusting to rigorous pace, new study habits, exams

- Yr 2: Doldrums of didactic study, exams

- Yr 3: Clinics/boards looming on horizon, first surgery

- Yr 4: Clinics (sleep schedule, constant change, boards, interpersonal conflicts), 1st job

The hardest part about vet school is getting in.
VET SCHOOL IS WAY MORE DIFFICULT THAN UNDERGRAD

- Not more difficult, just more information more quickly
- Since it is for your career, EVERYTHING seems to matter

- Much more interesting, since it is what you WANT to study
- Vet schools want you to succeed! Very few students fail or leave once in vet school.
I MUST HAVE A PERFECT 4.0 GPA TO HAVE A CHANCE AT VET SCHOOL

- Academic trends and overall workload matter more
- Other attributes and experiences also vitally important
- Prefer >3.5, but >3.0 still competitive at most schools. Students with >2.5 eligible at some schools.
I HAVE A PERFECT 4.0 GPA, SO I AM A SHOE-IN FOR VET SCHOOL!

- Must also complete pre-reqs and show evidence of:
  - leadership
  - high communication skills
  - community engagement
  - good ethical judgment
  - coping skills
  - work/life balance
  - vet/animal experience

- Not all GPAs created equal - community college vs. 4 yr, school rankings, curriculum selected (light course load, W’s on transcript), etc.
Application is **NOT** a score card/checklist

**Breadth** (more than 1 species or more than 1 type of practice) and **Depth** (duration and level of interaction) matter

Try what interests you and **Do what you LOVE!**
Keep an open mind. Many students change trajectory during vet school and many vets change career paths.

Knowledge and skills can apply across species.

Breadth of knowledge makes you more versatile as your interests or vet med trends change over time.
I NEED A SCIENCE-BASED MAJOR/ MINOR FOR VET SCHOOL

- As long as pre-reqs are met, students can have any major/minor they want

- When selecting a minor or electives, consider:
  - **skill building** (language, business/econ/finance, communication, etc.)
  - **complementing** (med technology, public health, psychology, etc.)
  - **diversifying** (fashion design, history, English, etc.)
  - **enjoying** (music, dance, art, etc.)

Develop a unique perspective through these courses to bring to vet med!
My classmates are my future **COLLEAGUES**
Work together and celebrate each others’ successes
Build a network that will span countries and decades!
Other than a couple East coast schools, most UD ANFS students do not overlap for vet school applications or
UD ANFS students are equally successful at getting in to same school during the same application cycle
Select programs based on:
- strengths of program
- personal interest
- geographic/social needs
- family needs

Home school advantage
- broader GPA/GRE range
- more students from smaller pool
- cheaper tuition

IF I HAVE A “HOME” VET SCHOOL, I MUST APPLY THERE
IF I AM APPLYING “OUT OF STATE”, I HAVE NO CHANCE AT THAT VET SCHOOL

- 30 Vet Schools in 50 states
- Most UD ANFS students get into more than 1 school (up to 7 schools!)
- Currently have students at or about to attend half the US schools!
- UD ANFS students have been accepted to all but 6 of the US accredited schools in just the past 4 years!

But before applying:
- Check for “contract seats”
- Check # out of state seats

Also: Ross, St. George’s, Royal Vet College (London), Edinburgh, Dublin
ONCE “OUT OF STATE”, ALWAYS “OUT OF STATE”

- True for some vet schools, but not all

- Ohio State, Missouri, UC Davis, Washington State, NC State allow students to apply for in-state residency after 1 year

- **MUST** prove and document NO major cash flow from out of state sources (i.e. parents, work in other states, etc.) during the year

- **MUST** change address, driver’s license, voter reg., etc. to new state

- **MAY** have to work in state during the year.
FROM AAVMC FAQ:
Is a veterinary school’s ranking important?

“No. Each of the veterinary schools has unique aspects about their educational programs, specialty areas, faculty, geographic location, etc. It’s really like comparing apples to oranges. All accredited veterinary schools deliver a standard quality of education meeting the requirements of the AVMA/COE.”
Educational debt = DEBT.

My loans were >$130,000, or ~$500/month

Total educational loans in my family of >$250K, or ~$1,000/month

As professionals, our earnings bumped us into higher tax bracket:
- Keep less due to higher tax %
- Fewer tax credits
- No credits for student loan repayment!
WITH VET LOANS, YOU MAY NEVER “BREAK EVEN” DURING YOUR CAREER

- Partially true... recent JAVMA study shows that some vet career paths may never break even before retirement, especially for women entering profession.

- Academia and industry were exceptions.

- Need to plan ahead to reduce or offset loans, negotiate for higher earnings, and plan for concurrent life/retirement savings!
Not necessarily...
- Scholarships available, but different than undergrad
- Combined grad/vet school option > tuition free or reduced, less time overall to both degrees
- Military option

But
- Loan repayment programs:
  - USDA or NIH VMLRP (Vet Med Loan Repayment programs)
  - Public service (10 yrs = discharge remainder of debt)
  - State programs (NJ, etc.)

https://www.avma.org/About/SAVMA/StudentFinancialResources/Pages/Scholarship-Loan-Repayment-and-Forgiveness-Programs.aspx
Due to earnings potential, typically good credit scores, and high likelihood of full repayment, most banks LOVE loaning money to vets!

Many banks even offer special financing lines just for professionals (i.e. “Professional Loans”)

Some lending groups target vets!

Amount depends on debt : earnings

But, you are financially responsible for each and every loan you take out!!!
BECOMING A VET PUTS LIFE PLANS ON HOLD

- Life happens before, during, and after vet school
- You can “have it all” just not always when you want it
- Be flexible with your timeline

- Make career decisions WITH others
- Prioritize your LIFE into your work goals (1, 5, 10yr plans)
BECOMING A VETERINARIAN ISN’T WORTH IT ANYMORE

- Don’t let others talk you OUT of vet med, especially mid-career veterinarians
- High degree of job satisfaction (above average), especially compared to other professionals
- Most common reason for leaving profession is retirement!

Love
is a four-legged word
OTHER MYTHS THAT NEED TO BE DEBUNKED?
FOR MORE INFORMATION

- VMSAR by Purdue Univ. Press


- American Veterinary Medical Association [https://www.avma.org/Pages/home.aspx](https://www.avma.org/Pages/home.aspx)