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College of Veterinary Medicine Essential Requirements

Approved by the CVM faculty on 2/3/2003

Introduction

The Washington State University Regents confer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree only after a student has mastered the coherent body of knowledge and skills that comprises the veterinary curriculum to the satisfaction of the faculty. The faculty will expect each veterinary student to demonstrate proficiency in the use and understanding of principles and facts related to the basic sciences and in the application of these principles to the practice of clinical medicine. There are certain qualities and skills that students must possess and/or refine to accomplish these things. These essential qualities include: ethical, attitudinal, behavioral, and emotional attributes, stamina, intellectual (cognitive, integrative, and quantitative abilities) capacity, communication skills, and the visual, auditory, tactile acuity and motor skills necessary to function as a health care professional. The following guidelines are meant to familiarize students with the expectations of the faculty, as well as some of the inherent demands of our veterinary curriculum. Judgments about whether a student has failed to meet any of these standards will be made in the context of the due process procedures outlined in the Procedural Guidelines section of this document.

Ethical, Attitudinal, Behavioral, and Emotional Attributes

Because the medical profession is governed by ethical principles and by state and federal laws, a veterinary student must have the capacity to understand, learn, and abide by these values and laws. Examples of breaches of veterinary medical ethics include, but are not limited to:

- cheating, plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty;
- falsifying medical records or certificates;
- willfully withholding medical treatments ordered by a clinician;
- betraying a client confidence; or
- animal cruelty, whether acts of commission or omission.

A veterinary student must be able to relate to instructors, classmates, staff, clients and their animals with honesty, compassion, empathy, integrity, and dedication.

- A veterinary student must not allow considerations of religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, politics or social standing to preclude productive and constructive relationships with instructors, staff, classmates, or clients;
- A veterinary student must not allow considerations of breeds or species to influence their relationships with their patients or teaching animals. For example, a student must never intentionally withhold medical care from a feline patient out of a dislike or distrust of cats.

A veterinary student must be able to understand and use the authority, special privileges, and trust inherent in the veterinary student-client relationship for the benefit of both the client and the patient and avoid behaviors that constitute misuse of this power.

A veterinary student must never compromise care of an animal that has been left in their care or is their responsibility, regardless of whether this care conflicts with personal schedules or activities. A veterinary student must never engage in educational activities while under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed, illicit drugs. In addition, a student should not engage in patient care duties while impaired in any manner by any substance (i.e., even prescribed drugs that are known to impact performance).

A veterinary student must never perform any action that might be construed as the practice of veterinary medicine, except as permitted under the laws of a state in which the student may function in the role of providing animal health care under the direction of a licensed veterinarian.

A veterinary student must be of sufficient behavioral and emotional health to fully utilize his/her intellectual ability, to exercise good judgment, to complete patient care responsibilities promptly and properly, and to relate to patients, their owners, staff and colleagues with courtesy, compassion, maturity, and respect for their dignity.

A veterinary student must be able to work collaboratively and flexibly as a professional team member.

A veterinary student must behave in a professional manner in spite of stressful work demands, changing environments, and clinical uncertainties.

A veterinary student must have the capacity to modify behavior in response to constructive criticism.

A veterinary student must be open to examining personal attitudes, perceptions, and stereotypes that may negatively impact patient care and interpersonal relationships.

An individual with a diagnosed psychiatric disorder may function as a veterinary student as long as the condition is under

sufficient control to enable them to achieve the programmatic expectations of the college.

While the above-referenced emotional/psychological abilities are essential requirements, documented emotional/psychiatric and/or psychological disabilities recognized by applicable law shall be reasonably accommodated.

Stamina

The study and ongoing practice of medicine often involves taxing workloads and stressful situations. A veterinary student must have the physical and emotional stamina to maintain a high level of function in the face of these likely working conditions.

Intellectual Capacity

A veterinary student must possess a range of intellectual skills that allows him/her to master the broad and complex body of knowledge that comprises a medical education at a level deemed to be appropriate by the faculty. These skills include the ability:

- to comprehend dimensional and spatial relationships of structure
- perform scientific measurements and calculations
- to develop reasoning, problem solving and decision-making skills appropriate to the practice of veterinary medicine.

A veterinary student's reasoning abilities must be sufficiently sophisticated to analyze and synthesize information from a wide variety of sources. He/she must be able to learn effectively through a variety of modalities including, but not limited to:

- class room instruction;
- small group discussion and interactive assignments, including participation in medical rounds, and goal-directed activities;
- individual study of materials;
- preparation and presentation of written and oral reports;
- ability to learn independently from reading/printed material;
- use of computer technology.

Communication Skills

Throughout the curriculum, a veterinary student will be expected to communicate effectively and efficiently with instructors, staff, and peers through written and oral means.

During the clinical year, a veterinary student must also learn to communicate with clients. Communication with a client often begins with the gathering and writing of a useful medical history. Students must be able to formulate and ask clients cogent questions, perceptively interpret their answers, and record these responses accurately in a clear and concise medical record. While mastery of both written and spoken English is considered to be an essential attribute, veterinary students with documented hearing, speech and other pertinent disabilities will be reasonably accommodated in accordance with law.

Visual, Auditory, Tactile and Motor Competency

A veterinary student must possess sufficient visual, auditory, tactile, and motor abilities to allow him/her to gather data from written reference material, including medical illustrations and graphic materials, from oral presentations, from demonstrations and experiments, from observations of clinical procedures performed by others, from computerized representations of physiologic phenomena, and from observations made during a basic physical examination and/or more specialized (e.g. orthopedic and neurologic) examinations of a patient.

A veterinary student must also be capable of eliciting and perceiving normal findings or signs of disease as manifested through the physical examination. Examples of findings that must be perceived and interpreted include, but are not limited to, the sounds emitted by the heart, intestines, and lungs; assessing the pliability and turgor of the skin; recognizing subtle changes in the hair coat; feeling the difference between a lipoma, a cyst, and a lymph node; evaluating the integrity and range of motion of musculoskeletal structures (bones, muscles, joints) of all the domestic animal species; and evaluating the consistency and/or distention of various intra-abdominal structures (for example, liver, spleen, intestines, kidneys, and reproductive organs), which must be accomplished through a combination of visualization and external and/or internal palpation.

A veterinary student must be able to distinguish subtle shades of black, white and gray as these pertain to the five radiographic densities in films of the chest, abdomen, and extremities.

A veterinary student must be able to grasp, manipulate, and employ surgical instruments, like scalpels, clamps, and retractors, or other specialized instruments, such as ophthalmoscopes.

A veterinary student must be able to manipulate tissues and employ devices in order to perform entry-level procedures; examples are venipuncture, vascular and urinary catheter placement, rectal palpation, and expressing anal sacs.

While mastery of the above competencies is an essential attribute, veterinary students with disability (disabilities) shall be reasonably accommodated in accordance with law.

In order to receive an accommodation for any of these essential requirements, students must contact the [WSU Access Center](#)

Approved by the CVM faculty on 2/3/2003

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