

Veterinarians in the Making

UNH grads accepted to veterinary medicine schools at rates well above national average

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STUDENT EMPLOYMENT AT THE NH VETERINARY DIAGNOSTIC LAB AT UNH OFFERS A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON VETERINARY CAREERS.

Prospective veterinarians hoping to get into one of the nation's handful of schools of veterinary medicine who attend UNH for their pre-vet coursework are seeing success.

UNH graduates are being admitted to schools of veterinary medicine at rates well above the national average of about 50 percent. In the most recent academic year, 88 percent of the UNH students who applied to veterinary medical school were admitted,

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building on a recent trend of 79 percent being admitted in 2015 and 80 percent in 2014.

According to the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges, veterinary medical school is very similar in academic rigor to medical school. There are 30 accredited colleges of veterinary medicine in the United States, each graduating about 100 students per year. Dr. Inga Sidor, director of UNH's [pre-veterinary advising program](#) [□](#), clinical associate professor of molecular, cellular and biomedical sciences and senior veterinary pathologist at the [NH Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory](#) [□](#) (NHVDL), explains that UNH's extensive hands-on research experience and relevant animal courses give prospective veterinary medical school applicants an advantage over graduates from other pre-vet programs. Students who are successful being accepted to veterinary medical school frequently have 400 to 500 hours or more of experience in veterinary clinics or biomedical research laboratories.

"We can speak with students about the realities of both preparing for veterinary school and being practicing veterinarians."

[COLSA's Cooperative Real Education in Agricultural Management \(CREAM\)](#) course is particularly valued by students and veterinary medical schools for giving large animal experiences to students who might not have grown up with exposure to large animals. CREAM is a student-run cooperative in which 25 UNH students, with the help of

advisors, operate and manage a small business — a herd of 25 to 30 registered Holstein dairy cattle. Students milk, feed and care for the herd every day of the school year and also conduct outreach activities for the college and general public.

"We have heard from students returning from vet school

interviews that CREAM has a very good reputation," Sidor says.

Student employment at the NH Veterinary Diagnostic Lab housed at UNH also offers a different perspective on veterinary careers and allows students to interact with the laboratory technicians and three veterinary pathologists on staff. The lab, which is co-

funded and co-managed by the [New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food](#) and COLSA, assists the state's commissioner of agriculture and the state veterinarian in their efforts to monitor and control important animal diseases. The lab also provides diagnostic services to hundreds of veterinarians from New Hampshire and New England who use the lab's histopathology, microbiology, serology and necropsy services for the diagnosis of animal diseases in pets, farm animals, wildlife, zoo and marine animals.

"Paid work at the NHVDL is different than work at a veterinary clinic and teaches the skills of laboratory work, attention to detail, accountability and teamwork. The grand rounds course, where students observe and participate in necropsies of animals submitted to determine cause of death, is another unique introduction to the fundamentals of anatomy, physiology and disease offered through the NHVDL," Sidor says. "And access to the large number of NHVDL client clinics allows us to recommend opportunities for our students to get off-campus experience."

The availability of many on-campus veterinarians as faculty advisors also improves UNH's acceptance rate. Faculty members bring expertise in a number of distinct fields, from pathology to

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equine, dairy, small animal and lab animal medicine.

“We can speak with students about the realities of both preparing for veterinary school and being practicing veterinarians. We have the opportunity to guide students from early in their education — both in recommending ways to enhance their academic program and experience or to gently guide them towards other, more suitable opportunities,” Sidor says.

UNH’s overall focus on undergraduate research provides many of its successful candidates for veterinary medical school a solid research experience, proving that they have potential to be not only successful veterinarians but scientists as well.

“In the end, it is the students who do the work to get into veterinary school. It is hard work and requires determination and passion to choose the difficult courses, study through sunny afternoons and late into the night and rise early for a vet assistant job or barn shift. We give them the tools and opportunities, but they must make the effort to take advantage of these options,” Sidor says, adding, “Our most successful students have not only performed well in class but have been involved in more than one research experience, internship, study abroad program, mentorship program or other academic ‘extra.’ Their efforts are recognized by the schools to which they apply and where they are accepted. We are very proud of what our students accomplish.”

Learn more about COLSA and its programs [here](#).

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