Frequently Asked Questions for the UNH Pre-Veterinary Program

1. Is there a pre-vet major at UNH? What major should I be?
   Because admission to veterinary school is highly competitive, students should choose an academic program that deeply interests them. Simply taking the prerequisite courses required by veterinary schools without considering alternate career goals is not advisable. The majority of UNH students accepted into veterinary school have pursued academic programs in one of the biological sciences in COLSA (e.g., Animal Science, Biomedical Science: Medical & Veterinary Science, Equine Studies, Zoology), although any academic program that includes the prerequisite courses can be considered. There are also opportunities for dual majors, minors and other combined programs which can be designed to match your career goals. Frequently, students who earn degrees in the humanities, fine arts, business or other non-science fields are also accepted. You should major in something that interests you, and something in which you will succeed, possibly as an alternative career path.

2. I am a high school student interested in being a veterinarian. How should I prepare for the UNH Pre-Veterinary Program?
   The UNH Pre-Veterinary Program does not have any specific prerequisite courses or admissions criteria. It is expected that students will have taken basic high school science and math courses (Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Math). Advanced placement or higher-level courses in these topics may also be useful, but will not necessarily replace undergraduate courses in the same areas (especially Biology) for major or veterinary school requirements. We encourage students to pursue animal experience (i.e. shadowing, or paid or volunteer work at vet clinics, animal shelters, barns, etc.) while still in high school.

3. My major advisor isn't familiar with the veterinary profession. Who do I talk to about getting into vet school?
   Any of the Pre-Veterinary Program advisors are available and willing to speak with students from any major about preparation for and admission to veterinary school. Most of these advisors are veterinarians themselves, or have been successfully advising pre-vet students for many years. Please email prevet.program@unh.edu or call (603) 862-3757 to make an appointment with a pre-veterinary advisor. Also, check the Pre-veterinary program website (http://www.prevet.unh.edu/).

4. How do I get more information about veterinary schools and their admissions process?
   The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) publishes a summary of veterinary schools and colleges in the US, Canada and abroad,
“Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements.” This book is available from the publisher’s website (www.thepress.purdue.edu) and other commercial sites and bookstores. Copies are available at Dimond Library; ask at the circulation desk. The AAVMC website (aavmc.org) also has links to individual schools.

5. **What are vet schools looking for in a candidate?**

Veterinary schools look for a combination of traits in a successful candidate, including:

a. Excellent academic credentials
b. A fundamental understanding of the veterinary profession and its challenges
c. Diversity of experience, including professional and personal factors
d. Leadership, community involvement and social awareness
e. Excellent Interpersonal and communication skills

Significant or exceptional veterinary or animal experience, including food-animal contact, research experience, cultural experience, community service or evidence of overcoming socioeconomic factors may be viewed favorably.

6. **What classes do I have to take?**

Requirements vary slightly among veterinary schools, so check the websites for specific programs to be sure you have their prerequisites. All prerequisites must be taken for a full letter grade, not Pass/Fail, and typically must be passed with a grade of C or better. Certain schools want other specific courses, such as Cornell’s requirement for two composition courses, or Animal Nutrition for application to North Carolina State University. Be sure to check the schools’ websites for more information. The student is ultimately responsible for making sure they meet the requirements and application deadlines.

Generally speaking, most veterinary schools require:

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<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>UNH Equivalent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Two semesters of biology (with lab)</td>
<td>BIOL 411 and 412</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two semesters of general chemistry (with lab)</td>
<td>CHEM 403 and 404</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two semesters of organic chemistry (with lab)</td>
<td>CHEM 651/3 &amp; 652/4, or 547/9 &amp; 548/550</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two semesters of physics (with lab)</td>
<td>PHYS 401/402 or 407/408</td>
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<tr>
<td>One semester of calculus</td>
<td>MATH 424B or 425</td>
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<tr>
<td>One semester of statistics</td>
<td>BIOL 528</td>
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<tr>
<td>One semester of biochemistry</td>
<td>BMCB 658/659 or BMCB 751/752</td>
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<td>Two semesters of English</td>
<td>ENGL 401 and one other course</td>
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7. **What electives should I take?** Once I have met all the course requirements and major requirements, should I keep taking biology related courses or should I take courses in other areas (anthropology, psychology, business, history, art, etc.)? Does it matter?

Veterinary schools look at a number of things when evaluating student transcripts, including the overall quality and rigor of the academic program (number
of upper division courses) and the total credit load. Advanced courses in the biological sciences which expand your understanding of the field are recommended. If you have a specific interest in another area that you would like to explore, go ahead. Any class or experience that makes a student well-rounded will enhance their personal and professional development, and may be viewed favorably by admissions committees.

8. **What about a minor? Or double major? Honors program?**

   A minor requires 20 credits in an area of concentration, 8 of which may cross-list with your major (128 credits minimum required for graduation). Minors can typically be completed in the same four years as your major. A double major requires 160 credits, and typically entails summer courses or an additional year of study. The University Honors or Honors-in-Major programs include taking a certain number of courses at the honors level, plus a thesis project. If you do well in these additional programs, they should enhance your application, and demonstrate your ability to handle a more rigorous curriculum.

9. **What about my GPA? What is the minimum GPA I need to apply?**

   A high GPA is viewed as an indicator of academic potential. The average GPA of accepted students tends to be 3.5-3.7 for most schools, and many schools have a specific minimum GPA, between 2.5 and 3.4, averaging 3.0. These minimums are not necessarily firm, and schools may be open to applicants with lower scores, given other compensating factors in a candidate’s portfolio. Schools may look at the pattern or history of grades (e.g. significant improvement in the last two years), or performance in key indicator classes, such as Organic Chemistry, Biochemistry or Genetics.

10. **Is a C in organic chemistry or calculus good enough? Will repeating courses to improve my grades be beneficial? How many courses should I repeat?**

    Generally speaking, courses should not be repeated. A poor performance in one of the basic courses can be redeemed partially by a good performance in a higher-level course which demonstrates strength and competency within the same area. In rare cases, it may be advisable or necessary to repeat the course (see below for D’s and F’s).

11. **What do I do if I get a D or an F in a required class?**

    Check in the undergraduate catalog or with your advisor to see what the minimum acceptable grade is for your major. Although you may not have to retake a course to graduate from UNH, many veterinary schools require a C or C- or better in prerequisite courses. Remember, you must retake the same course at UNH for the grade to be substituted in your UNH GPA. The old grade will still appear on your transcript, but will not be used to calculate your GPA. Check with the admissions offices at specific schools to see how they deal with this question.

12. **What about summer courses?**

    It is usually preferable to take the required science courses during the regular school year to demonstrate that you can perform well even while carrying a full course load, especially larger key classes such as Organic Chemistry. If this is impossible because of time or scheduling constraints, summer work is acceptable.

13. **What about AP credit?**
Check with specific veterinary schools for their policy on accepting AP scores. Most schools accept AP credit, but some schools prefer or require college credit. Some schools accept AP credit, but advise students to pursue advanced courses in biology, chemistry, physics, or other science courses, which provide reinforcement of fundamental concepts. Make sure that the AP credit is indicated on your official transcript.

14. Do I need to finish my bachelor’s degree?
For most veterinary schools, applicants must have completed the equivalent of at least three full years of college, with at least 90 semester hours of course work. Most successful candidates, however, have earned bachelor’s degrees prior to enrolling.

15. What about GRE’s?
The GRE’s (Graduate Record Exams, www.ets.org/gre) have largely replaced other standardized tests for entry into veterinary school. If you intend to apply to veterinary school in the fall of your senior year, the GRE should be taken in the preceding spring or summer, allowing at least two-three weeks before application deadlines (around September 15). Preparatory courses or books are available commercially and on campus through CFAR (http://www.cfar.unh.edu/gre.html). If your performance on previous standardized tests (i.e. SAT) is not strong, consider taking the exam early in the spring of your junior year to allow for a follow-up study course and repeating the exam.

16. How much does animal experience count? Should I get experience with animals other than working for a veterinarian?
Veterinary medicine is an animal oriented profession. Veterinary, animal, health science and or research experience is necessary, but how much and what types are required varies among schools. Some require a minimum of 500 hours. Veterinary clinical experience is especially important, as an understanding of the duties and responsibilities of a practitioner and the scope of veterinary medicine is critical. The type of practice depends on your interest area. Other experience working with different types of animals in different settings could involve breeding, rearing, feeding and showing various types of animals including companion animals, livestock, laboratory animals, zoo animals or wildlife.

Remember to keep a notebook or log of your experience, including total hours, activities and names of the veterinarians or other professionals with whom you interact. These contacts may be willing to write letters of recommendation later in the application process.

17. What opportunities are there at UNH to obtain animal and veterinary experience?
There are many opportunities on campus to obtain experience that veterinary schools will accept. These include Pre-Veterinary Club, Dairy and Equestrian clubs, jobs or volunteering at the dairy or horse barns, Therapeutic Riding Program, Little Royal Livestock Show, courses at the Shoals Marine Lab (www.sml.cornell.edu/), research or independent studies (www.unh.edu/undergrad-research/), Cooperative Real Education in Agricultural Management (CREAM, www.unh.edu/cream/), and gross necropsy and rounds at the New Hampshire Veterinary Diagnostic Lab (NHVDL), among others. Talk to your advisor about other ways to get involved.

18. Will getting involved in research help me get in?
Research is an excellent way of obtaining more experience, but you should only pursue it if it interests you, not because it will “get you in”. Involvement with a research project will immerse you in a specific topic, and expose you to hands-on methods in the laboratory or the field, or both, which will expand your scientific horizons. You may develop and test your own hypothesis, or become involved in ongoing research with faculty members on or off-campus. These research mentors can provide good advice on career opportunities within veterinary medicine and biomedical research. Because they work closely with you, they may be willing to write letters of recommendation during the application process.

19. Can I still study abroad? Will study abroad help me get in?
Although more specific advanced planning may be required to study abroad, most pre-vet student schedules should be able to accommodate this program. Studying abroad can be an asset, as it exposes the student to different cultures and perspectives, which is viewed positively by veterinary schools.

20. What other things should I do to prepare for applying to veterinary school?
As noted above, veterinary schools are looking for students who achieve in academic pursuits, but also have diverse experiences outside the classroom. This might include volunteer work or mentoring in the community, being active in your dormitory or sorority/fraternity, or tutoring or being a teaching assistant. Any activity that inspires you and involves you in the wider world in a positive way should enhance your application.

21. What happens if I don’t get in to veterinary school? Can I reapply?
Veterinary school admissions are competitive, and acceptance is not guaranteed even with a strong application—having an alternative career plan (“Plan B”) is strongly recommended. If you don’t get in on the first round, talk to the veterinary school admissions representatives to see how to strengthen your application, take their advice on how to enhance your appeal, and then reapply. You might also consider taking additional courses, or pursuing a second degree (BS, MS or PhD). Keep in mind that veterinary schools may not consider the graduate GPA, only the rigor of the program, in their evaluation. Working in the veterinary or biomedical science field may or may not be critical, but continuing to show your commitment and aptitude for a veterinary career is important.

22. What can I do if I don’t get into vet school? What can I do if I change my mind about going to vet school?
Any curriculum or major that prepares you for acceptance to veterinary school will also prepare you for a broad range of careers in biological and biomedical sciences, which might include other opportunities in human or animal health care, public health, biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries, environmental science, biomedical engineering, forensics, behavior or nutrition. Other advanced training opportunities are abundant, including graduate school, or programs for careers in pharmacy, nursing, physical or occupational therapy, or as a physician or pathologist assistant. The critical thinking skills acquired in a pre-veterinary program are also appreciated by employers outside of science and medicine.

23. If I wait a year or two to apply, what should I do in the mean time?
Many students apply to veterinary school after working for a year or more, and the experience and maturity gained in practical life experience can be an asset.
Consider your appeal as an applicant as objectively as you can, and continue to develop key aspects, such as leadership, community involvement and awareness, communication and interpersonal skills, and animal and veterinary experience. Working in the veterinary or biomedical science field may or may not be critical, but continuing to show your commitment and aptitude for a veterinary career is important. Programs like Peace Corps or AmeriCorps can also expand your personal and professional horizons.

24. If I don’t get into a school in the US, is it a good idea to go to one of the Caribbean or other international schools? Will I still be able to practice veterinary medicine in the US?

Veterinary schools in the US are accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Council on Education, to ensure a minimum standard in education is met. Schools in Canada, England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, and Ross University (St. Kitts) and St. George’s University (Grenada) in the Caribbean are also accredited. Students graduating from an international accredited school take the National Board Exam and a state veterinary exam just like students graduating from a US veterinary school. Acceptance to the international schools is typically less competitive.

25. I am interested in working with ________ (large animals, wildlife, exotic animals, etc.) so which is the best school for this type of specialty?

Veterinary school training generally has a broad-based approach, as the national veterinary licensure exams cover care and treatment of most types of domestic animals. Only a few schools “track” students into subspecialties (e.g. small animal, equine, food animal, etc.). It is worth spending some time considering what schools might be better if you want experience with specific species. Consider regional agricultural practices or geography (e.g. dairy cattle in NY or the upper Midwest, swine in Iowa, or aquatics in Florida), but remember that schools often have concentrations or relationships with industries that may not be obvious. Investigate websites for the schools, and speak with your advisor to learn more. Most of this specialty experience is gained over summers and during your final year veterinary school externships.

26. What about letters of reference for the application?

Three letters of reference are typically requested and should be sufficient. In special circumstances, an applicant may want to submit more than three letters, if another perspective will enhance your application. You should request letters from someone you have come to know well, and who can reflect significantly on your suitability for a veterinary career. Ask the potential letter-writer whether they feel they can write a strong recommendation for you, as an unsupportive letter will not help your application.

27. What are my financial prospects in the veterinary field?

The large majority of graduating veterinarians go into in private clinical practice, however, veterinarians are employed by government, business, universities, and the military in a wide variety of research, regulatory, and clinical roles. In a survey answered by 96% of new graduates in 2013, excluding salaries for graduates pursuing advanced study, average full-time starting salary was $67,136. Salaries vary by subspecialty, with significant differences between food animal exclusive
($76,740), mixed animal ($63,526), companion animal ($69,712) and equine ($47,086) practice. Veterinarians attaining positions in the uniformed services started at $63,450. Students pursuing advanced clinical training or graduate degrees averaged $28,988. (From: Shepherd, AJ (2013) JAVMA 243:983-987)

Most students will borrow to finance a veterinary school education; scholarships are not typically available. A good credit score (for the student and their parents) is key for loan eligibility. Mean educational debt among those graduating with debt in 2014 was $135,283. (From: Nolan, RS. (2015) JAVMA 246(12):1268-1271)

Across the veterinary industry, mean income for private practitioners was $121,303 in 2009, with declines noted since 2007 in equine and large animal practice because of the recession. Veterinarians in public and corporate practice earned an average of $124,232, and industry veterinarians earned an average of $167,415. (From: Burns, K (2011) JAVMA 238(6):669-671)

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