



# William & Mary Arts & Sciences

## Advising for Students Interested in Veterinary Programs

Written by Dr. Paul Heideman, edited by Dr. Beverly Sher; updated March 2023

### William & Mary Resources

The W&M Pre-Vet Club is the College's organization for students interested in veterinary medicine. Members discuss course selection, trade information on opportunities to gain experience in working with animals, go on field trips to vet schools and zoos, and provide mutual support. The club has a listserv, [preveterinaryclub@lists.wm.edu](mailto:preveterinaryclub@lists.wm.edu), and meeting announcements and other information of interest to pre-veterinary students are posted there.

William & Mary's pre-vet advisor is Dr. Beverly Sher. To schedule an advising meeting, email Dr. Sher at [btsher@wm.edu](mailto:btsher@wm.edu).

To receive announcements of interest to pre-veterinary students, as well as information about other health professions, subscribe to the Health Careers Advising listserv. To do this, log into [lists.wm.edu](http://lists.wm.edu), click on the Academic line in the list of types of lists, scroll down to Health Careers Advising, click its name, and then click the Subscribe link on the left side of the page.

The Cohen Career Center can be very helpful to students who are trying to arrange internships or find part-time jobs in the community that are relevant to veterinary medicine. Set up an appointment with Don Snyder to discuss these possibilities.

### Useful Books and Websites

The website of the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges, available at [www.aavmc.org](http://www.aavmc.org), provides essential information for prospective veterinary students.

*Get Into Veterinary School: Insights by an Admissions Expert*, by Joseph M. Piekunka, who served for ten years as the Cornell University School of Veterinary Medicine's Director of Admissions, is an exceptionally useful guide to every step of the pre-vet process.

The AAVMC's *Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements* (also known as the VMSAR), is now online. It provides an overview of the veterinary school admissions process and includes information on the requirements of every veterinary school in the United States and Canada. Here is the url: <https://applytovetschool.org>

### Animal Experience

All vet schools expect applicants to have documented experience with live animals, both in the veterinary clinic and outside the clinical setting. While VMCVM (the vet school at Virginia Tech) requires only 100 documented hours, and no extra points are given for additional hours by that school, other veterinary schools require considerably more. Applicants are encouraged to acquire experience with a diversity of animals, from small domestic pets such as dogs and cats to horses, goats, pigs, birds, reptiles, and so

forth. Pre-vet students at William & Mary have volunteered at wildlife rehabilitation centers, humane societies, the Virginia Living Museum, Busch Gardens, Colonial Williamsburg's stables, zoos and petting zoos, and farms and ranches, and the Cohen Career Center has helped students arrange internships at some of these places. Conducting research that involves hands-on experience with live animals is another activity that can be

included in the animal experience hours list. Look for positions that allow you to interact directly with live animals and help maintain them (e.g., shoveling manure in horse stalls counts!). Maintaining a journal of your experiences, with dates, hours, and contact information for the people who supervised you, is an excellent way to keep track of your activities. Many vet schools require such a summary from applicants, and some vet schools even require a letter of documentation from the supervisor of each experience.

### **Veterinary School Course Requirements**

Any student considering veterinary school should check the course requirements and recommendations of the particular veterinary schools to which the student might apply. These are available in the VMSAR and on individual veterinary schools' websites.

In general, veterinary schools require two semesters each of introductory biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics, all with lab. Some veterinary schools also require a semester of biochemistry. Many veterinary schools require two semesters of English; COLL 150 seminars and English literature and composition courses can be used to fulfill this requirement. Mathematics requirements vary; some veterinary schools require or recommend taking calculus or statistics. In addition, many veterinary schools list useful/suggested electives, which often include such courses as cell biology, comparative anatomy, genetics, microbiology, nutrition, and animal physiology.

At William & Mary, the veterinary schools' usual requirements can be met as follows, **with lecture/lab combinations designated as lecture/ lab**: BIOL 203/203L and BIOL 204/204L; CHEM 103/103L, 206/206L, 207/253 (or 209/253), 208/254, and 314; and PHYS 101/101L plus PHYS 102/102L or PHYS 107/107L plus PHYS 108/108L. Students planning to major in Chemistry or Physics should take PHYS 101/101L and PHYS 102/102L. Appropriate calculus courses include MATH 111 and 112 or MATH 131 and 132. Appropriate statistics courses include MATH 106, PSYC 301, and Biostatistics, as well as KINE 394. COLL 150 courses count towards the veterinary schools' English requirements.

### **Suggested Course Plan for Freshmen**

Most freshman pre-vet students choose among the following courses in their first fall semester:

- (1) BIOL 203/203L (or BIOL 302: Integrative Biology: Animals, if AP/IB or dual enrollment credit has been granted for BIOL 203/203L and Bio 204/204L.)
- (2) CHEM 103/103L (or CHEM 250, for students who have AP/IB credit for CHEM 103 and its lab)

Note that CHEM 103, which is offered only in the fall semester, is a prerequisite for the next course in the chemistry sequence. Therefore, students should take CHEM 103/103L in the fall of freshman year unless they plan to start taking their chemistry courses as sophomores. The chemistry sequence at William & Mary is Gen Chem I (fall)-> Orgo I (spring)->Orgo II (fall)-> Gen Chem II (spring); you can take Biochemistry at the same time as you take Gen Chem II.

- (3) A math course: Students who are ready for calculus can choose between MATH 111 and MATH 131. MATH 131 is only taught in the fall; MATH 111 is taught both in fall and spring. Note that MATH 108 is not a pre-veterinary calculus course. While some students do take BIOL 203/203L, CHEM 103/103L, and a mathematics course in their first fall semester, this is a challenging course load that

should be discussed with the student's pre-major advisor first.

(3) All students must take a COLL 100 course and a COLL 150 course by the end of freshman year. Freshmen should plan to take one of these courses in the fall.

(4) If the student needs to complete the foreign language requirement by continuing a language begun in high school, freshman year can be a good time to do this, assuming that the high school language courses are still fresh in the student's mind. Similar logic also applies for students who have entered W&M with college credit for MATH 111 and who are thus ready to take MATH 112.

### **Other Hints on Course Planning**

Students should not feel obligated to take 15 or more credits in the first semester at the College, particularly if they arrived W&M with college credits or if they are considering taking summer school courses. Students must, however, take 12 credits to be enrolled full-time.

### **Standardized Tests**

The GRE is now the usual standardized test for veterinary school admission. Commercially available GRE preparation books and practice tests have worked well for our students in the past; taking a formal GRE course is not necessary.

### **Interviews**

Interview procedures at different veterinary schools differ; see the websites of the individual schools for details. *Get Into Veterinary School* has excellent advice on the interview process. The Career Center's Don Snyder does mock interviews for students applying to health professions schools.

Interviewers often ask questions which are often related in various ways to the practical and ethical aspects of successfully completing veterinary school and becoming a veterinarian. Some real sample questions include: Why do you want to be a vet? Veterinary school is intense and stressful; how do you deal with lots of pressure? How do you feel about the use of animals in vet school? Of your vet experience, what is the most difficult situation you have faced, and how did you deal with it? Of your vet experience, what do you enjoy the most? What kind of books do you like to read...and why? You have a pregnant mare. The foal is very valuable, but there are three months left before term. The mare has a tumor in her upper respiratory tract and can't breathe freely. The mother is in great distress now, and will inevitably be killed by the tumor eventually, but you want the foal. What do you do? How do you feel about the issue of livestock grazing vs. wildlife grazing on public lands? What will you do if you are not accepted?