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Getting to Veterinary School: A Reflection

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Getting to Veterinary School A Reflection

Getting to veterinary school is an extremely challenging and complex process. Each year, thousands of VMCAS (Veterinary Medical College Application Service) applicants are rejected from the thirty accredited U.S. veterinary schools because their applications are not strong enough. I believe that this weakness stems from the lack of in-depth assistance from schools, the difficulty of finding all of the needed resources, and the skewed student perception of how challenging it is to get into veterinary school. I have spent the last four years of my undergraduate career making my way through this exact process that so many students struggle with and as a result I have created a comprehensive informational website for pre-veterinary students. Through my experiences, I have accumulated a wealth of knowledge that when shared through my website has the potential to help students gain an understanding of the rigorous career pathway of veterinary medicine, help them negotiate the application process, and strengthen their application.

The idea for this honors project was formulated a year ago as an extension of my desire to help other students. As a pre-veterinary student, I have gained invaluable tips and seen the pitfalls of the process. Instead of allowing students to continue making the same mistakes, I wanted my website to be a tool in guiding them in the right direction. I decided to focus on the four main areas of the process, which include the details of the profession, information on the veterinary schools, the components of the application process, and funding options. It has been a much bigger and lengthier undertaking than I had expected to bring all of these resources and information together. However, I have had few difficulties and only rewards as I know that my hard work is going to be invaluable to pre-veterinary students at GVSU and potentially around the United States.

Gathering the information and putting together the website has been a huge part of this project, but an equally important component has been promoting it around campus. In order for my website to be of any use, it needs to be utilized by the university as an advising tool and widely viewed by students interested in the profession. I am currently in the beginning stages of my promotional plan, in which I am unveiling the website to the local area of GVSU and surrounding veterinarians. At this point, my website is featured on Dr. Terry Trier's GVSU Pre-Vet Advising website and it is soon to be on the GVSU CLAS Advising Center's pre-veterinary resources page. I have presented my website to the pre-veterinary club and promoted it through social media to make GVSU students aware of its existence. In addition, I have reached out to dozens of veterinary clinics in the area as a way to make them aware of its presence online as a tool and for their testimonial assistance. In the future, I hope to expand the reach of my website by contacting schools across the nation to see if they would like to utilize it for their students, improving the search engine optimization of the website, and promoting it on veterinary related forums.

This past fall I was accepted to the Michigan State University's and the University of Wisconsin's veterinary programs and will be attending MSU in the fall for small animal medicine. As you can see, I have successfully navigated the intense process that is applying to veterinary school. That is exactly the reason I think that my website is such a monumental resource for students. It was researched, written, and put together by a student in the exact same position as the pre-veterinary students who are going to it for guidance and information. I believe that students who utilize my website as a resource will greatly improve the strength of their application and their chances of getting into a veterinary program.

Dr. Chamberlain,

I've been working with Justine Travis for the past year on her honors project. She has developed a superb website that offers comprehensive information about all phases of the path to becoming a veterinary doctor, including possible career paths, what coursework to take, how to apply to vet school, and how to fund vet school. You can find a link to the website here:

<http://travi95.wix.com/gvprevetstudent>

Pre-vet is one of those career paths that trip up a lot of students and requires careful advising. Students don't have a clear understanding of the career path, and they don't understand the steps necessary to get into vet school. As a result, many students fail to succeed. Justine has identified a real need and developed a top notch resource to address it. Her website has enthusiastically been embraced by Terry Trier, the main pre-vet advisor in the Biology Department, the CLAS advising center, the pre-vet club, and veterinarians in the community. She has worked tirelessly to compile exhaustive information, and to infuse the site with her first-hand experiences, as well as those of others who have navigated the vet school process.

Justine was a pleasure to work with and has always been a model of competence and maturity. She is a real credit to the Honors Program. I've also included a brief synopsis that she has provided summarizing her creative work. I would assign her a grade of an "A" for her thesis.

Sincerely,

Michael Henshaw