

CVMA for July 2009

Our New Curriculum: Clinical Relevance Starts Day One

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First impressions count. Our new Illinois Integrated Veterinary Professional Curriculum (IIVPC) capitalizes on students' enthusiasm for the clinical aspects of veterinary medicine by putting them directly into a clinical setting for the first eight weeks of the program.

Each week they'll experience a different aspect of veterinary medicine, such as anesthesiology, imaging, equine medicine and surgery, small animal emergency medicine, dairy production medicine, and clinical pharmacology, through specially designed clinical rotations. These rotations will provide clinical context for basic science courses.

Students in the IIVPC will take additional clinical rotations in the fall of the second year. By the end of that fall semester, each student will have rotated through 15 service areas, including 8 core rotations covering a range of species and disciplines. Structured learning objectives—including a checklist of procedures each student is expected to complete—will ensure that these rotations provide good learning experiences.

During the clinical rotation periods in the first and second years, students will meet as a class three times a week to cover topics such as professional ethics, communication skills, animal welfare, and business practices. They will also be expected to complete online modules on medical terminology, breed identification, and mathematical calculations.

Many of the clinical rotations will include training in our new Clinical Skills Learning Center. The center, occupying a remodeled north wing of the Surgery and Obstetrics Laboratory, has stations for learning and practicing basic medical, surgical, diagnostic, and imaging techniques, as well as animal restraint and a host of other skills. With guidance from experienced veterinary technicians, students will use real equipment and realistic animal models to build skills in a supportive learning environment.

The remainder of the first and second years of the IIVPC will consist of integrated basic science courses that provide students with a solid foundation in biological structure and function and the pathobiological basis of disease. Clinical correlates modules in each course will illustrate the clinical relevance of the basic science material.

Our new curriculum was developed with input from hundreds of individuals over thousands of hours to give students a solid foundation in the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes needed by new veterinary graduates. I commend our dedicated faculty and our pioneering students for embarking together on this new path.

And I encourage veterinary practitioners throughout Illinois to step forward as supporters of our

new direction. Those of you coming to Urbana for Fall Conference will have an opportunity to explore the Clinical Skills Learning Center. Contact me to learn how your contributions to the Clinical Skills Learning Center can make a difference in the veterinary student experience.