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## **Our New Curriculum: Innovative, Integrated, Implemented**

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August 24, 2009. That's the day 120 members of the Class of 2013 report for their first day of study. It will be unlike the first day of any previous Illinois veterinary class.

With the implementation of the new Illinois Integrated Veterinary Professional Curriculum, students will spend their first eight weeks engaged in the daily activities of clinical service areas, such as anesthesiology, clinical toxicology/pharmacology, poultry medicine, dermatology, and shelter medicine.

In all, 23 different one-week rotations will be offered. Students will again participate in these rotations during the last seven weeks of fall semester in the second year, so each student will ultimately experience 15 of the 23 rotations.

Eight of the one-week rotations will be core for every student at some point over the two years. These include anesthesiology, imaging, equine medicine and surgery, small animal emergency medicine, small animal internal medicine, small animal orthopedic surgery, small animal soft tissue surgery, and either food animal husbandry and techniques or food animal reproduction, medicine, and surgery. The remaining non-core rotations cover a host of disciplines, such as lab animal medicine and dentistry, and a variety of species, such as exotic animals and dairy cattle.

A medical education software program called E\*Value is being used to schedule and track these student experiences. It will help ensure that students complete the learning objectives for each rotation. For example, there will be a checklist of activities that each student is expected to perform over the course of the clinical rotations, such as haltering a cow, preparing a blood smear, and performing a venipuncture. E\*Value will allow electronic validation of such procedures.

During the clinical rotation blocks, students will meet as a class three times weekly to cover topics such as professional ethics, communication skills, and animal welfare. They will also master online modules covering medical terminology, breed identification, and mathematical calculations.

One of the most exciting aspects of the new curriculum is our new Clinical Skills Learning Center. There, students will learn and practice skills such as gowning and gloving, knot tying, intubation, blood cell identification, and animal positioning for radiology using real equipment and realistic animal models in a supportive learning environment. Experienced veterinary technicians will facilitate student learning in this new center, which is located in a remodeled north wing of the Surgery and Obstetrics Laboratory.

We welcome alumni and others to visit this learning center and to contribute financially to its success. If you are attending Fall Conference, on September 10 and 11, you will have an opportunity to explore it. Contact me ([dean@vetmed.illinois.edu](mailto:dean@vetmed.illinois.edu)) to learn how your contributions to the Clinical Skills Learning Center can make a real difference in the veterinary student experience.

The rationale for this innovative introduction to the curriculum is to capitalize on students' enthusiasm for the clinical aspects of the profession. The remainder of the first and second years of the new curriculum 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.

The desire to give students a solid foundation in the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes needed by new veterinary graduates has guided the development of our new curriculum. 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.