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Academic and Advising Services appreciates your input regarding this publication. Readers who note errors or inconsistencies in this handbook are urged to notify Dr. Carol Bokros (Bokros_c@mercer.edu) so that the appropriate corrections can be made. CB 8-5-16
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American Veterinary Medical Association

Mission Statement
The mission of the Association is to improve animal and human health and advance the veterinary medical profession.

Objective
The objective of the Association shall be to advance the science and art of veterinary medicine, including its relationship to public health, biological science, and agriculture.

Veterinarian's Oath
Being admitted to the profession of veterinary medicine, I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health and welfare, the prevention and relief of animal suffering, the conservation of animal resources, the promotion of public health, and the advancement of medical knowledge.

I will practice my profession conscientiously, with dignity, and in keeping with the principles of veterinary medical ethics.

I accept as a lifelong obligation the continual improvement of my professional knowledge and competence.

(Approved by the AMVA House of Delegates, 1954; Revision approved by the HOD, 1969; Revision approved by the Executive Board 1999, 2010)

Introduction

1. THE PRE-VETERINARY TRACK

A Doctor of Veterinary Medicine is a doctor who specializes in the research of, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease in animals. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the mean income of a veterinarian in 2015 was about $99,000 and there is a positive outlook for the field: [http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291131.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291131.htm).

More information about the practice of veterinary medicine can be found on the Web sites of the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges ([http://www.aavmc.org/additional-pages/Veterinary-Career-Options.aspx](http://www.aavmc.org/additional-pages/Veterinary-Career-Options.aspx); [http://aavmc.org/Students-Applicants-and-Advisors/Pre-Vet-Student-Resources.aspx](http://aavmc.org/Students-Applicants-and-Advisors/Pre-Vet-Student-Resources.aspx)).

Mercer University undergraduate students who plan to pursue a career in veterinary medicine are considered to be on a “pre-veterinary” track. This designation is made to ensure that these students receive specific advising about the requirements and protocols for their respective career paths.

Pre-veterinary track is NOT an academic major; pre-veterinary students must choose an academic major and minor offered by one of Mercer’s colleges or schools and work to fulfill their degree requirements.

Students on a pre-veterinary track must investigate the different veterinary schools available and make themselves aware of the particular requirements for the programs in which they are interested. Pre-veterinary students need to complete the specific courses required by their preferred professional school(s) in addition to completing the requirements for their major and minor programs of study (see also sections 7, 8, and 10).
2. BUILDING A STRONG VETERINARY SCHOOL APPLICATION

According to the Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements, 2016 (https://www.aavmc.org/Publications/VMSAR.aspx), there have been more than 2 applicants for every seat in veterinary medical schools in the U.S. in recent years. Pre-veterinary students therefore think ahead towards creating a strong veterinary school application “portfolio” during their undergraduate years. They must take the appropriate coursework, perform well academically, and participate in appropriate extracurricular activities that will develop the skills and characteristics required of a successful veterinary school applicant.

According to the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges, “Veterinary colleges are looking for a different sort of applicant than in the past. CVMs have no trouble attracting animal lovers, but they’re also looking for students who know how to run a business, communicate with clients, conduct research, and work in areas that the public doesn’t usually associate with veterinary medicine, such as biomedical research, food supply veterinary medicine, and public health. Veterinarians receive training across species, so that makes them uniquely qualified to fill a variety roles in medicine, health, and research.” (http://aavmc.org/Media-FAQs.aspx).

In short, veterinary schools are looking for individuals with the following characteristics:

- substantial experience working with animals (both large and small if possible),
- a good base of knowledge about the field of veterinary medicine and commitment to its study,
- a strong academic background with a firm foundation in the sciences but a breadth of experience and education,
- good reasoning ability and strong critical thinking skills,
- self-motivation and a strong work ethic,
- a positive attitude, able to function effectively under stress,
- strong leadership skills but with the ability to work well on a team,
- compassion and a commitment to community service,
- strong interpersonal skills, able to connect well with people from various backgrounds,
- excellent communication skills (both written and oral),
- integrity and high ethical standards, and
- competitive entrance exam scores.

3. DEVELOPING A BACK-UP PLAN

Because the pre-veterinary track is challenging and veterinary schools are so selective, all pre-veterinary students should develop an alternative plan to implement in the event that adequate progress is not made on their track (i.e., GPAs below 3.3) or acceptance to veterinary school is not achieved.

An effective back-up plan is one that addresses any perceived “weak spots” in an applicant’s portfolio. For example, it would be appropriate for a student with GPA’s below 3.2 to take more classes and earn high grades to increase their GPA before applying again to veterinary school, while a student with high grades and very little veterinary experience should spend more time working or volunteering in a veterinary clinic before applying again. Students without a strong desire to follow this career path should consider a complete change of career goals; they may investigate their options using the Web site, www.exporehealthcareers.org, and consult the advisors in the Office of Career Services (Mercer-Macon).
Pre-Professional Advising and Resources

4. ACADEMIC & PRE-PROFESSIONAL ADVISING AT MERCER UNIVERSITY

**Academic Advising for the Degree Plan.** Like all Mercer University students, each pre-health professions student at Mercer-Macon has an assigned **primary academic advisor who should be the first stop for most advising questions** (first-year students have their UNV 101 instructor advising them during their first year, and all students who have declared their major have a major advisor). This handbook provides the answers to common health vocations advising questions, and familiarity with this information is part of the training for advisors at Mercer University.

**Pre-Health Professions Track Advising.** Pre-health professions students enrolled in one of the traditional undergraduate programs on the Macon campus also have access to a secondary advisor for all questions pertaining to their pre-professional tracks, Dr. Carol Bokros, the Assistant Director of Pre-Health Professions Programs, whose office is with the Office of Academic and Advising Services in the Penfield Hall Annex on the Macon campus (Bokros_c@mercer.edu).

Dr. Bokros provides support for pre-health professions students and their advisors through information sessions, workshops, materials available on the Mercer Web site, emails, and a Facebook fanpage (“MercerPreHealth”).

Students must view the pre-veterinary track orientation video and read this handbook before making an appointment. Students may make (and change) their own appointments using the Starfish program, which is accessible through MyMercer. ([https://my.mercer.edu/](https://my.mercer.edu/)).

**Career Advising.** The Office of Career Services on the Macon campus offers advising for students who are investigating careers in the various health-related professions, students who are preparing for interviews with professional schools or potential employers, and students requiring alternative career advising ([http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/careerservices/](http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/careerservices/)). See also the document in Appendix C, Internet Resources for Exploring Careers in Health Care.

5. UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATION WITH PRE-HEALTH STUDENTS

**Email:** Students should note that official Mercer business is always conducted on Mercer University email, and so must check their MU email account regularly or forward their Mercer email to their personal email account.

**Social Network:** Students who subscribe to the social networking site Facebook ([https://www.facebook.com/pages/MercerPreHealth/365563379357](https://www.facebook.com/pages/MercerPreHealth/365563379357)) are encouraged to become a fan of the MercerPreHealth fanpage to receive electronic reminders about events and deadlines. Note that this site is linked to Twitter, so students who subscribe to Twitter will receive this information via “tweets”.

**Mercer Science & Pre-Health Google Calendar.** All pre-health advising events, pre-health and science-related student organization events, and science department seminars and events are listed on the Mercer University Science & Pre-Health Google Calendar available at [http://tinyurl.com/ns95vb7](http://tinyurl.com/ns95vb7).

**Your Online Presence.** Pre-medical students are cautioned to maintain a respectable online presence, being mindful that their posts and activities could have a negative impact on their acceptance to medical school and/or on their professional lives in the future. See [https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/how-social-media-can-affect-your-application](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/how-social-media-can-affect-your-application) and [http://thedo.osteopathic.org/2011/06/writing-on-the-wall-crude-behavior-online-can-jeopardize-a-students-future](http://thedo.osteopathic.org/2011/06/writing-on-the-wall-crude-behavior-online-can-jeopardize-a-students-future).

6. THE PRE-HEALTH PROFESSIONS RESOURCE LIBRARIES

Two library collections are maintained on the Mercer-Macon campus for pre-health students: the **Pre-Health Collection in the Tarver Library** and a smaller **Pre-Health Resource Library in the Academic Resource Center.** The Pre-Health Collection in Tarver library contains materials about the health-related professions in general, entrance exams, personal statements, and professional school interviews. Also included are works of
fiction and non-fiction that encourage students to consider various aspects of health care. This collection is located on the first floor of Tarver; a content listing can be found on the Web site at http://libraries.mercer.edu/tarver/subject-guides/pre-health/pre-health. The Pre-Health Resource Library includes materials on study skills, test-taking, and preparation for standardized tests. Students are free to use these materials any time during ARC hours, but may not remove them from the ARC.

**Academic Preparation for Veterinary School**

7. **MINIMUM REQUIRED COURSEWORK FOR THE PRE-VETERINARY TRACK**

Most veterinary schools in the U.S. require a minimum of one year of English composition, one year of general chemistry, one year of organic chemistry, one year of general biology, and one year of physics (the sciences must have lab components). Some require up to a year of college level mathematics; most require multiple humanities and/or social sciences; many require additional upper division biology courses. For instance, The University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine requires 3 semester hours of biochemistry, 8 hours of upper division biology coursework, and 14 hours of humanities or social sciences as well as the courses already listed (see http://vet.uga.edu/admissions/requirements#min_req). In addition, some vet schools require multiple other courses in the humanities and social sciences.

The Pre-Veterinary Advising Checklist found in Appendix A lists the minimum science coursework that the majority of veterinary schools in the United States expect of their applicants. Because the admission requirements for the different veterinary schools in the U.S. vary, students on the pre-veterinary track must investigate the different veterinary schools available and make themselves aware of the particular requirements for the programs in which they are interested. Students are advised to use the resources offered by VMCAS: http://www.aavmc.org/data/files/vmcas/prereqchart.pdf; see also section 11.

8. **ACADEMIC MAJORS AND MINORS FOR PRE-VETERINARY STUDENTS**

Most veterinary schools in the U.S. prefer applicants who complete a bachelor’s degree before they matriculate, and some veterinary schools prefer that their applicants earn a science degree. The Bachelor of Science in Biology degree offered by the College of Liberal Arts fits well with this track. However, students are urged to investigate veterinary schools to identify their targets to see what each prefers before choosing a major field of study.

Pre-veterinary students whose target schools do not prefer a degree in Biology may major in any discipline s/he chooses, but s/he must also complete the required courses for admission to their preferred veterinary programs. Before officially declaring a major, therefore, a student should create a personalized 4-year plan (4YP) that includes all required coursework to see how well the two programs fit together. Students need to be aware that extra semesters might be required for degree programs that do not fit well with the pre-veterinary classes.

**Minors in Chemistry & Biology.** Pre-veterinary students who select a non-science major are encouraged to at least minor in both Chemistry and Biology in order to obtain a firm foundation in the sciences.

- **Chemistry Minor:** Students who complete 16 credit hours of chemistry (CHM 111, 112, 221, and 222 or CHM 115, 241, 221, and 222), with 6 hr or more in courses numbered 200 or higher taken in residence at Mercer, fulfill the Mercer University College of Liberal Arts requirements for a minor in chemistry.

- **Biology Minor:** Students who complete 17 credit hours in biology (BIO 211, 212, 303 [or ?], and BMB 465), with 6 or more hr in courses numbered 300 or higher in residence at Mercer fulfill the CLA’s requirements for a minor in biology.

**Veterinary School Matriculation Without a Degree.** Many students are surprised to learn that many veterinary schools do not require a bachelor’s degree for admission. Applicants should note, however, that most matriculants to veterinary school hold a bachelor’s degree (http://www.aavmc.org/data/files/vmcas/prereqchart.pdf).
Students interested in this option must plan ahead carefully, as they would need to take the GRE and apply to professional school at the end of their second year of undergraduate study (see sections 18-25) rather than at the end of their third year. Students are encouraged to have a back-up plan in place to use if early admission is not achieved (completion of a bachelor’s degree and applying again).

9. THE IMPORTANCE OF MATHEMATICS TO THE PRE-HEALTH TRACKS

Math Placement. To enroll in the first semester of general chemistry (CHM 111) and/or introductory physics (PHY 141), a student must demonstrate a minimum mathematics competency that is equivalent to pre-calculus (MAT 133) or above; this competency may be demonstrated through credit (college, AP, or CLEP) for MAT 133 or its equivalent, or through a score of 15 or higher on the math placement test.

Information about the math placement test can be found online here: http://aas.mercer.edu/for-students/placement-exams/.

CLEP Exam for Pre-calculus. A student who scores 50% or higher on the CLEP pre-calculus exam may submit his or her test official transcript to the Mercer registrar and receive MAT 133 credit. Information about the CLEP pre-calculus exam can be found here: http://clep.collegeboard.org/exam/precalculus.

10. SCHEDULING OF PRE-VETERINARY COURSEWORK

Suggested scheduling of the minimum required per-veterinary courses (along with the courses recommended by Suggested scheduling of the minimum required pre-veterinary courses is outlined in the Scheduling of Core coursework for the Pre-Veterinary Track found in Appendix B. These suggested plans chart the minimum science coursework for students on the pre-veterinary medicine track over the four years that students are expected to be at Mercer University. (Remember, students must check the admission requirements of the veterinary schools to which they are likely to apply and to adjust their personal plans accordingly.)

A student’s actual scheduling of these courses depends on factors such as a student’s initial mathematics placement (see next section) and the availability of required courses for the student’s academic major. When arranging their course schedules, pre-health students are advised to plan ahead and review the published lists of Mercer University course offerings. This is important because not all of the required courses for a student’s major and/or the pre-health track will be offered every semester, and a one-semester delay due to complications involving prerequisites could turn into a one-year delay in applying to professional school.

Mathematics Placement. To enroll in chemistry and physics course sequences, a student must demonstrate a minimum mathematics competency that is equivalent to pre-calculus (MAT 133) or above; this competency may be demonstrated through credit (college, AP, or CLEP) for MAT 133 or its equivalent, or through a score of 15 or higher on the math placement test. Information about the math placement test can be found online here: https://aas.mercer.edu/for-students/placement-exams/; http://departments.mercer.edu/math/student/placement.html.

Students who are not ready to take calculus their first semester should consult the plans in Appendix B about how to schedule courses beginning from the algebra or pre-calculus level. Note that this situation requires summer coursework to catch up or the completion of at least one “gap year” before matriculation into veterinary school (see next section).

Course Load. The veterinary school curriculum is quite rigorous, so admissions committees will look to an applicant’s ability to carry a full academic load as s/he completes the undergraduate studies as an indicator of how well he or she might handle the professional school curriculum. Unless there are extenuating circumstances that prevent him/her from doing so (e.g., employment, family circumstances), a per-veterinary student is expected to take 15 to 17 hours each semester.
**Transient Coursework at Non-Mercury Institutions.** The official University policy on transient coursework can be found in the University Bulletin (“catalog”). The section from the 2015-16 University catalog is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Transient Status for Mercer Undergraduate Students</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An undergraduate student who wishes to take academic courses elsewhere as a transient student and apply those credits toward a Mercer degree must obtain written approval in advance from the student’s advisor and the Registrar’s Office. The student must have been enrolled and attended classes at Mercer for at least one semester prior to requesting permission to study elsewhere. Transient Permission Forms are available in the Registrar’s Office. Failure to obtain written approval in advance may preclude acceptance of the transfer credit. A student normally will not be permitted to attend another institution as a transient student for more than two consecutive academic terms. No correspondence work will be accepted for credit toward a degree. Mercer University does accept courses from the Independent Study Programs of the University of Georgia for transfer credit; the maximum credit accepted is 9 semester hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student must be in good academic standing to be approved to take courses as a transient student. Ordinarily, the last 32 semester hours of degree work must be earned in residence at Mercer University. At least 12 semester hours of upper division work in a major, concentration, or specialization and 6 semester hours of upper division work in a minor, if elected, must be done in residence. Courses that are equivalent to courses offered at Mercer will transfer as long as the host institution has regional accreditation and the student earns grades of C or better in the courses. Course outlines (syllabi) and catalog information may be required before approval for transient status is granted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses taken at another institution will in no way affect the Mercer cumulative grade point average; however, all transfer credit attempted will be considered when determining University honors at graduation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transient credit from two-year colleges is limited to 64 semester-hours (refer to section on transfer credit). If 64 hours have previously been transferred from two-year colleges, transient credit will displace previously transferred course hours that are not needed for the student’s program completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the student’s responsibility to request that a transcript from the other institution, containing final grades, be sent to the Registrar’s Office at Mercer University. No credit will be awarded until an official transcript is received from the institution attended.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-veterinary students who plan to request a letter of evaluation from the Health Vocations Advisement Committee should avoid taking their core science coursework at other institutions, as the HVAC uses the grades earned in those courses (general chemistry, organic chemistry, general biology, general physics – see section 7) as data to evaluate applicants as they prepare to apply to professional school (see section 23). Students who feel that they need to take a science class away from Mercer for whatever reason should read section 10, then discuss it with their primary advisor and/or with Dr. Bokros (section 4).

**“Gap” Year(s).** Students who are not ready to matriculate to veterinary school immediately after completing his or her undergraduate degree may delay application, but should continue working to strengthen their application portfolio during that time. Students who take a gap year between undergraduate studies and veterinary school should discuss an appropriate timeline for completing their coursework, taking the GRE, and applying to veterinary school with a pre-health advisor.

Students who are not competitive veterinary school applicants upon completion of their undergraduate programs should use their gap year(s) to make themselves more attractive to admission committees. This is usually accomplished by taking more science coursework, obtaining more veterinary shadowing or animal care experience, taking (or re-taking) the GRE, or any combination of these things.
11. WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT VETERINARY SCHOOLS

Internet resources offer the most accessible and up-to-date information about health-related professional schools and health-related careers. The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges Web site (http://www.aavmc.org/) is the appropriate starting point for pre-veterinary students to research veterinary schools and for general advice about veterinary medicine as a profession. The AAVMC Web site page for Applicants (http://aavmc.org/Students-Applicants-and-Advisors/Veterinary-Medical-College-Application-Service.aspx) contains links to various resources for students investigating the field of veterinary medicine and/or planning to apply to veterinary school, including a chart of admission pre-requisites for their member institutions.

Pre-veterinary students should consider the following information to help them decide if a particular school would be a good match for them:

- academic and clinical resources;
- mission and focus, if any (e.g., general practice veterinary medicine, food animal disease research);
- curriculum structure (e.g., curriculum delivery style, availability of externships and research opportunities);
- student services (e.g., academic assistance, clubs and associations, housing);
- matriculant statistics (e.g., the mean or median GPA’s and GRE scores of accepted students);
- admission pre-requisites;
- location; and
- tuition and financial aid information.

The AAVMC publication, *Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements*, is published every year and is available for purchase through the AAMVC’s Web site or can be ordered directly from Purdue University Press (https://www.aavmc.org/Publications/VMSAR.aspx); this comprehensive guide contains admissions data from member veterinary schools as well as advice for applicants. A current copy is kept in the Pre-Health Professions Collection in Tarver Library.

Note that the AAVMC coordinates incentive programs to encourage students to enter the field of food animal medicine. Information about these incentive programs can be found on the Web site of the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges: http://www.aavmc.org/foodanimalprograms.aspx.

12. EXPECTATIONS ABOUT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Veterinary schools will assess an applicant’s learning ability and work ethic by looking at his/her cumulative grade point average and at his/her GPA in science coursework (Biology-Chemistry-Physics). They will assess an applicant’s overall knowledge and test-taking ability by checking their Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores (see section 21).

Admissions committees will also look to an applicant’s ability to carry a full academic load as they complete their undergraduate studies. The ability of a pre-health student to handle a full course load that includes multiple science classes is a good indicator that s/he is ready for the rigors of professional school.

In order to gauge their chances of acceptance, per-veterinary students are urged to compare their own GPAs and test scores to those of the applicants who gained admission to their target programs in the previous admission cycle.

According to the AAMVC publication, *The Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements* (2016), the mean cumulative GPA for this year’s matriculants in veterinary schools across the country was 3.48. The University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine reports on their Web site that the average cumulative GPA of students accepted to their program this past year was 3.68, that their average math-science GPA was 3.67, and that their average GRE score (V & QR combined) was 313 (http://www.vet.uga.edu/admissions/statistics).

**Calculation of Grade Point Averages.**

*Mercer University GPA’s.* Mercer University displays semester and cumulative grade point averages (GPAs) on student MyMercer accounts. The grading system used by the University is described in the University
Bulletin under “Academic Information”. Mercer uses a “4 point” grading system in which quality points are assigned per academic credit unit in the following scale: A = 4.0; B+ = 3.5; B = 3.0; C+ = 2.5; C = 2.0; D = 1.0; F = 0. A student’s Mercer GPA includes only Mercer coursework. Mercer’s policy is to exclude the first grade earned if a course is repeated. Courses taken on a pass-fail basis and audited coursework are excluded from GPA calculations.

All students should know how to calculate their own grade point averages. Mercer maintains a GPA calculator on the Registrar’s page of the Web site here: http://apps.mercer.edu/registrarcalc/MercerGPA.html.

**Professional School GPA’s.** The centralized application service for most veterinary schools in the U.S., VMCAS (section 20), calculates official grade point averages (GPA’s), but will include all coursework taken at all post-secondary institutions. VMCAS uses a “4 point” scale, and assigns the following quality points per academic credit unit for grades earned: A = 4.0; B+ = 3.3; B = 3.0; C+ = 2.3; C = 2.0; D = 1.0; F = 0 (https://vmcas.freshdesk.com/support/solutions/articles/9000067935-vmcas-gpa).

**Repeated Coursework.** Students should visit the Web sites of each veterinary school to which s/he plans to apply for their individual policies on GPA calculations. For instance, most schools will accept the VMCAS GPA’s in which the mean of all grades earned for any course that has been repeated, but others may accept the last grade earned instead.

**Pass/ Fail Coursework, AP Coursework, Audited Coursework, and CLEP Credit.** VMCAS excludes courses graded on a pass/fail basis from their grade point average calculations. They also exclude courses for which credit was earned via Advanced Placement or CLEP testing, as well as audited courses.

**A Warning About Auditing Courses.** Students should not consider auditing required pre-professional coursework before actually enrolling in those courses. According to the University Bulletin, “Courses that a student audits may not later be taken by that student for credit, nor may student receive credit-by-exam for these courses.”

**Course Withdrawals.** Professional school admissions committees review applicants’ transcripts carefully to assess the students’ academic abilities and levels of commitment and motivation. While withdrawing from a course is unquestionably preferable to earning a D or F, students should be aware that multiple withdrawals on a transcript can signal that the student has difficulty with either commitment or with time management. Pre-medical students should therefore withdraw from courses only on rare occasions and in extreme circumstances. Pre-medical students are urged to follow the steps outlined in Appendix D of this document and to seek the advice of their advisors if they are unsure about their most prudent course of action.

Students should keep in mind that earning one or two C’s might be acceptable in the long run if the rest of the application portfolio is strong (mostly A’s and a few B’s along with appropriate extracurricular activities and experience). However, it is important for students who earn more than one C to show definite improvement in their academic performance over time, and to bear in mind that earning many C’s and/ or grades lower than a C - especially in core science prerequisites - may be a warning sign that pre-veterinary medicine is not the right career path for them. In such cases, mature evaluation of career goals and/or academic strategy is the appropriate response to such a warning; career counseling is available from the Career Services Office.

**Extracurricular and Summer Activities for Pre-Veterinary Students**

When evaluating applicants, veterinary schools look for candidates with integrity who are highly motivated, naturally curious, good at solving complex problems, and experienced with animal care. They look to the candidate’s academic record for evidence of a strong work ethic and the ability to master specific sets of knowledge, and to a candidate’s record of extracurricular activities for evidence that s/he has the characteristics they are looking for. Pre-vet students are encouraged to view the “VetVid” videos about getting into veterinary school. These videos are available on the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges’ Web site: http://aavmc.org/Students-Applicants-and-Advisors/Pre-Vet-Student-Resources.aspx.
Pre-veterinary students should remain cognizant that a balance between extracurricular activities and academic progress must be maintained. Pre-health students should therefore participate in extracurricular activities that help them develop the aforementioned qualities, but that do not distract them from academic excellence. **Students should recognize that genuine commitment to a few activities will result in a more positive outcome than maintaining a large number of short term commitments to a large number of activities.** The extracurricular activities outlined in sections 13-17 are appropriate for pre-veterinary students.

### 13. VETERINARY & ANIMAL CARE EXPERIENCE

Shadowing or observing a veterinarian, working in a veterinary clinic, dairy barn, zoo, or other animal facility, or volunteering at an animal shelter are all opportunities for students to gain first-hand knowledge about veterinary medicine and animal husbandry. These types of experiences allow students to verify their career decisions and give veterinary schools confidence that the applicants have confirmed and invested in those decisions.

#### A. Veterinary Experience

Shadowing (observing) a veterinarian or working in a veterinary clinic is the only way that a student will know if veterinary medicine is right for him/her. Many veterinary schools require a specific number of hours of veterinary experience (for instance, UGA requires 250 hours of veterinary experience supervised by a veterinarian: [http://vet.uga.edu/admissions/requirements#course_req](http://vet.uga.edu/admissions/requirements#course_req)). Students should consult the Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements to learn their target schools’ requirements and start obtaining such experience as early as possible.

**Asking Permission to Shadow.** Whenever possible, students should visit the clinic in person to seek permission to shadow or volunteer. To make the best impression possible, students should dress and behave in a professional manner (see below and section 25), and have a professional-style resume and cover letter to present to the veterinarian or office manager upon arrival. Veterinary clinics always have duties in the animal housing area which are usually performed by their technicians and other employees. Offering to perform such work (e.g., cleaning cages and runs or washing instruments) in exchange for the privilege of observing will probably be well-received.

**Resume & Cover Letter.** Students are encouraged to seek the assistance of the professionals in the Office of Career Services for help in preparing a professional-style resume and cover letter before contacting or visiting clinics about shadowing.

**Mercer Referrals.** Mercer’s Office of Career Services is building a list of health care professionals in the middle Georgia area who allow student shadowing and will refer qualified students to these professionals as appropriate. To qualify for a Mercer referral, a student must meet the following criteria:

- Be enrolled full-time at Mercer as a pre-health student in one of the traditional undergraduate colleges on the Macon campus (the College of Liberal Arts, the School of Engineering, the Townsend School of Music, or the Stetson School of Business & Economics),
- Have completed at least 2 of the 8 standard veterinary school prerequisite courses (see section 7), with preference given to students who have completed those courses at Mercer,
- Have achieved grade point averages of 3.2 or higher (both overall and math-science), and
- Have had their resume and cover letter approved by the Office of Career Services (see previous section).

**Possible Shadowing Prerequisites.** Some health care facilities require observers to have a criminal background check, training in patient privacy laws (HIPAA: [http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/)) and policies, a physical exam, up-to-date immunizations, and/or have a negative tuberculosis test before they will be allowed near animals and their owners. While some of these are not common in veterinary clinics, students should contact the facility for their requirements and policies so that these things may be taken care of well in advance of the scheduled shadowing experience.

Some medical and dental practices require certification of college enrollment before they will allow student shadowing, so it is possible that veterinary offices might require the same. Students should inquire about exactly
what the clinic requires, as the following options are available from the University: Official certification of enrollment can be obtained from the University registrar, and a simple letter of introduction with unofficial verification of enrollment can be obtained from Dr. Bokros in Academic & Advising Services.

**Dress and Behavior During Shadowing Experiences.** Students who are observing veterinary professionals are advised to dress and behave as practically and professionally as possible during the observation periods. Dress should be clean, neutral, and appropriate for the animal care facility. Closed-toe shoes or boots are usually expected, and the amount of exposed skin should be minimized. Perfume or after-shave should not be worn and make-up should be minimal and conservative.

The student shadower/volunteer should show respect and gratitude to everyone in the clinical setting. A note of thanks sent to the professionals and the clinic after the experience is expected.

**Maintaining a Record of Experience.** It is recommended that students keep a “volunteer/shadow journal” in which they record dates, times, contacts, and experiences. Such a journal can be an invaluable resource when the time comes to build a professional resume, and journaling about one’s experiences allows reflection about what has been witnessed and learned.

**Mission Work.** Many Mercer students find that participation in veterinary-related mission work is valuable and rewarding. Students may participate in veterinary-related mission work (e.g., Christian Veterinary Missions: http://www.cvmusa.org/serve/; WorldVets: http://worldvets.org/; International Service Learning: http://www.islonline.org/programs/veterinary/), or may investigate the general (non-animal-related) mission opportunities open through Mercer on Mission: http://www.mercer.edu/mom/.

**B. Animal Experience.** Most veterinary schools require a specific number of hours of animal experience as well as veterinary experience. Working at a chicken ranch or at a farm or barn, participating in competitive horseback riding, participating in 4-H or Future Farmers of America, or volunteering in an animal shelter are all ways to gain experience working with animals.

**14. CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT: LEADERSHIP & SERVICE**

Involvement in group organizations can help students develop their organizational, communication, teamwork, and leadership skills, and is also an avenue for the formation of satisfying and supportive friendships. Students will benefit from involvement in almost any organization (animal-related, health-related, special interest, religious, Greek, etc.); a complete list of campus organizations at Mercer can be found here: http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/campuslife/org_list.cfm.

Mercer “fosters an environment that challenges every student to engage in leadership opportunities that educate and advance them as servant leaders” (http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/leadership/), and pre-health students should take full advantage of this. Leadership-building opportunities on campus are listed on the Student Affairs Web site here: http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/leadership/1mu/bios.cfm.

Student Affairs connects students with different campus events on their Web site here: http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/campuslife/events.cfm. Many of the health- or science-related organizations on campus collaborate on events throughout the year. These groups post their meetings and events on the **Mercer Science & Pre-Health Google Calendar**, which can be accessed here: http://tinyurl.com/ns95vb7.

**Service.** Pre-veterinary students should bear in mind their status as citizens of their communities and should strive to participate in service projects regularly. Students can maximize the benefits of their service by selecting projects or causes that they truly care about and by sustaining their efforts towards those projects over time.

Participating in community service work that involves animals is a good way to combine community service, animal experience requirements, and leadership. Volunteering at a local animal shelter or rescue operation
is a great way to get involved. At Mercer, pre-veterinary students are encouraged to join the campus club, Mercer Animal Rescue, which participates in animal-related volunteer work regularly. Off campus, students can volunteer at All About Animals Pet Rescue (a “No Kill” shelter; http://www.allaboutanimalsmaconrescue.org/; https://www.facebook.com/allaboutanimalsmacon), Central Georgia CARES animal advocacy group (http://centralgacares.com/; acpup247@yahoo.com), or volunteer at the Macon-Bibb County Animal Control Shelter (http://www.maconbibb.us/animal-welfare/; 478-621-6791).

15. INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

Pre-health professions students should consider participating in at least one independent research project as an undergraduate. Such projects help students develop critical thinking skills and independence, and can be a very positive addition to a student’s professional school application portfolio. See also “Summer Activities” below.

**Current Research Projects at Mercer-Macon.** Many of Mercer’s academic departments (e.g., Chemistry, Biology, Physics, and Psychology in the College of Liberal Arts; Basic Sciences in the School of Medicine) have ongoing research projects and faculty members who are willing to supervise undergraduate researchers. Students may visit the “Research” page of the Mercer Web site (http://research.mercer.edu/; http://medicine.mercer.edu/research/macon/) and the Web pages of individual departments for information about current research projects.

A major benefit of undergraduate research is that the student learns to think critically and scientifically. This involves the asking of appropriate questions, the design of appropriate experiments to answer them, and the compilation and analysis of data from those experiments. These skills are then extended to the appropriate sharing of the entire experimental episode in poster and/or seminar format, and the defense of their work in question-and-answer sessions with other scientists. Mercer students are encouraged to participate in “BEAR Day”, an annual campus-wide event to celebrate research, held every spring (http://bearday.mercer.edu/).

**How to Get Involved.** The student should do some background research on the projects they are interested in before approaching the supervising faculty member. For instance, reading up on the basic biology of *Trypanosoma* and the disease processes involved in malaria would be appropriate before approaching a faculty member working on the molecular aspects of that disease. The student should then make an appointment to speak with the potential research supervisor regarding suitable projects and space availability.

A student may conduct research on a volunteer basis or for academic credit. Students interested in receiving course credit for research should know that they must commit to spending 3 hours or more on the project each week (in lab or in the field) for every credit hour being earned. End-of-semester reports or presentations are also required by many supervisors. Grading policies for research credits vary with departments and supervisors. Because of the time and effort that it takes to train undergraduate researchers, most research supervisors prefer to have students commit to more than one semester of research, with some preferring more than one year of commitment.

16. SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Pre-veterinary students are advised to use their summers to participate in a variety of activities that will help them prepare for professional school:

**Internships and Summer Enrichment Programs.** There are a fair number of internship programs involving animals that students could gain valuable work, animal care, and/or research experience from. Students are advised to research these opportunities in the fall, as application deadlines tend to be in the spring. A few are listed below.

**Exploratory (Is Veterinary Medicine Right for You?).**

- Tufts University - http://www.tufts.edu/vet/avm/college.html
- St. George’s University - http://www.sgu.edu/school-of-veterinary-medicine/veterinary-summer-camp.html
Recruitment of Students from Under-Represented Populations.

Michigan State University - http://cvm.msu.edu/student-information/cvm-undergraduate-programs/enrichment-summer-program
UC Davis - http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/students/diversity/pre-vet-outreach-recruitment.cfm

Zoological Gardens & Wildlife Centers.

Association of Zoos and Aquariums listing of internships:
https://www.aza.org/searchaza.aspx?search=internships (a few examples shown below)

Zoo Atlanta internships: http://www.zooatlanta.org/home/volunteer/Internships_Externships#oSML6
Alabama Wildlife Center’s internships: http://www.awrc.org/Internship
Central Florida Zoo and Botanical Garden internships: http://www.centralfloridazoo.org/jobsinternshipsvolunteering
Tampa’s Lowry Park Zoo internship program: http://www.lowryparkzoo.com/internships.php
The National Zoo (Washington, DC)’s internships: http://nationalzoo.si.edu/UndergradInternships/
Fossil Rim Wildlife Center (Texas) internships: http://www.fossilrim.org/intern.php
Seneca Park Zoo (New York) internships: http://www.senecaparkzoo.org/page/internships
Staten Island Zoo (New York) internships:

Research-Oriented.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Center for Veterinary Medicine “Windows to Regulatory Research” Internship program:
http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/WorkingatFDA/FellowshipInternshipGraduateFacultyPrograms/VeterinaryMedicineStudentInternships/default.htm
Homeland Security/ USDA joint program: Plum Island Animal Disease Center Research Participation Program:
http://www.orau.gov/piadc/
Purdue University - http://www.vet.purdue.edu/veterinary-scholars/

Equine-Related.

A list of equine-related internships can be found on the web site of the University of Vermont:
http://asci.uvm.edu/intern/?Page=equine.html&SM=internmenu.html

Independent Research. Opportunities exist for students to engage in independent learning and research to enhance their critical thinking skills and academic backgrounds. Students interested in doing independent research can investigate the opportunities available at Mercer through the Mercer Undergraduate Biomedical Scholars program (http://mubs.mercer.edu/program-overview/; see last section) or at other institutions across the nation. For instance, students can compete to participate in the National Science Foundation’s Research Experiences for Undergraduates programs (http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5517&org=NSF).

Summer Camp Counselor. Students may gain valuable organizational and interpersonal skills by working at a summer camp. This experience is even more valuable when the camp incorporates animals into the experience. Some examples are listed below.

Georgia 4-H Camps: http://georgia4h.org/camp/
Georgia Department of Natural Resources Junior Naturalist Camps: http://www.georgiawildlife.com/node/693
North Georgia Zoo Creation Encounters Camp: http://www.creationencounters.org/CECHome.html
Equestrian Camps can be found using a search engine: http://www.localhorse.com/Directory/Georgia/summer-horse-camps/
Non-animal-related camps that Mercer students have had good experiences with include:

- Georgia Lion’s Club Camp for the Blind - [http://www.glcb.org/](http://www.glcb.org/)

Other camps can be found using search engines such as [http://www.mysummercamps.com/camps/georgia-summer-camps.html](http://www.mysummercamps.com/camps/georgia-summer-camps.html)

**Summer Jobs.** For those students who need to work over the summer, consider that many professional schools value experience working with the public. Therefore, if working in a clinical setting or animal care facility is not possible, students are encouraged to find jobs that involve customer service of some kind.

**Summer Classes.** For those students who find it difficult to stay on schedule to complete their degree requirements and the veterinary school admission prerequisites by the semester s/he intends to do so, summer coursework offers an opportunity to catch up or get ahead. Pre-health students should pay close attention to their course schedules each semester, as well as their long-term schedules and plans, in order to determine whether or not summer classes are necessary (see Appendix B for scheduling suggestions).

Pre-health students should also remain cognizant of the importance of retaining the skills and concepts learned in the required pre-professional courses. Since they will rely on this base of knowledge in professional school, they should consider their individual learning style before deciding whether to take summer courses: summer courses cover material more quickly and sometimes with less depth - than classes during the regular academic year, and pre-veterinary students need to learn this material thoroughly.

**Courses to Avoid Taking Away from Mercer During the Summer.** Pre-health students are advised to avoid taking core science courses and/or courses within their majors at non-Mercer institutions. Because some veterinary schools expect their applicants to provide at least one letter of evaluation from a science professor, it is to the student’s advantage to get to know their science professors during the first two years of their college careers. The most complete - and therefore influential - letters of evaluation are those written by faculty members who have formed good relationships with students. This is especially true for non-science majors at Mercer University, who have only limited opportunities to get to know these professors.

**17. THE VALUE OF READING**

The ability to communicate well in both oral and written form is valued highly by most health-related professional schools. The ability to read quickly, efficiently, and critically will help students succeed in college, in professional school, and in their professional lives. Reading increases a student’s vocabulary by exposing the reader to new words and phrasing and helps develop writing skills by exposing him or her to new patterns and arrangements of composition. Robert and Michele Root-Bernstein state in their 2011 article, *Turning STEM into STREAM: Writing as an Essential Component of Science Education,*

> “Writing isn't just wordsmithing. It also teaches mastery of the creative process. Whether one is writing fiction or nonfiction, creative nonfiction or poetry, the process of taking inchoate facts, trends, feelings, impressions, images, and emotions and translating them into words requires mastery of all the tools for thinking required to perform any other creative activity. Moreover, since words are our primary means of communicating, anyone who has not mastered their creative use is simply underprepared for any discipline, including STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] subjects.” (bolding mine; [http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/3522](http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/3522))

Pre-health students should therefore make it a habit to read at least one or two unassigned books per semester. Reading in this way will help students investigate their career choice more deeply, practice their critical reading skills, explore issues outside of their major field of study, and – of course - feed their imaginations. Students are also encouraged to participate in reading or discussion groups to help them explore themes and make connections, and to invest themselves fully in all of their college writing assignments. See the reading list on the Tarver Library’s Pre-Health Professions Collection Web site for suggested titles: [https://libraries.mercer.edu/research-tools-help/research-guides-tutorials/tarver-guides/pre-health](https://libraries.mercer.edu/research-tools-help/research-guides-tutorials/tarver-guides/pre-health).
Application to Veterinary School

18. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

There are three basic steps to the professional school application process in the U.S.:

1. the primary application, which is usually completed through a centralized application service, or CAS (see section 20 for information about VMCAS, the service for veterinary schools);
2. the secondary application, which involves submission of supplemental materials (additional essays, letters of recommendation, etc.) directly to the professional schools to which the students are applying; and
3. the interview, which is by invitation.

Cost. Students should plan ahead carefully for the costs of applying to veterinary school, which include fees for taking the GRE (section 22), for the application service VMCAS (section 20), fees for supplemental/secondary applications, and travel expenses for interviews. A minimum “ballpark” estimate for budgeting purposes is $500.

Timing. Many veterinary schools have early fall application deadlines (http://www.aavmc.org/data/files/vmcas/geninfochart.pdf), so pre-veterinary students traditionally begin preparing their professional school applications during the fall of their third (junior) year and have them completed by the summer of that same year.

A Note About Deadlines: Applicants should note that many of the published deadlines for applications are receipt deadlines. Therefore, students should plan to complete their application materials (both for application services and for individual schools) at least 4 weeks in advance of the published deadlines to maximize their chances of acceptance.

Most veterinary schools use a “rolling admissions” system. This means that the schools admit qualified students as they receive their applications (rather than waiting until the deadline for applications, comparing all applicants at that time, and then admitting the most qualified from the whole pool of applicants). Thus, it is advantageous for a student to submit applications as early as possible after the application cycle begins.

From the VMCAS Instructions: “VMCAS STRONGLY recommends that applicants get S.E.T. for verification by August 15th! The E in S.E.T. stands for: Evaluations – Have all THREE of your required evaluations listed on the application. VMCAS will not accept late application materials.”

19. DECIDING WHICH VETERINARY SCHOOLS TO APPLY TO

Students should apply to schools for which there is some special attraction for the applicant. Students should investigate each veterinary school’s location, educational mission, focus, curriculum structure, special electives, academic services, student services, and tuition rates (see section 11). These factors might translate into a viable reason for applying to a particular veterinary school, even outside of a pre-veterinary student’s home state.

Students should also check a school’s Web site for “student profile” information, because matriculant statistics can help a student decide if his/ her own academic record fits reasonably well with the records of that school’s average matriculant and can therefore help the student gauge his/ her chances of acceptance by that school.

Residency Requirements and Preferences. Acceptance rates are highest for students applying to veterinary schools located in the same state in which they reside. Most veterinary schools reserve a certain percentage of seats in each class for non-residents, and this percentage varies widely from school to school. For instance, the University of Missouri gives half of its seats to Missouri residents, while Cornell reserves 55% of its seats for New York residents, and Michigan State University reserves about 70% of its seats for Michigan residents. The University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine admitted seven applicants (< 7%) last year from outside of Georgia and its contracting states (states which do not have a veterinary school make admissions agreements with those that do; Georgia contracts with South Carolina, Delaware, and West Virginia). Therefore, a pre-veterinary student should “target” veterinary schools primarily in their home state, and/or check the admissions requirements of each school they are interested in very carefully for residency requirements.
20. VMCAS

There are currently 30 schools of veterinary medicine in the U.S. ([http://aavmc.org/factsheet.aspx](http://aavmc.org/factsheet.aspx)), all of which participate in the centralized application service of American Association of Schools of Veterinary Medicine, VMCAS ([https://portal.vmcas.org/vmcasHelpPages/instructions/](https://portal.vmcas.org/vmcasHelpPages/instructions/)).

Centralized application services allow students to submit a single set of application materials in order to apply to multiple professional programs. They also allow students to monitor their application status online throughout the application process. Most centralized application services operate in annual cycles that open and close at the same time every year. VMCAS operates on an annual cycle which opens on or around **June 1** each year and closes in mid-September.

Applicants should read all instructions before commencing ([https://portal.vmcas.org/vmcasHelpPages/instructions/](https://portal.vmcas.org/vmcasHelpPages/instructions/)), and use their best judgment as they complete the application. Students must **contact the application service directly if they encounter problems or have specific questions.**

**Cost.** The fee for application to veterinary school through VMCAS is $195, which covers application to one school; additional schools can be added for $100 each ([http://aavmc.org/factsheet.aspx](http://aavmc.org/factsheet.aspx)).

**Timing.** VMCAS operates on an annual cycle. **Each year the service opens on or around June 1 and stops accepting applications in mid-September.** Each school has a specific application deadline date, which is noted in the online VMCAS application. Students should note that these dates are subject to change; each veterinary school’s Web site should be consulted for the most up-to-date information on deadlines.

Students are encouraged to complete their VMCAS applications as early as possible, as the services can take up to 8 weeks to process applications during their peak season.

> *From the VMCAS Instructions:* “VMCAS **STRONGLY** recommends that applicants get **S.E.T.** for verification by August 15th! The **E** in **S.E.T.** stands for: **Evaluations** – Have all **THREE** of your **required evaluations** listed on the application. **VMCAS will not accept late application materials.**”

Students will be expected to provide biographical information, information about all coursework they have completed (or plan to complete), GRE scores, a Personal Statement (an essay in which students present themselves and their reasons for wanting to attend veterinary school – see section 24), information about their extracurricular activities (experiences related to veterinary medicine and animal care, volunteer and community service, honors and awards, work history, and research experience), as well as a list of veterinary schools to which they plan to apply. Students will also need to submit official transcripts of ALL colleges or universities they have attended, as well as a specified number of letters of evaluation (see sections 22 and 23).

Note that applicants are required to copy the information from his/her transcripts; the applicant should use an unofficial copy of his/her transcripts (available on MyMercer) to complete this section so that s/he may be as accurate as possible. **Any discrepancies between a student’s transcripts and the VMCAS application will create unnecessary delays in processing the application!**
21. THE GRADUATE RECORD EXAM (GRE)

The GRE, which is required by most veterinary schools, is a standardized multiple choice test of general academic skills (http://www.ets.org/gre). Veterinary schools use GRE scores to help them evaluate applicants, as it has been shown to be a good predictor of performance in the first year of graduate or professional school.

**Structure and Scoring.** The GRE is administered year-round as a computer-based test at Prometric test centers across the nation. The GRE exam consists of three sections (verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and analytical writing) and takes almost 4 hours to complete. The first two sections are scored from 130-170 in one-point increments, and the third is scored from 0 to 6 in half-point increments. More information about test content and structure can be found here: http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/content/, and a guide to understanding GRE scores can be found here: http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/scores/understand/.

**Timing.** Pre-veterinary students should familiarize themselves with the GRE and prepare to take it 12-15 months before the planned veterinary medicine program matriculation date. The test can be taken up to five times per year, but students must wait 21 days between each attempt.

**Cost.** The GRE registration fee is currently $195.

**Preparation.** No specific courses or fields of study prepare students for the GRE; instead, the GRE is meant to test general skills that are learned over a long period of time, both in and out of academic settings. However, students should still plan to prepare for the test in the following ways:

- **Learn everything possible about the GRE** as early in the undergraduate program as possible (see links above).
- **Commit to intensive review through the spring and early summer of the application year.**
  - Review may be formal (e.g., participating in a commercial prep course such as that offered by Kaplan) or informal (e.g., studying alone or participating in a study group sponsored by a student organization).
  - Materials for all health professions entrance exams are available in the Pre-Health Study Skills and Exam Prep Resource Library in the Academic Resource Center and on reserve in the Tarver Library.
- **Develop a test-taking strategy.**
  - Students are encouraged to read about the different strategies already developed (e.g., those taught by commercial exam preparation companies like Kaplan, Princeton Review, and Examkrackers), and to put them into practice. Effective strategies invariably include time management during the test and the identification of relevant information within passages.);
- **Commit to practicing** the full-length exam under controlled, timed conditions.
  - The GRE takes over 4 hours to complete, so building stamina is an important aspect of test preparation.
- **Analyze practice exam results methodically.** The most effective way to improve a test score is for the student to analyze each question that he or she missed on the practice exam to determine why it was missed. For instance, knowing that a question was missed because an important concept is not fully understood can identify which areas need further study, while knowing that a question was missed because of mis-reading the question can help the student read more carefully and analytically next time. See http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/Page/209/Seven_Preparation_Tips_for_Retaking_or_Taking_the_Standardized_Tests.

22. LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION/ EVALUATION

Letters of recommendation (LOR’s) or of evaluation (LOE’s) are required for the veterinary school application. VMCAS requires a minimum of three and a maximum of six LOR’s (https://portal.vmcas.org/vmcasHelpPages/instructions/); most schools request at least one letter from a veterinarian, a letter from an employer or supervisor, and at least one letter from a science faculty member. Veterinary schools
vary in their requirements for letters of recommendation, so pre-veterinary medicine students should consult the Web sites of their target professional schools for the number and types of recommendation letters required by each.

**Composite LOE’s/ LOR’s.** Some schools allow or require a composite letter from a pre-health advising committee. VMCAS will count a committee letter as one letter. Mercer University’s Health Vocations Advisement Committee (HVAC) prepares such composite LOE’s for pre-dental, pre-medical, pre-optometry, and pre-veterinary students; section 23 contains more information about the committee and how to request their LOE.

**Proper Etiquette for Requesting a Letter of Recommendation.** A student should contact the potential writer 2-3 weeks before the letter’s receipt deadline. If the potential writer agrees to provide a letter of recommendation, the student should provide him/her with a current resume and a brief statement of purpose describing exactly what s/he will be applying for and, if available, a list of the applicant characteristics/ attributes that are important to address. The student should also supply a stamped, addressed envelope for each letter or instructions about how to upload an electronic document, and the deadline by which the letter should be submitted. It is customary for an LOR to be confidential, so a student may be asked to sign a waiver of his/her right to see the letter. Waiving this right is customary and expected; this practice ensures that a candid letter of evaluation or recommendation is written. The student should send a brief note or email of gratitude to their letter-writer after the letter is submitted.

23. **THE MERCER UNIVERSITY HEALTH VOCATIONS ADVISEMENT COMMITTEE (HVAC)**

The Health Vocations Advisement Committee (HVAC) is a university committee that convenes twice each year (spring and fall) to evaluate eligible Mercer students as candidates for medical, dental, podiatric, and optometry schools, and to prepare letters for professional schools that detail their recommendations of those students.

The HVAC currently conducts only two letter-writing cycles each year: one during the fall semester and one during the spring semester. The HVAC meets to prepare a student evaluation letter for each student who submits the required materials by the appropriate deadline for each cycle (July 25, 2016 for fall 2016; January 20, 2017 for spring 2017), so timing of the request is important. This cycle is subject to change each year, as the committee may adjust its schedule and procedures to suit the requirements of the professional school centralized application services used by Mercer applicants.

**Eligibility.** Committee policies and request forms are often specific for the application cycle, so HVAC LOE request packet materials are emailed to pre-veterinary students upon request during the semester immediately before the request.

To be eligible to request an HVAC letter, a student must

- be enrolled in and on track to complete a bachelor’s degree from the College of Liberal Arts, the School of Engineering, the College of Health Professions, the Stetson School of Business and Economics, or the Townsend School of Music,
- have completed at least 6 of the 9 core science courses required for admission to medical or dental school at Mercer (the 9 core courses are general chemistry I and II, organic chemistry I and II, general biology I and II, biochemistry, and physics I and II),
- have earned a cumulative Mercer GPA of 3.0 or higher, and
- have participated in appropriate extracurricular activities during his/her undergraduate career.

**Areas of Evaluation.** The HVAC will evaluate applicants in the categories listed below, using pre-veterinary, pre-medical, and pre-dental students previously evaluated as the comparison group: Academic Ability and Accomplishments, Engagement in a Broad Education/ Pursuit of Knowledge/ Experience Outside of Major and Minor, Critical Thinking and Problem-solving Abilities, Communication Skills (Both Written and Oral), Responsibility and Time Management, Interpersonal Skills, Leadership and Teamwork Skills, Commitment to Service, and Depth and Breadth of Relevant Professional Experience.
Recommendation Levels. At the conclusion of the candidate’s evaluation, the HVAC assigns one of the following recommendation levels: Recommend with Enthusiasm, Recommend, Recommend with Reservation(s), or Do Not Recommend. (In general, if the committee has more than one reservation about a student’s application to medical school, they will give that student the “Do Not Recommend” ruling.)

The committee reserves the right to decline to evaluate any student who does not present enough appropriate data in his/her request packet to warrant an evaluation. A student who is declined by the committee may attempt another request in the next HVAC meeting cycle.

Optimum Time to Request the HVAC LOE. In general, pre-health students planning to apply to professional schools with fall application deadlines are encouraged to submit their requests in the spring before the summer they plan to apply to professional school. However, students should apply to veterinary school only when they feel they are strong applicants, with GPA’s and GRE scores within the range of those of accepted applicants at their target schools, appropriate shadowing and animal care experience, and a strong record of service and campus involvement. Likewise, students should not request an HVAC LOE until they feel they will compare favorably to other pre-vet/ medical/ dental students who have been evaluated by the committee before them. Students who are unsure about their status should consult with Dr. Bokros before deciding.

How to Submit a Letter Request. The committee requires a number of documents from applicants to perform an evaluation. Letter of Evaluation Request Packets are supplied to students only after they view the narrated powerpoint presentation for the specific evaluation cycle they plan to use. Those presentations are emailed to all per-veterinary students every semester. Completed packets are submitted to Dr. Bokros in the Office of Academic & Advising Services by the posted deadline for each cycle. Applicants who miss the published deadlines cannot be guaranteed an HVAC letter.

Order of Service. During the spring evaluation cycle, all LOR’s will be completed and ready to upload to the appropriate CAS by the first week of June of that year. During the fall evaluation cycle, all LOR’s will be completed and uploaded on a first-come, first-served basis, with all letters uploaded no later than mid-October of that year. Students who would like their letters submitted early in the application cycle should submit their materials well before the HVAC request deadline to ensure that their letter reaches their target schools’ admissions offices by their posted application deadlines.

24. THE PERSONAL ESSAY

The Personal Essay (PE) provides the opportunity for applicants to explain why they wish to pursue professional education and offers a way for admissions committees to get a better sense of the applicant as a person. Students must therefore describe the events, people, and/or experiences which helped lead them to their decision to pursue optometry. Applicants may also describe the aspects of optometry that intrigue them the most, and explain any extenuating circumstances that might have influenced their educational pursuits (e.g., hardships, obstacles, or challenges).

A few guidelines for writing the Personal Statement:

- Students should treat their PE as any other college-level composition: it should be written in a formal style, have a central theme to unify the different ideas (if possible), and should be crafted with an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. A title is optional but can highlight the central theme.

- Being a formal statement of an applicant’s goal to pursue veterinary medicine, the Personal Essay should not contain slang terminology, contractions, unconventional punctuation, or acronyms. An exception can be made for an abbreviation or acronym if its use is essential for the narrative, but it must be defined fully in its first usage. Clichés, obvious exaggerations, and negativity should be avoided.

- Succinct expression of ideas is important, as space is limited. The centralized application service for veterinary schools, VMCAS, allows applicants to submit Personal Essays of 4,500 characters or less -spaces included
• (https://portal.vmcas.org/vmcasHelpPages/instructions/supporting-information/personal-statement/). From the VMCAS 2016 Instructions: "Discuss briefly the development of your interest in veterinary medicine. Discuss those unique activities that have contributed to your preparation for a professional program. Discuss your understanding of the veterinary medical profession, what you have to offer the profession to it and your career goals and objectives."

**When to Write the Personal Essay.** Applicants should not wait until the last minute to write their Personal Essay. Preparation of a first draft of the Personal Essay early in the application process (e.g., the beginning of the third year) allows an applicant the time to get feedback and to make multiple revisions, and therefore submit a polished product on their professional school applications.

**Feedback on Personal Essays.** Students are advised to have multiple people read and give feedback on their personal essays before submitting it as part of the application. Dr. Bokros will give comments on essays within a week of receipt if the essay is emailed to her as a Word document. Note that she will give comments on an original draft and one revision only. The writing tutors in the ARC are also a good source of feedback, as are the counselors at the Office of Career Services.


**Supplemental Essays.** Some veterinary schools require applicants to write a “supplemental essay” for their secondary applications. Such an essay is usually a response to a prompt scenario or question, which may require demonstration of some knowledge of animal science or veterinary medicine. No matter what the prompt is, students are urged to read the prompt carefully and respond to it specifically and completely, and to do some basic background research if necessary.

More information and advice about Personal Essays and Personal Statements can be found in the books available in the Pre-Health Resource Library in the ARC and at the following Web sites:

- “Tips for Writing a Personal Statement”: http://www.cmu.edu/hpp/apply-to-schools/personal-statements/tips.html
- “Preparing Personal Statements”: http://www.creighton.edu/soar/preparingapps/statements/

25. THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW

Most professional schools will invite applicants who look promising “on paper” to visit their school for an interview. The interview offers committees the chance to judge how an applicant presents him/herself in person and how well s/he communicates and interacts with the veterinary school faculty, staff, and students.

**Scheduling.** Interviews are usually conducted on weekdays, so applicants must be able to make arrangements to miss school or work to attend interviews.

**Structure.** Professional schools differ in the structure of their interviews. Interviews are usually highly structured, with a specified amount of time spent with each interviewer or group of interviewers. Students are encouraged to check YouTube and the Web sites of their target vet schools for information about this process (e.g., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVqsDMyAfS8 and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Meb4DZligNA).

Some schools conduct a series of individual interviews, others conduct group interviews, and others use a combination of these methods. “Multiple Mini Interviews” (MMIs) are gaining in popularity among medical schools as a means of collecting information about an applicant’s non-academic qualities and characteristics, and this model has been adopted by at least one veterinary school.
MMIs involve applicants visiting multiple stations to perform different tasks or address different scenarios within a strict time schedule. More information about MMI’s can be found here:

http://www.studentdoctor.net/2011/01/the-multiple-mini-interview-for-medical-school-admissions/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luYUCiGIB5k
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOVbDD9INjE
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdXKVLTt1ZQ

**Preparation Resources.** More information about the professional school interview can be found the various interview guides placed on reserve in the Pre-Health Professions Collection in the Tarver Library.

Students may also find the following resources for medical school applicants useful, as the processes for veterinary, dental, and medical application are so similar:

Basic Advice from the AAMC About Interviews -
https://www.aamc.org/students/aspiring/basics/280914/interview.html


Information About Common Mistakes on a Pre-Med Blog Site -
http://www.studentdoctor.net/2013/12/medical-school-interviews-6-common-mistakes-that-admissions-officers-hate/


Kaplan’s video series on interviews -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOcsORgXDog&list=PLdprizTzRD9kGldw6SBwhFOJgaB0kTvnF

**Dress & Behavior.** Applicants have limited time with each interviewer to make an impression, so dress and behavior is very important. In general, applicants should dress and behave as professionally as possible. They should smile and be pleasant to everyone they encounter (on the phone, by email, or on the phone), to know their own application well, know the school at which they are being interviewed, and show enthusiasm for its programs. Mercer students are encouraged to attend the Professionalism for Pre-Health Students workshop and/or Career Services’ Dress for Success presentations as part of the preparation for their professional school interviews.

Due to the nature of the work within the veterinary profession, it is recommended that women wear pant suits, not skirts or dresses, to the interview.

**Anticipating Interview Questions.** Applicants should prepare by anticipating some of the obvious questions and practicing their answers. Some examples of interview questions for veterinary school applicants are found in Appendix E.

Veterinary school applicants should also be prepared to ask questions as well as answer them. Although an applicant should be thoroughly familiar with the veterinary school at which they are applying, a few appropriate questions are also listed in Appendix E.

**Mock Interviews.** Mock interviews may be arranged with a faculty member through Dr. Bokros or with a staff member with the Office of Career Services.
26. POST-BACCALAUREATE PREPARATION FOR VETERINARY SCHOOLS

Post-baccalaureate pre-veterinary students are those students who have earned bachelor’s degrees but continue to work toward preparing successful professional school applications. These students include:

- those who have already applied to veterinary school and were unsuccessful, and
- those who have completed bachelor’s degrees but have not yet completed the courses required for admission to veterinary school.

Re-Applicants. A pre-veterinary student who has previously applied to professional schools but has not been accepted should, ideally, seek and follow the recommendations of an admissions official from one of his/her target schools in order to learn which specific areas of his/her application portfolio need to be strengthened in order to improve his/her chances of being accepted. If that is not possible, students may seek Dr. Bokros’ advice about how to strengthen their application for reapplication.

Applicants must keep in mind that professional schools look for evidence of an applicant’s academic ability, appropriate animal care and veterinary experience, and personal characteristics and activities related to “citizenship” (see section 2). Students should use an appropriate strategy for improving their standing in one or more of these areas when making post-graduation plans. Possible options for post-graduation activities include taking classes to strengthen the academic record and working in a vet clinic or animal care facility to increase professional experience.

Post-Baccalaureate Programs. Post-baccalaureate programs can be formal (a structured graduate or certificate program) or informal (enrollment as a non-degree-seeking student to take graduate or upper level undergraduate courses). Because the pre-veterinary and pre-medical tracks are so similar, pre-veterinary students may consult the post-baccalaureate resources offered by the Association of American Medical Colleges: https://services.aamc.org/postbac/.

Note that professional schools will NOT consider applications from applicants whose plans do not include completing graduate programs in which they are currently enrolled. In other words, students should not enroll in academic programs that they are not planning on completing.

Post-Baccalaureate Work at Mercer.

Record Enhancement Master's Degrees at the Mercer University School of Medicine. The Mercer University School of Medicine offers a one-year graduate program that leads to the Master of Science in Preclinical Sciences (http://medicine.mercer.edu/admissions/preclinical/) and a two-year graduate program that leads to the Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences (http://medicine.mercer.edu/admissions/biomed/). These programs are suitable for students who have already completed the basic sciences but want to enhance their academic records and/or research experience.

Completion of Prerequisite Coursework at the College of Liberal Arts. Students who have not completed the basic science courses for admission to veterinary school may enroll in the College of Liberal Arts as non-degree-seeking students to complete those classes, but should be aware of the following:

- The CLA does not offer a formal, or structured, post-baccalaureate program.
- Non-degree-seeking students receive limited academic advising and are not eligible for HVAC evaluation.
- Financial aid is usually not as easy to obtain for non-degree-seeking students as aid for degree-seeking students.
- Completion of the pre-veterinary coursework requires a minimum of 5 semesters of sequenced coursework. Refer to the schedule below for the most expedient schedule of coursework and
application completion. Note that this plan assumes that a student has already taken mathematics through the pre-calculus level or higher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General Chemistry I (CHM 111)</td>
<td>General Chemistry II (CHM 112)</td>
<td>Organic Chem I (CHM 221)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physics I (PHY 141)</td>
<td>Intro. Biology I (BIO 211)</td>
<td>Organic Chem II (CHM 222)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mathematics?</td>
<td>Mathematics?</td>
<td>Take the GRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intensive prep for the GRE</td>
<td>Submit Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Intro. Biology II (BIO 212)</td>
<td>Biochemistry (BMB 465)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physics II (PHY 142)</td>
<td>Microbiology, Genetics, Histology, and/or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Application and Interview Process</td>
<td>other upper level biology coursework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Veterinary School Matriculation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX A: Pre-Veterinary Advising Checklist

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Recommended Completion Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The courses below should be completed by the end of the third year so that the student is prepared to take the GRE:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. General Chemistry (a universal requirement)</td>
<td>1st year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHM 111 and CHM 112 (CHM 115 may substitute for CHM 111 and 112, but if the student’s target vet schools require 8 hr of general chemistry, the student should take CHM 241 to complement CHM 115)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Introductory Physics (a universal requirement)</td>
<td>1st, 2nd, or 3rd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHY 141 and PHY 142 or PHY 161 and PHY 162</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Introductory Biology (a universal requirement)</td>
<td>1st and 2nd years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO 211 and BIO 212</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Note: BIO 211 is offered in the spring; BIO 212 is offered in the fall.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Organic Chemistry (a universal requirement)</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHM 221 and CHM 222</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Note: CHM 221 is offered in the fall; CHM 222 is offered in the spring.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mathematics (refer to requirements for major and for specific veterinary school)</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STA 126 and/or MAT 191, or ?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Biochemistry (required or recommended by many veterinary schools)</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMB 465</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Social Sciences (required or recommended by many veterinary schools)</td>
<td>1st, 2nd, or 3rd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSY 101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC 101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Additional Biology Coursework (if required)</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## ADDITIONAL PRE-VETERINARY PREPARATION:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Recommended Time Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Veterinary Experience</td>
<td>Initiated 1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer at an animal hospital; shadow a veterinarian; investigate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internship or other employment opportunities in a veterinary facility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(part-time or summer).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Animal Experience</td>
<td>Initiated 1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer at an animal shelter or business; work at an animal facility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(horse or dairy barn, groomer, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Citizenship/Service</td>
<td>Initiated 1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make appropriate contributions to the campus and community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through activities and organizations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Committee Recommendation Letter (if required)</td>
<td>Jan. of 3rd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request a Health Vocations Advisement Committee (HVAC) letter of evaluation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Admission Test Preparation (GRE)</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete at least four full-length practice exams during the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring semester of year 3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Admissions Test Completion (GRE)</td>
<td>By end of summer after 3rd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take the GRE by June of year 3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Primary Application</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarize yourself with VMCAS through spring semester of year 3;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit completed application by August 15 before start of year 4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These recommendations are based on a student’s matriculation to veterinary school after completion of undergraduate degree; students taking one or more gap year(s) may shift these requirements according to their individual plans.*
### APPENDIX B: Scheduling of Core Science Coursework for the Pre-Veterinary Track

Students must create their own 4YP that includes their major, minor, and general education requirements in addition to the core coursework shown below.

#### Calculus -Ready

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CHM 111</td>
<td>CHM 112</td>
<td>Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BIO 211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CHM 221</td>
<td>CHM 222</td>
<td>Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIO 212</td>
<td>(BIO 303, 310, etc. recommended)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Declare Major</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PHY 141</td>
<td>PHY 142</td>
<td>Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BMB 465 or other BIO</td>
<td>BMB 465 or other BIO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare for admission exam and application</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Apply for May graduation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Not Ready for Calculus – Plan A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MAT 095 or 133</td>
<td>MAT 133 or math for major</td>
<td>CHM 111 or CHM 112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Optional: BIO 212) Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CHM 221</td>
<td>CHM 222</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PHY 141 or 142?</td>
<td>BIO 211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Declare Major</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>BIO 212 (or BIO 310)</td>
<td>PHY 142?</td>
<td>Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PHY 141 or 142?</td>
<td>BMB 465</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(BIO 303, 310, etc. recommended)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare for admission exam and application</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Apply for May graduation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Not Ready for Calculus - Plan B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MAT 095 or 133</td>
<td>MAT 133 or math for major</td>
<td>Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CHM 111</td>
<td>CHM 112</td>
<td>Volunteer or Shadowing Experience or Independent Research Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PHY 141 or 142?</td>
<td>BIO 211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Declare Major</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>BIO 212</td>
<td>PHY 142</td>
<td>BMB 465 (if available)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHM 221</td>
<td>CHM 222</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PHY 141 or 142?</td>
<td>(BIO 303, 310, etc. recommended)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare for admission exam and application</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Apply for May graduation if degree requirements on track</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: Internet Resources for Exploring Careers in Health Care

Mercer’s Pre-Professional Web site
- http://aas.mercer.edu/pre-professional-tracks/ and http://cla.mercer.edu/pre-professional/
  Contain information for students interested in applying to health-related professional schools.

Mercer’s Career Services Web site
- http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/careerservices/ Information about BearLInk, TypeFocus, SuccessTrak, Career Day, and other services for students

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Web site on Health Care Careers

For More Information About Careers in Healthcare
- http://www.explorehealthcareers.org/
- http://www.mynextmove.org/
- http://www.sowega-ahec.org/educational-tools/health-careers-manual (information about specific jobs; includes career videos)

Links for Health-Related Professional Organizations
- American Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants: www.anesthetist.org
- American Academy of Nurse Practitioners: http://www.aanp.org/
- American Academy of Physician Assistants: http://www.aapa.org/
- American Dental Education Association: http://www.adea.org/
- American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy: http://www.aacp.org/
- American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine: http://www.aacpm.org/
- American Association of Pathologists’ Assistants: http://www.pathassist.org/
- American Chiropractic Association: http://www.acatoday.org/
- American Dental Education Association: http://www.adea.org/
- American Dental Association: http://www.ada.org/
- American Medical Association: http://www.ama-assn.org/
- American Medical Student Association: http://www.amsa.org/
- American Nursing Association: http://www.nursingworld.org/
- American Occupational Therapy Association: http://www.aota.org
- American Optometric Association: http://www.aoa.org/
- American Osteopathic Association: http://www.ostheath.org/Pages/default.aspx
- American Pharmacists Association: http://www.pharmacist.com/
- American Public Health Association: http://www.apha.org/
- American Veterinary Medical Association: http://www.avma.org/
- Association of American Medical Colleges: http://www.aacmc.org/
- Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry: http://www.opted.org
- Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions: www.asahp.org
- Association of Schools of Public Health: http://www.aspph.org/
- Georgia Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants: http://www.georgiaaaa.org/
- Georgia Dental Association: http://www.gadental.org/
- Georgia Public Health Association: http://www.gapha.org/
- Georgia Association of Physician Assistants: http://www.gapa.net/
- Middle Georgia Medical Society, Inc.: http://www.mgmsnet.org/
- National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences: http://www.naacscl.org/

Pre-Health Blog Sites
- http://a-doctor-in-the-house.com/ Follow Andrea Dooley as she makes her way through medical school and beyond.
- http://aspiringdocsdiaries.org/ AspiringDocs.org is a program of the AAMC.
- http://www.studentdoctor.net/
**Links for Information About Financing a Veterinary Education**

- Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges’ information about paying for vet school: [http://www.aavmc.org/students-applicants-and-advisors/funding-education.aspx](http://www.aavmc.org/students-applicants-and-advisors/funding-education.aspx) (includes info about military scholarships)
- FutureVet.com’s list of scholarships: [http://futurevet.net/students/scholarships/vet-school-scholarships](http://futurevet.net/students/scholarships/vet-school-scholarships)
APPENDIX D: Withdrawing from Courses

Steps to Take in the Decision-Making Process

1. Get the Facts
Calculate your projected grade in the class using the formula given in your syllabus for your course grade. Do the calculations using the grades you have earned so far, then project what grades you might earn for the rest of the semester and plug them into the formula. Do this to create a “worst case scenario” in which you earn poor grades for the remaining exams, and a “best case scenario” in which you earn improved but reasonable grades (e.g., 75-85%). The results will give you a realistic range of possible grades for the rest of the semester. Keep in mind that having a firm grasp of the course’s foundational concepts is often required for success. Increasing your grades to the 80% range after scoring in the 30-50% range requires backtracking to learn the concepts that you didn’t learn well the first time.

If your calculations reveal that there is no way you can pass the class with a C or higher, then withdrawing is recommended. If your calculations reveal that there is a way that you can still earn a solid C or higher in the class, then proceed to step 2.

2. Talk with Your Instructor
If your calculations reveal that there is a way that you can still earn a solid C or higher in the class, then the next step is to meet with your instructor. Talk honestly about how you are studying and how much time you are spending on the material, and get an idea from the instructor about his/her impression of whether you are likely to fall on the low side of your grading scale or on the high side.

[FYI: Claiming that there is a “disconnect” between your learning style and the professor’s teaching style is a dangerous way to go… it can sound like an excuse. Flexibility in learning style is a trait expected of professional school applicants, as it shows maturity. The staff of the Academic Resource Center can help students identify their best learning style and offer suggestions about how to adapt to multiple teaching styles. (Students with learning disabilities are urged to seek supportive assistance from Carole Burrowbridge at the office of ACCESS and Accommodation: http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/disabilityservices/.)]

3. Be Honest With Yourself
Ask yourself how willing you are to fight to earn a passing grade in order to continue moving forward on the per-veterinary track. This will be a true test of your determination. If you are still hypothetically able to earn at least a C, and you are willing to either double the amount of time you are spending on the class or to change the way you spend time on the class, then it is worth your while to stay in the class.

If you have already “moved on” mentally and won’t or can’t put forth more effort to conquer the class, then it is best to withdraw and make alternative plans to continue progressing. Note: If you are not willing to do what it takes academically to make yourself into a competitive professional school applicant, then you should re-examine your professional goals.

4. Consider the Consequences BEFORE Withdrawing
A. Make a revised three-year plan in which you have withdrawn from the class and consider how withdrawing will affect your progress. Will withdrawal force you to take summer classes? Are you able to take summer classes at Mercer (time-wise and financially)?
B. Check with financial planning to make sure that withdrawing will not impact your financial aid or scholarship or loan status.
C. Remember that it is not recommended that per-veterinary students take their core BIO or CHM courses (or courses within their major if they aren’t science majors) at other institutions. Consider that every science class at Mercer is a chance to get to know members of the Health Vocations Advisement Committee, who write letters of evaluation for this group of students applying to professional schools (for those pre-vet students who plan to request an HVAC letter).

5. The Withdrawal Process
Complete a withdrawal form. Have your instructor sign it and your primary advisor sign it. Submit the signed form to the registrar’s office by the published withdrawal deadline.
APPENDIX E: Sample Interview Questions for Veterinary School Applicants

- How are you today?
- Tell me about yourself. Tell me about your family. Tell me about your animals.
- Why veterinary school? Why not medical? Or dental? Or PA/ etc?
- If veterinary didn’t exist, what would you do instead?
- What have you done to test your interest in veterinary medicine?
- What DON’T you like about the veterinary field?
- When did you decide on veterinary?
- Tell me about your veterinary experience. About your experience with animals.
- How do your personal values and morals fit with veterinary medicine?
- Do you want to specialize? In what?
- How does animal care fit into health of the human population?
- How did you study for the GRE?
- How would you be a good fit for our school?
- What DON’T you like about the veterinary field?
- Tell us about a time when your morals were questioned. How did you handle it?
- Where do you see yourself in ten years? Twenty years?
- Name three books that you read this year. What impact did each have on you?
- Situational questions (e.g., What would you do if you suspected a client was abusing his/her animals?)
- Describe yourself in four words.
- If you were a part on a bicycle, which part would you be and why?
- Name three people that you admire and tell me why you admire each.
- Name five people you would like to have dinner with, and why.
- What is your life’s “calling”?
- What were the strongest aspects of Mercer University?
- What are the major deficiencies in your undergraduate training?
- Teach me something not related to animals.

Possible Questions for Professional School Applicants to ASK:

- Where are your most of your graduates distributed?
- What subspecialties do most of your graduates go into?
- How do your students score on the Board exams?
- Tell me more about your specialty program in XXX.
- What support staff is available?
- What kind of mentor/advisor system is used?
- Is there administrative training as part of your program? Legal training? Bioethics training?
- Tell me about the labs, cafeteria, library, parking, computers, etc.
- What is the patient populations in the school’s clinic/hospital (only if this information is readily available on the school Web site)?