General Information for Pre-veterinary Students:

Many students interested in pursuing a career in veterinary medicine believe they must major in biology to gain acceptance into medical school. While many individuals applying to veterinary medical school are biology majors, this is not the only (or even preferred) degree plan accepted by veterinary medical schools across the nation. The prerequisite courses required by the majority of veterinary medical schools include:

- General Biology I and II (BIOL196/196L, BIOL 197/197L)
- General Chemistry I and II (CHEM 121/121L, CHEM 122/122L)
- General Physics I and II (PHYS 151/151L, PHYS 152, 152L)
- Organic Chemistry I and II (CHEM 241/241L, CHEM 242/242L)
- Biochemistry I (CHEM 475)
- Genetics (BIOL 300)

Although the curriculum listed above is required by many veterinary medical schools, there is substantial variation from school to school. Furthermore, the above courses do not satisfy the required course work for many schools, but represent only a fraction of the courses required. For example, Colorado State University also requires three credits of Statistics, three credits of English, and twelve Humanities credits. Conversely, the University of California, Davis does not require statistics but does require systemic physiology and twelve credits of English. It is clear that required course work varies substantially between veterinary medical schools and it is critical for the student to carefully investigate all required course work for all programs he or she intends to pursue. The student must make a composite list for all courses and carefully map out a strategy to complete all courses by the end of the junior year. As long as the prerequisite courses required by the veterinary medical school of interest and accompanying laboratories are completed prior to matriculation to medical school, any degree plan is acceptable by most veterinary medical schools. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT INFORMATION FOUND AT THIS WEB SITE IS ONLY INTENDED TO PROVIDE GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ADMISSION AND IT IS THE STUDENT’S RESPONSIBILITY TO ATTAIN SPECIFIC INFORMATION CONCERNING COURSE WORK REQUIRED BY SPECIFIC MEDICAL SCHOOLS. Information concerning specific prerequisites for many schools can be found at http://aavmc.org/vmcas/college_requirement.htm.

Regardless of whether the veterinary medical school requires them or not, it is advisable for students to enroll in Microbiology, Molecular Biology, Immunology, Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy, and Physiology. A proper background in these subjects provides a strong foundation for assimilating the information you will learn in veterinary medical school. The pace and volume of material covered in veterinary medical school are so high that students who have not seen the material before are often overwhelmed and struggle to maintain a high level of academic performance. So now it becomes clear why the many of pre-veterinary students major in biology; preparation for veterinary medical school necessitates enrolling in multiple courses required for the biology major.
Regardless of degree plan pursued or other extenuating circumstances, admission to veterinary medical school is more competitive than any other type of professional school. The national grade-point-average for students gaining acceptance to veterinary medical school in 2004 was a 3.59 while the average GRE score was in excess of 1200 (quantitative and verbal scores). A common misconception held by many pre-veterinary students is that a low performance on either can be offset by excessive service in a veterinary environment (veterinary clinics, zoos, animal shelters, humane societies) or having been employed while in college. The reality of the situation is that all students accepted to veterinary medical school have performed substantial community service and many of them also worked through college. As such, neither circumstance constitutes a mitigating factor for either a low grade-point average or a low GRE. Therefore, it is imperative that students interested in medical school strive to excel academically while in college.

**Getting Ready to Apply to Veterinary Medical School:**

Many students do not realize that there is much more to applying to veterinary medical school than completing coursework and taking the GRE. There are many additional requirements that must be completed prior to applying to medical school. Additional requirements include:

- Community service
- Experience working with animals (veterinary clinics, zoos, animal shelters, humane societies)
- Three letters of reference
- Research experience

It should be noted that the student should take GRE during the spring semester of the junior year. This is essential to ensure timely completion of the application process. Upon completion of the GRE, the student should start the application process by completing the Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS) application form. Links to register for and complete this application are found at [http://aavmc.org/vmcas/vmcas.htm](http://aavmc.org/vmcas/vmcas.htm). In addition to completion of the common application form, many veterinary medical schools also have secondary applications that must be completed. Following an initial screening process, most schools will send secondary applications to qualified students along with instructions for completion. Again this is variable between schools and it is the **STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO OBTAIN AND COMPLETE ALL SECONDARY APPLICATIONS REQUIRED.** Official transcripts must be sent to VMCAS. Applications are not complete without official transcripts from **ALL COLLEGES OR UNIVERSITIES ATTENDED.**

Some veterinary medical schools prefer an evaluation from the Preprofessional Evaluation Committee. To obtain the evaluation, the student should submit letters of reference, a resume summarizing your community service and research experience, and a personal statement to the pre-health committee no later than June 1 during the junior year at which time an interview with the committee should be scheduled. This is necessary to ensure that the pre-health committee has ample time to prepare and submit their evaluation to the school(s) the student is applying to. In the event that the student's university does not have a pre-health committee, the three letters
of recommendation may be submitted directly to the medical school(s) being pursued. It should be noted that most medical schools prefer an evaluation from the pre-health committee if available.

In the event that the student is granted one or more veterinary medical school interviews, it is important for the student to adequately prepare for the interview process. While part of the preparation involves the interview conducted by the pre-health committee (if available), there are additional resources that can greatly assist the student during preparation. The student should familiarize him or herself with the information available on the Association of American Veterinary Medical College website found at http://aavmc.org/index.html. The ambitious student will consult these websites throughout their undergraduate careers as they also contain useful information such as year by year national averages for applying verses accepted GRE scores and GPA’s.

One further cautionary note; the deadline for completion of the application process is early October. It is highly unlikely that any student submitting an application will gain admission into medical school using this deadline as a guideline. Many schools will have already conducted many interviews by this time and schools with rolling admissions will have already sent out acceptance letters. Applications for medical school should be completed during the summer before the senior year, preferably before the end of July. VMCAS open in early June and it is highly advisable for students to complete their application as early as possible in order to maximize the probability of gaining admission to veterinary medical school.

Finally, most students interested in pursuing medical school are not aware of how much it will cost them just to apply. The registration fee for the GRE alone is currently $200 and preparation courses for the GRE cost approximately $1000. Following completion of the GRE, you will encounter VMCAS application fees and secondary application fees for many veterinary medical schools. The primary VMCAS fee combined with the secondary veterinary medical school application fee brings the average cost of application to approximately $135 per school. Considering that most applicants pursue 8-10 schools, you should plan on spending at least $1500 if you do not plan on taking a prep course and $2500 if you plan to enroll in either the Princeton or Kaplan Review courses. Following the application process, you will encounter travel expenses for interviews. Depending on how many interviews you go on, you should plan on spending anywhere from $1500 to $3500 on airfare and possibly hotels. The bottom line is **YOU WILL LIKELY SPEND AT LEAST $3500 JUST APPLYING TO VETERINARY MEDICAL SCHOOL.** If you don’t have the money, you should get a part time job and start saving now!

We realize this is a great deal of information to process, so timelines for completion of all these requirements are provided below. The student should keep in mind that these are intended to be guidelines and it is the student’s responsibility to ensure completion of all requirements.

**Freshman Year:**

Although currently not required for admission, all prospective students should take either the SAT or ACT during the senior year of high school. This is important as the UNLV uses these
scores to place students in the appropriate Math and English courses. In addition to the standardized test, prospective students should take the Chemistry placement test to determine if they are eligible to enroll in CHE121 (General Chemistry I). Information concerning when and where to take the Chemistry placement test can be found at [http://sciences.unlv.edu/Chemistry/policy.htm](http://sciences.unlv.edu/Chemistry/policy.htm). Information concerning taking the Biology placement test is obtained by visiting the Biology Department Office located in WHI 101.

Why take the placement test? Without taking these exams, the student cannot enroll in the General Biology, General Chemistry, or English courses required for admission to any professional school. Instead, the student will spend at least the first semester (if not the entire freshman year) simply satisfying prerequisite course work required to take the prerequisite course work that professional schools require. The end result of failing to take the placement tests is usually the delay of acceptance to medical school by at least a year, unless the student compensates by either taking classes during the summer or having multiple semesters with exceptionally heavy course loads (19 credit hours or more).

Following completion of the placement tests, the student should begin working towards completing the general prerequisites required by the majority of the veterinary medical schools. Information concerning the general prerequisites can be found under the General Pre-veterinary Information heading of this web page. The student would also benefit from researching the specific prerequisites for specific programs. Information regarding specific prerequisites for all veterinary medical schools across the nation can be found at [http://aavmc.org/vmcas/college_requirement.htm](http://aavmc.org/vmcas/college_requirement.htm).

Following completion of the freshman year, the student should plan to acquire the service experience required by medical schools. It is essential to obtain experience in the clinical environment. Volunteering in an emergency room or participation in shadowing programs offered by local hospitals will accomplish this. While clinical service is the most important, other social service is also viewed favorably by medical schools. Such services might include volunteering for your local Audubon Society, Meals on Wheels, or Habitat for Humanity. The goal is to not only show a commitment to medicine, but also to serving your community. Be sure to acquaint yourself with your supervisor, as you will likely request a letter of reference from him or her.

It is prudent for the student to begin gathering information on veterinary medical school reviews and the latest statistics concerning school admissions. This enables the student to make an informed decision concerning which schools to pursue when actually initiating the application process. The student will find information concerning these issues at [http://aavmc.org/students_admissions/statistics.htm](http://aavmc.org/students_admissions/statistics.htm).

Finally, **SAVE MONEY FOR APPLICATION EXPENSES!**

**Sophomore Year:**

The student should complete the majority of the general prerequisites by the end of the sophomore year. More specifically, the student should complete at least General Biology I and II
and Organic Chemistry I and II. Completion of the general prerequisites is essential for enrolling in the upper division science courses required by most veterinary medical schools such as Genetics and Biochemistry. General Chemistry I and II are prerequisites for Organic Chemistry I and II. Organic chemistry is a prerequisite for both Genetics and Biochemistry. As such, it is imperative to finish Organic Chemistry I and II prior to enrolling in these courses. The student cannot expect to accomplish this before completing the junior year if Organic Chemistry I and II are not completed by the end of the sophomore year. Furthermore, while the general prerequisites satisfy the admission requirements, several advanced biological science courses are required to provide the best background for success in veterinary medical school. Ideally, the student will complete General Biology I and II no later than the fall semester of the sophomore year in order to allow as much time as possible to take additional coursework that is germane to the succeeding in veterinary medical school. In the best case scenario, the student should at least enroll in Microbiology (BIO251) by the spring semester of the sophomore year.

In addition to coursework, the ambitious student will also investigate research possibilities with science faculty at UNLV as many veterinary medical schools require such experience. The primary reason for this is research allows one to gain a deeper knowledge and appreciation of science. Furthermore, conducting research as an undergraduate affords you the opportunity to acquaint the student with a faculty member. Assuming the student makes a favorable impression, this allows the student to approach the professor when securing letters of recommendation required for application to veterinary medical school. Finally, conducting research indicates that the student possesses well-developed social skills, particularly if the student presents the data at any kind of a scientific conference. Presentation of data demonstrates the ability to communicate orally and effectively interact with people in a professional environment, two essential qualities in terms of executing duties as a veterinarian. Finally, the student should continue to investigate specific prerequisites for medical schools of interest by using the links available at http://aavmc.org/vmcas/college_requirement.htm.

Following completion of the sophomore year, the student should acquire additional service experience primarily at local veterinary clinics, zoos, animal shelters, and humane societies but also with local service organizations (Meals on Wheels, Habitat for Humanity, Red Cross, Salvation Army, Audubon Society, etc.). During this service, it is essential for the student to familiarize oneself with the intimate details of the service pertaining to veterinary experience. Questions concerning such knowledge may arise during veterinary medical school interviews or interviews with the pre-health committee. Make sure to acquaint yourself with supervisor for your summer volunteer work as you will likely request a letter of reference from him or her.

Finally, SAVE MONEY FOR APPLICATION EXPENSES!

**Junior Year:**

You should complete all general prerequisites during this year. Hopefully, all the biology prerequisites are already satisfied and the student can pursue additional course work that will be beneficial for preparation for success in veterinary medical school. Such courses include Microbiology, Molecular Biology, Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy, and Immunology. If you have not conducted research, now is a good time to do so. As stated before, many veterinary
medical schools view such experience favorably and it affords the opportunity to acquaint the student with a faculty member who may provide a letter of recommendation.

The student should take the GRE no later than April of the spring semester. Many students benefit from one of the preparation courses offered by either Kaplan or the Princeton Review. The student will find links to both services at the bottom of this header. The Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS) open in early June and the organized student will begin the application process as early as possible. The first step is registering with VMCAS. Links to register for and complete these applications are included at the bottom of this header. In addition to completion of the common application form, most veterinary medical schools also require completion of a secondary application. Following an initial screening process, most schools send secondary applications to qualified students along with instructions for completion. The student should note that this process would not begin until the primary application is complete. The primary application process is not complete until the student submits official transcripts from all universities attended.

Some schools prefer a composite evaluation from a Preprofessional Evaluation Committee. As such, obtaining this evaluation constitutes a requirement for completion of the application. Obtaining the evaluation from the pre-health committee is often the rate-limiting step for completion of the application. The student will minimize any delays by scheduling an interview with the pre-health committee as early as possible. To accomplish this, the student requires four components: three letters of recommendation, a personal statement indicating the student’s motivation and intent, a list of medical schools the student intends to apply to, and a resume summarizing all relevant work and volunteer experience. Once assembled, the student should submit these items to the pre-health committee and schedule an interview. The pre-health committee will prepare and submit the evaluation based on the packet and the interview. The sooner this interview is scheduled, the sooner the student’s application is complete. The ambitious student will schedule an interview as soon as the GRE score is available. This requires the student to have the letters of recommendation, personal statement, list of medical schools, and resume by mid-May of the junior year.

During the summer following your junior year, it is advisable to participate in a summer undergraduate research fellowship program. Medical schools and research programs across the nation offer these fellowships. These fellowships are competitive and the student should complete the applications by the end of the fall semester of the junior year. The application usually requires at least two letters of reference in addition to a standard application form for each program pursued. Since these are merit awards, participation in such programs is very prestigious and will dramatically bolster your application to medical school.

Information for the Kaplan Review is found at [http://www.kaptest.com](http://www.kaptest.com)
Information for the Princeton Review is found at [http://www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)
Link to register for [http://www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org)
Links to veterinary medical school web pages: [http://aavmc.org/students_admissions/vet_schools.htm](http://aavmc.org/students_admissions/vet_schools.htm)
Link to VMCAS: [http://aavmc.org/vmcas/vmcas.htm](http://aavmc.org/vmcas/vmcas.htm)
Senior Year:

Veterinary medical schools typically schedule interviews during the fall semester of the senior year. Therefore, a light course schedule for this semester is appropriate. In the event that the student is granted one or more interviews, it is important for the student to adequately prepare for the interview process. While part of the preparation involves the interview conducted by the pre-health committee (if available), additional resources are available to the student that can greatly assist the student during preparation. The student will find information concerning frequently asked questions at [http://aavmc.org/students_admissions/vet_schools.htm](http://aavmc.org/students_admissions/vet_schools.htm). Links found at this site take the student to the websites for any veterinary medical school in the United States. The student should familiarize him or herself with the schools that grant interviews in order to ask intelligent questions during the process. The ambitious student will consult these web sites throughout their undergraduate careers as they also contain useful information such as year by year national averages for applying verses accepted GRE scores and GPA’s.

Concerning the spring semester of the senior year, plan to enroll in courses that would best prepare the student for success in veterinary medical school. If such course work were complete, now would be a good time to take courses for personal enrichment. Plan to relax during the Summer, it may be the last time you get to do so for quite some time!