STATEMENT OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Introduction

The Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree (or DVM) signifies that the holder is a veterinarian prepared for entry into the practice of veterinary medicine with or without further postgraduate study. All Cornell veterinary students must acquire broad scientific knowledge and technical skills necessary for them to function independently in a wide array of clinical, research, and other situations. Candidates for the DVM degree must demonstrate the requisite skills and abilities to satisfy both the overall and course-specific requirements of the curriculum.

Moreover, students must be able to function safely and effectively in multiple environments such as classrooms, laboratories, examinations, large and small animal clinics, and a variety of animal environments. Exposure to chemicals (e.g., medications, disinfectants, anesthetics, tissue fixatives) and pathogens are unavoidable during veterinary school and beyond.

Veterinarians are governed by a code of ethics and professional behavior that forms a social contract between the profession and society. The DVM degree is conferred only after the student has achieved satisfactory mastery of the necessary scientific and clinical knowledge as well as technical skills, while also demonstrating the professionalism, attitudes, and behaviors that are consistent with the professional degree of veterinarian. Throughout the curriculum, students must demonstrate a high level of compassion for all animals and people, excellent interpersonal and communication skills, the highest moral and ethical standards, and a motivation to serve, and they are expected to interact effectively with people of all ethnic, social, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

Essential Requirements

The following information will familiarize applicants and students with the abilities, skills, and attitudes expected to meet the requirements of the curriculum and the profession. The avowed intention of an individual student to practice only a narrow part of clinical medicine, or to pursue a non-clinical career, does not alter the requirement that all veterinary students take and achieve competence in the curriculum required by faculty.

The College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University has an ethical responsibility for the safety of patients and clients with whom students and veterinarians interact and interrelate. Patient and client safety and well-being are therefore essential factors in establishing requirements involving the physical, cognitive, and emotional abilities of candidates for admission, promotion, and graduation.

Candidates for the DVM degree must be able to elicit and receive a variety of inputs from their environment, including tactile, visual, and auditory stimuli, then process these inputs based on their knowledge and experience, and finally make appropriate responses that include both verbal communications and a variety of physical actions.

A candidate for the DVM degree must demonstrate abilities and skills in five areas: observation, communication, motor, intellectual (conceptual, integrative and quantitative), behavioral, and social.

I. Observation: The candidate must be able to observe and make assessments from required demonstrations and experiments, including but not limited to anatomic dissection, microscopic analyses, animal/patient demonstrations, and radiographic and other graphic and diagnostic images. A candidate must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand, and assess findings. S/he must perceive and interpret signs of fear, aggression, and other potentially dangerous behaviors exhibited by various animal species. Observation requires the functional use of vision, hearing, and somatosensation, often in complex situations in veterinary health care environments.

II. Communication: A candidate must be able to elicit information, establish rapport, offer explanations, and to describe changes in behavior, activity, and posture. Communication includes not only speech, but also interpretation of nonverbal cues, and reading and writing in English. The candidate must be able to communicate effectively, efficiently, and in a timely manner with all members of the health care team.

III. Motor Function: A candidate must have sufficient motor skills to use scientific and diagnostic instrumentation, to carry out animal restraint and essential diagnostic procedures, including palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other components of a physical exam on live animals, to perform surgical manipulations, and to conduct dissection and necropsy on cadavers. A candidate must be able to execute motor movements reasonably required to provide general care, surgery, and emergency treatment to patients of all species.

In addition, the candidate must be able to escape physically dangerous contacts with animal patients. Such actions require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium and functional use of the senses of touch, vision, and hearing.

IV. Intellectual (Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative): Problem solving, a critical skill of veterinarians, requires that a candidate be able to obtain, retrieve, analyze, integrate and synthesize iIn addition, a candidate should possess the ability to measure and calculate accurately, to perceive three-dimensional relationships, and to understand the spatial relationships of structures. Candidates must be able to formulate and test hypotheses that enable effective and timely problem-solving in the diagnosis and treatment of patients in a variety of clinical situations. In many cases, these decisions and appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic maneuvers are time-sensitive. Thus, candidates must demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and abilities to process multiple situations simultaneously.

V. Behavioral and Social Attributes: A candidate must be able to fully utilize his or her intellectual abilities, exercise good judgment, promptly complete all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients, and to develop effective relationships with their companions, peers, staff, colleagues,

and with clients. S/he must be able to work effectively as a member of a health-care team, and must be able to tolerate physically and emotionally taxing workloads, to function effectively under stress, and to display flexibility and functionality in the face of uncertainties inherent in assessing patients' health problems. Candidates need to be able to both elicit and convey information to clients and staff in a timely and effective manner, using both oral and written formats. S/he must understand the legal and ethical aspects of the practice of veterinary medicine, and function within both the law and the ethical standards of the veterinary profession. The candidate is expected to demonstrate a high commitment to professional behavior that includes, but is not limited to, demonstration of competence, compassion, integrity, lifelong learning, concern for others, interpersonal skills, collegiality, interest, and promotion of the public good. These personal qualities, abilities, and skills will be assessed during the admission process and throughout the educational program. In addition, applicants and enrolled veterinary medical students must be able to perform the duties of a veterinary student without endangering the lives of patients, caretakers, colleagues and staff, or themselves. In order to complete required courses, students are expected, at a minimum, to work with dogs, cats, horses, and cows. Other species are commonly seen (e.g. rabbits, warm- and cold-blooded small and exotic pet species, llamas and alpacas, etc.). Information from multiple sources efficiently and accurately.