

The New Admissions Process

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The demand for admission to the professional colleges such as medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry and law, plus the vocal concern of alumni and professional associations, has caused the faculties and administrations to take a closer look at the selection process. Iowa State College of Veterinary Medicine has just completed a thorough review and revision of the pre-professional requirements and selection process.

The process of attempting to select the best students from a pool of applicants much larger than the number of spaces available presents many problems. Perhaps the first problem is to define the objectives of the selection process and then develop a plan which may have a chance for success. An oft-quoted objective is to select students who will become "good veterinarians." It would be more reasonable to have as an objective "to select students with the potential to successfully complete the professional curriculum." Hopefully the educational system would then succeed in graduating competent veterinarians.

Once the objective has been defined, the next problem is to examine the validity of the various criteria used in the selection process. A personal interview has long been the most frequently used instrument in the evaluation of an applicant to a professional school. The interview allows an admissions committee to verify and clarify information obtained about the applicant from the application form and other sources. An interview may be used to detect gross deficiencies in personality and emotional stability. It may also be used to promote good public relations between professional schools and parents, applicants,

professional organizations, state legislatures, and future applicants.

Great doubt exists as to the validity of the interview in selecting candidates for professional schools. Zubin states, "While standardized tests, psychophysical techniques, and psychological methods have become more and more sophisticated, the interview has remained a vague, global assessment device—a catch basin for the residue of behavior that filters through the network of objective measures."¹ Kelly in *A Critique of the Interview* stated, "In each instance where we have put the interview to a test and collected data in a fashion whereby we could determine whether it added anything to the accuracy of the predication of performance without benefit of the interview, we have come up with the conclusion that it is not worth the cost. All evidence suggests that it gives a great deal of satisfaction to the persons who use it: they usually feel good about it, but we have not been able to demonstrate in any of those investigations the utility of the interview. In view of its cost in terms of professional time, our findings raise serious doubt whether it can be defended as an economical procedure."²

In comparative analysis of the validity of pre-admissions information at colleges of veterinary medicine the undergraduate performance and Veterinary Aptitude Test (VAT) scores are consistently related to grade point attained in veterinary school, while biographical information, interview assessments, recommendation ratings, and admissions committee evaluations tended to show low relationships.

In view of the published evidence on selection criteria and in consideration of the economics of using large amounts of faculty time for admissions work, major changes were

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made in the selection process. Personal interviews have been discontinued and candidates are selected on a point system using the following criteria in awarding points:

I. Academic Performance	50 points
II. Veterinary Aptitude Test	25 points
III. Evaluation Forms	2 points
IV. General Achievement	18 points
V. Committee Evaluation of Records	5 points
Total Maximum	100 points

I. Academic Performance

Cumulative grade point average (GPA) is added to required course GPA then multiplied by a factor of 6.25. Thus, if a candidate had a perfect GPA, 50 points would be awarded.

II. Veterinary Aptitude Test

The VAT measures abilities in the following five areas:

- A. Reading Comprehension—ability to read and understand science-oriented materials written in text-book style.
- B. Quantitative Ability—ability to reason through and understand quantitative concepts and relationships.
- C. Biology—principles and concepts from elementary college biology courses.
- D. Chemistry—concepts and problems from elementary college chemistry courses including organic and inorganic chemistry.
- E. Study-Reading—ability to read, organize, analyze, and remember unfamiliar information.

The VAT is the only pre-admission requirement that measures the abilities of all the applicants under identical conditions. Therefore, the score achieved on the VAT should partially compensate for differences in grading standards at the various colleges where the pre-veterinary work is taken. Published data indicate that the VAT score has good validity in predicting performance in the professional curriculum.^{3,4,5} In the new selection process, the VAT score constitutes 25 percent of the total points awarded.

III. Evaluation Forms

Applicants are required to have three people submit a personal evaluation of the candidate. The candidate is awarded two points toward admission if three evaluations are received. These evaluations are reviewed by the selection committee and can influence the awarding of points under Item V, Committee Evaluation of Records.

IV. General Achievement

In the general achievement area, points are awarded for things that tend to indicate motivation, maturity, goal attainment, and leadership. This particular area of the selection criteria provides a student an opportunity to compensate for a slow start in college. Applicants with more than two years of pre-veterinary work will be favored by these criteria; however, two-year pre-veterinary students who performed well from the beginning will still be competitive.

- A. Degree(s)
 - B.S.—(3 points)
 - M.S. or Ph.D. (2 points)
- B. Second or subsequent application (1 point)
- C. Peace Corps, Vista, Military or similar service (1 point)
- D. Full-time employment, nine months or more continuously outside school (1 point)
- E. Employment while in college (1-2 points awarded depending on hours worked)
- F. Extracurricular and/or community activities subsequent to high school graduation (0.5-2 points)
- G. Elected or volunteer offices subsequent to high school graduation (0.5-2 points)
- H. Outstanding achievement awarded by committee consensus (1 point)
- I. Special circumstances:

To compensate for any social, cultural, or economic disadvantage which an applicant might have. Points awarded after thorough review and consideration by entire committee (1-3 points)

V. Committee evaluation of record

After an overall review of the records,

0-5 points may be added to an applicant's total score.

- VI. The committee reserves the right to recommend denial or admission of an applicant regardless of total points scored.

Through the use of computer analysis, each of the criterion used in the selection approcess will be analyzed for validity.

Preliminary results from records of students completing one quarter of the professional curriculum indicate that the number of years in pre-veterinary work, cumulative GPA, and VAT are all valid criteria for selecting veterinary students. As a bank of data is accumulated, correlation studies will be run to maximize the validity of selection criteria. The admissions committee is cognizant of the fact that many factors which cannot be quantitated may influence the success or failure of individual students. However, the general consensus is that the system being used is as fair and unbiased as possible while selecting highly qualified candidates.

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