COMPUTER PLACEMENT FOR GRADUATING SENIORS

Jim Altmaier*

Start a conversation with a practitioner and the subject of the surplus of veterinarians, particularly new graduates, is sure to come up. Veterinary schools around the country have responded to surveys showing dwindling new job openings and pressure from state veterinary medical associations by curtailing enrollment numbers. Vet students are bombarded with speeches and presentations explaining all the careers that exist for them outside of traditional practice. But the fact is, most students want to practice. They have chosen this course of study based on their observations of veterinarians in practice back home, and it has led them to desire to do that kind of work. So what is the future plight of new graduates? Are they doomed to unemployment or are they to engage in a salary war, the lowest bidder getting the job? The SCAVMA chapter at Iowa State University has a new approach to answer the needs of its new graduates.

The theory is that the job market is a competitive arena and we need to market our graduates more aggressively. We need to actively seek out job openings for our graduates and guide the seniors into them. We need to take advantage of ISU's fine reputation and of the large number of past ISU graduates. We need to offer the seniors a mechanism by which they can be actively engaged in job searching even while on preceptorships. We need to give the practitioners seeking new graduates positive feedback from their inquiries. We need to give practitioners a system that is easy to access and that responds to their inquiries with immediate suitable candidates for their job opening. SCAVMA has created and implemented a system that meets all of the above requirements.

Utilizing computer technology SCAVMA has developed a low cost system to aid both the graduating senior and the practitioner. This January over 4,000 questionnaires and letters explaining the system will be mailed out to practitioners. Those practitioners that have a job opening can return the questionnaire and the data will be entered into a computer. The computer will be filled with data from our seniors. A matching program will be run and a listing of all seniors interested in the job opening and a short autobiography of each senior will be generated and sent to the practitioner. Concurrently, the computer will print out a notice to each senior who gets matched. Information from the practitioners questionnaire that was received but not used in the matching process will be available for the seniors' perusal. Direct contact between the two parties can be initiated by either party. SCAVMA sees this project as a service to the practitioner. It will be a tremendous time saver for the practitioner in many ways including cutting down on interviews with seniors who really aren't interested in that particular opening. It will also give immediate feedback to the practitioner so that he/she will have a quick overview of the possibilities coming from the newly graduating class. For the senior, this program should bring in a greater quantity of job openings and insure a maintenance of high quality job openings for ISU graduates. It will sort out the specific openings that are of interest to each individual. It will also be an aid for the senior while he/she is out on a preceptorship.

Any business course on efficiency or management will expound the necessity of the proper handling of information in today's complex and fast-paced world. ISU's SCAVMA chapter feels it is meeting that necessity and is writing a new page in the changing and demanding veterinarian job market of the eighties.

*Mr. Altmaier is a second-year student in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University.