

## Tips for Internship Applications

### General

- Read the instructions for the Veterinary Internship and Residency Matching Program ([www.VIRMP.org](http://www.VIRMP.org))
- Read the instructions again
  - Follow instructions exactly !
- Completed applications are due early in December,
  - Be sure your COMPLETED application is submitted by this date.
- Request transcripts early. Give letter-writers plenty of time to construct the best letter that they can write (give them at least 3 weeks, ideally at least 1 month before the due date).
- Rank lists are confidential – Do not “pry” in an attempt to figure out where you might be ranked by the institution. They also should not ask you where you are ranking them. If they do as, it's ok to say, "I'll be ranking you highly" (if that's true). Never tell them you're ranking them number one if you're not.
- Be certain to include or highlight any activities during school or outside of school that help to distinguish you from the many other candidates vying for your internship slot. Include any research experience, extra-curricular activities or memberships, any leadership roles, and prior job experiences that gives you unique skill sets that many other veterinary students might lack. Your prior veterinary work experiences are particularly important for most internship committees.
- For factors involved in selecting interns, read the article by Davidson HJ, Selection methods and criteria for choosing veterinary interns. JAVMA 2005; 227:55-60. Factors which negatively impact your application include letters of recommendations stating that the candidate is “below average” or even “average”, failure to include a letter from a professor at your University, failure to include a letter from a diplomate of a specialty college, a poorly written letter of intent, and a low GPA. The factors which are judged to have high importance during the evaluation of your application include letters of recommendation (most important factor!), class rank, resume or CV, and GPA. The letter of intent and university transcripts were given a much lower importance ranking. Letters of recommendation which include statements that the candidate has had ‘difficulties working with technicians or house staff’ or any other statements of interactive or interpersonal difficulties are major red flags and are often cause for a “low rank” or “no rank” decision. The “ability to play well with others” will be the single most important factor that people are interested in learning about if they have a conversation with anyone at your institution.
- Rank order lists are due to VIRMP in January (date varies slightly each year).

### Letter of Intent

- This letter will be evaluated to determine whether you can construct a well written and well-structured letter. Be certain to have at least one (and maybe 2) other people read your letter and give you feedback and recommendations for revisions. Be certain to state your goal or goals so that it can be determined whether these are realistic and whether the institution can reasonably meet your goals. Consider including a statement indicating that you recognize the demands of the internship and are dedicated to fulfilling these requirements. Try to be succinct and get all your thoughts onto a single sheet of paper. Consider explaining how your prior practical experiences will allow you to bring certain skills to the institution. You might wonder

whether to mention an interest in a residency or a further degree program (masters degree or PhD) – only if that is true. In general, the site evaluating your application will want to know whether they can fulfill your goals and desires. It is probably in everyone's best interest if you state your true future interest in general practice, residency, further training towards another degree, teaching at a university, or whatever your ultimate goals might include.

### **Letters of Recommendation**

- A key feature of the letters of recommendation is that the letter writer must be able to write a GOOD (excellent) letter of recommendation.
- Who should write your letters? A well known, well respected faculty member who is active in the field and is known by many members of the profession is an ideal letter writer. A junior faculty member with less name recognition is also a good choice, but letters from faculty members who are board certified in their field generally carry greater strength than letters from individuals who have not yet attained board certification. Letters from residents and interns and letters from veterinarians in general practice may be very strong letters on paper, but some individuals on the intern/residency selection committee will give these letters less weight. Individuals who have ties to the institution may carry greater strength – for example, a letter from a resident who excelled during their internship at XYZ university/institution may be looked upon favorably in your application to XYZ institution, but will carry less weight to other institutions/universities.
- However, it is just as important that the person writing your letter writes you a GOOD letter of recommendation. Therefore, consider which clinicians you have worked with on your clinical rotations who spent enough time with you to know you and your skills. The number of superlatives in the letter is an important factor in the strength of the letter. Do not be afraid to ask the potential letter writer whether they feel familiar enough with your performance and abilities to be able to write a GOOD letter of recommendation that would be in STRONG support of your application. If not, it may be a good idea to get a letter from someone else – it's better to have a strong letter from a more junior faculty member than a wishy-washy letter from someone famous!
- Give your CV, letter of intent, GPA and class rank, and as much supplemental information as possible to the people who are going to write a letter of recommendation for you as this will improve the quality of the letter. Be certain to give the letter writer PLENTY of time to construct your letter – late requests for letters of recommendation may be interpreted as “poor planning” on the part of the applicant and might negatively affect the quality of the subsequent letter.

### **Ranking Internship Programs:**

There are many factors to consider about internships and the factors of greatest importance will vary among individuals. However, some factors that you might consider in the decision-making process include:

Information you can obtain from VIRMP website ([www.virmp.org](http://www.virmp.org)) or hospital's website

1. Academic versus private practice
2. Number of interns per year
3. Contact person
4. Salary
5. Start/end dates of internship

6. Hospital caseload
7. Faculty in direct support of internship program
8. Number of specialists in each area (and whether full time or part time/consultant)
9. Prerequisites (eg, state license, etc)
10. Requirements for application (most are VIRMP application, transcript, personal statement, CV, and letters of reference but read carefully)
11. Do interns have primary case responsibility?
12. Do interns have an assigned mentor and/or receive performance evaluations?
13. Are their teaching rounds?
14. Can interns attend CE courses?
15. Are interns required to present formal seminars?
16. Do interns participate in journal club?
17. Do interns have 24-hour access to library and computer facilities?
18. Are interns provided with a computer to use?
19. Do interns perform surgery?
20. Does the practice have 24-hour care?
21. What percentage of time does the intern spend on emergency duty?
22. Does the practice employ formally trained veterinary technicians?
23. Do interns have access to the following equipment, either on-site or outsourced: blood pressure monitoring, digital radiography, endoscopy, bone plating equipment, echocardiography, MRI, CT scan, electrocardiography, ultrasound

#### Information from current/past interns

1. What is a typical day like as an intern?
2. Who is available to help interns (on by your self? specialists available by phone? residents or other doctors on with you?)
3. How many interns are on at a time? How often are you the only doctor in the building?
4. How much overlap is there with previous intern class?
5. Can interns get time off for interviews (jobs or match)?
6. Are interns' days off fully days off (no on-call or responsibility to the hospital or coming in to SOAP patients or for rounds?)
7. Do interns keep primary case responsibility or do you transfer to other services/interns?
8. Do interns perform surgery? ultrasound? endoscopy?

#### Information from internship director

1. Is health care offered?
2. For smaller internships: How many years has the practice had an internship program?
3. What do most of former interns do after the internship (and what is success in getting residencies if that is one of your goals)?
4. Can interns do elective/outside rotations if they have an interest in a particular specialty?