Use of innovation and diverse experiences to enhance veterinary clinical training

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Extensive clinical skills training prepares students for a hands-on future

A commitment to educating confident, competent, and career-ready veterinarians drives the curriculum at Lincoln Memorial University’s Richard A. Gillespie College of Veterinary Medicine (LMU-CVM). The college’s clinical skills program spans students’ first 6 semesters and provides hands-on skills practice using models, cadavers, and live animals. LMU-CVM is a leader in creating and validating innovative models for veterinary training, including advanced skill models for ultrasound and endoscopy. Educational research performed by LMU-CVM’s Center for Innovation in Veterinary Education and Technology underpins training and assessment methods. Upon completion of the clinical skills program, students have over 285 hours of hands-on skills practice, including performing 3 companion animal spay/neuter surgeries by the end of their third year. Student competence is regularly assessed using systematic skills-based assessments to ensure that all students meet the college’s clinical skills standards.

Distributed clinical training teaches students to practice medicine in diverse settings

A distributive clinical year curriculum relies on workplace-based training in multiple high-quality practices and institutions, including diagnostic pathology laboratories, well-resourced animal shelters, and research institutions. Most students are in a rotation alone or with only 1 other student, so they work hand-in-hand with practicing veterinarians to improve their clinical reasoning and hands-on clinical skills, including surgical skills. Training in these diverse clinical environments teaches students to provide quality care in a real-world setting, including those where resources are limited. Students graduating from a distributed program are well-prepared to practice medicine within common constraints placed on veterinarians in a variety of workplaces today.

New programs commit to further improvements for veterinary technicians and veterinarians

A shortage of veterinarians and veterinary technicians is negatively impacting patient care nationally. LMU-CVM has answered the call of the veterinary profession and society to produce more veterinarians by expanding class size from 125 to 225 through the addition of a spring-starting cohort. In time, this initiative will make a positive impact in the acute veterinarian shortage.

LMU-CVM also started the country’s first masters-level program for qualified credentialed veterinary technicians, the Master of Veterinary Clinical Care. This program provides advanced training to existing technicians, creating the potential for a career ladder similar to what exists for human nurses. A pathway for career advancement may entice technicians to stay in their profession, working with veterinarians to provide essential patient care.

Finally, LMU-CVM has developed an undergraduate-to-professional degree path aimed at producing much needed equine veterinarians. The Equine Veterinary Education Program produces career-ready equine veterinarians after 6.5 years of college. The first 5 semesters are spent completing an associate degree, preparing for veterinary college, and participating in equine internships in the summer. In the DVM program, students complete equine-focused electives, summer internships at equine practices, and 28 weeks of clinical rotations in equine medicine and surgery.

LMU-CVM is committed to serving the veterinary profession and society by addressing the veterinarian workforce shortage, providing targeted training for veterinary technicians, and producing career-ready veterinarians with real-world clinical experience.