

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTION OF AN EXTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

1. You should seek to select an experience that immediately following, and even years later, will cause you to say, "My externship was a great supplement to my veterinary education at Purdue."
2. If possible, you should plan to visit the potential experience site to become somewhat familiar with the people with whom you will be working. Information to seek would include:
 - Has the unit had Purdue veterinary externs previously and was it a positive experience? *(Reports on past externships are on file in the Student Services Center. You should plan to review these reports, and you may wish to discuss the experience with past externs.)*
 - As an extern, in your opinion would you be considered as an asset or a burden to the unit?
 - Who will be your mentor(s) and is he/she (they) willing to spend time to interact with you?
 - What are the credentials of your potential mentor(s) including educational background, professional experience and special training, or professional interest and commitment to continuing education?
 - Is/are your potential mentor(s) known as an honest, fair, responsible and ethical veterinarian(s)?
 - Will you be allowed to participate in a variety of professional activities? In general, how much hands-on professional experience will be possible? Will professional supervision be available to you during these activities?
 - Is the staff friendly and accepting of an extern?
 - Will you be challenged intellectually in this experience?
 - Will there be non-professional duties expected of you such as cage-cleaning or other husbandry activities?
 - What will be your expected working hours? What will be your expected obligation for emergency duties?
 - What will be your compensation?

- Would you predict that your mentor(s) would be willing to provide you with a thoughtful and supportive letter of reference?
3. You should determine whether the potential externship site is operated in an up-to-date and ethical manner. For example, are medical, surgical and diagnostic procedures, and equipment adequate and modern? Are clients treated fairly? These issues should be discussed with your faculty advisor or an SVM faculty member who knows the mentor/practice.

It is recommended that you avoid doing your externship with a veterinarian who is a member of your family. However, if you do schedule your externship at a location with a family member, that veterinarian may not be your mentor or complete your evaluation.

4. You should gain an appreciation for the expected caseload of the potential externship site at the time of year when you expect to be there. Does the distribution of cases by species, primary care vs. referral cases, medical vs. surgical cases, fit with your career goals? Remember that a caseload that is too large, as well as too small, may detract from your learning experience.
5. In general, you should not arrange an externship in an experience where you have worked or observed previously. It is better to select a new setting that will broaden your veterinary experience by exposure to new approaches, equipment and working environment and compliment your overall career plans. Selecting an experience in a multi-veterinarian unit offers the advantage of exposure to various professional approaches and the expectation of an adequate steady flow of cases.
6. Your externship is intended to provide you a working experience in the "real world" of veterinary medicine. You should seek to select an experience that will immerse you in all aspects of professional activity including exposure to practice management, business aspects such as fees and costs, client relations, professional and ethical behavior, and computerization of the operation. Non-practice externships can also provide you with exposure to the business aspects of the organization.