

Ashley Shaw - Founders Scholarship Application Essay

I am a rising third-year student at the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine. My areas of interest lie in the overlapping fields of Nutrition, Integrative Medicine, and Rehabilitation Therapy. I believe that these disciplines are deeply connected and each builds upon the others. Although there are currently no complementary medicine courses offered as part of our core or elective curriculum, my passion for alternatives to Western veterinary medicine was sparked before I even applied to vet school when my mentor introduced me to acupuncture and herbal modalities. She showed me that Western medicine is not the only answer and, because each animal is unique, we are best able to serve our patients when we can offer as many treatment options as possible.

Once I entered vet school and realized that, if I wanted exposure to complementary modalities, I would have to create those opportunities, I made it my goal to join the school's SAHVMA chapter executive board. In the past year as President-elect, I helped organize equine and small-animal acupuncture wet labs, fund trips to a specialized rehabilitation facility in Atlanta, arrange for guest speakers to introduce the general student body to various applications of holistic medicine, and set up a monthly shadowing opportunity with the CCRP at the UGA Veterinary Teaching Hospital. In the year to come, I plan to continue and expand upon these opportunities so that the UGA SAHVMA chapter can be a resource for any student curious about incorporating holistic medicine into their practice.

While I hold several leadership roles within the UGA vet school, being President of the Holistic Club is the one that most excites me because it is a position through which I can have a significant impact on student awareness of integrative veterinary medicine. I would love to become more involved in that world, and I am eager to not only continue learning about developments in the field, but to be an active part of the process. In that spirit, I conducted research last summer on a commercially available herbal supplement, proving that it had a significant decrease in calcium oxalate supersaturation and may be beneficial for managing calcium oxalate uroliths in dogs. I took this research to the National Veterinary Scholars Symposium at the NIH, won an Award of Excellence for my poster on it at the Science of Veterinary Medicine Symposium at UGA, and presented these findings at the 2018 ACVIM conference.

Through my leadership role in the Holistic Club and related extracurricular activities, I hope to put myself in the best position possible to enter the profession as a well-rounded veterinarian who can advance an increasingly widely embraced modality even further. My immediate goal is to get my CVA certification before I graduate, and I would love to add herbal education to my toolbox. This scholarship would be a tremendous help towards making that dream a reality, amplifying the impact I can make on the clients and other practitioners I connect with on a daily basis and ultimately the field of veterinary medicine as a whole.