Tools for Preparing Veterinary Technicians for College Success

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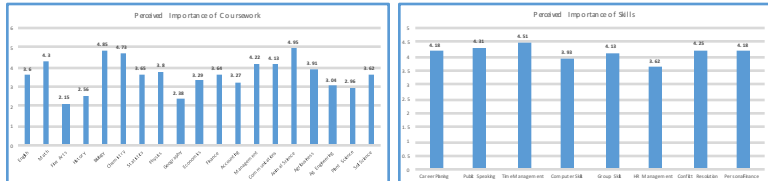
ABSTRACT

Programs requiring a licensing exam must prepare students in a step by step process that requires a combination of academic preparation for the licensing exam and professional mentoring for career success. Developing technical skills required by the American Veterinary Medical Association must begin at the freshman level. Innovative programs such as first year initiative programs can help students succeed in college, preparation for the national exam, and career success through high impact learning objectives and mentoring. Veterinary technology students have been enrolled in a first year initiative class the first semester of college to help acclimate them to the profession. A critical part of the first year initiative is mentoring students on the importance of exam preparation, soft and technical skill development and how each fit into the overall career path. Students are engaged in learning exercises that include professional speakers, reflection assignments, job shadowing and one on one meetings with faculty. Students are then assessed to determine their understanding of what is expected of them in order to be successful. Results of the 2016 class revealed that student perceptions of the industry and job expectations are changed as a result of the program. Soft skills such as time management, group skills, and conflict resolution were all improved after completing the experience. Students rated the importance of technical skills higher than soft skill development. As a result, the program has adapted to include additional high impact experiences to reinforce soft skill development and how they relate to industry success.
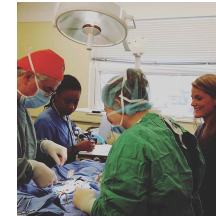
Start With the End in Mind: A Successful Graduate Prepared to Pass the National Exam

Capstone course with national board prep → Online prep course entitled Vt Tech Prep (faculty monitor student access) → Review sessions with faculty → Use of national exam questions are routine → Field trips → Access to Career Planning and Development Center. → Internship → TVMA and TVTA state conferences → Faculty mentor visits during internship experience → Comprehensive lab notebook for review

Student Perceptions of Soft and Technical Skills

Very Important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Not Necessary
5	4	3	2	1

High Impact Activities: Lab Experiences, Mock Client Interviews, Animal Assessment and Restraint, Oral Questions, Professional Speakers, Externship, Disaster Animal Response Team, Mock job interviews

Hard Skills
- Hard science skills tend to focus on knowledge attainment with a quantitative focus.

Soft Skills
- Areas such as interpersonal skills, for instance, communication (both speaking and listening), teamwork skills, and the ability to understand circumstances.

Application to Vet Tech Programs
The proper method for giving a cat a shot would be considered to be a technical skill, while being able to talk with the cat's owner and comfort them through the process would be a soft skill.

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2017 NACTA Conference

Purdue University June 28, 2017

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