



Business and Communication – DVM Curriculum

Effective communication is essential to the practice of high-quality veterinary medicine

New DVM Curriculum's Seven Guiding Principles

All seven principles are embraced by the Doctoring course

1-The curriculum emphasizes self-directed learning rather than teaching

Self-directed learning is introduced during the first two weeks of school and continued throughout the Doctoring course. A “learning facilitator” approach is used.

2-Material is delivered in context with basic and clinical material woven longitudinally

The Doctoring course is offered in all four years of the DVM curriculum. Where feasible, material is delivered in context by coordinating medical case information used in simulated client labs with concurrent medical blocks.

3-The curriculum emphasizes what an entry-level vet should know/be able to do

Students are taught:

- *client and professional communications
- *basic business practices
- *personal financial management skills.

The faculty at the School of Veterinary Medicine have increased communication and business instruction in order to support our veterinary graduates as they enter practice or pursue other career opportunities. These curriculum offerings are coordinated under our “Doctoring” course, which covers a broad range of veterinary practice and professional career building skills. The School’s new DVM curriculum is built upon key learning outcomes – the Doctoring course particularly emphasizes:

Communication	Business Management
Leadership & Team Building	Professionalism
Critical Thinking	Mental Well-Being

Business and Communication Course Content

Communication skills learned during the first and second year are reinforced and built upon in the third and fourth years. Rather than using traditional didactic lectures, which have been shown to be relatively ineffective in communication skill training, the course emphasizes use of simulated client labs where students are actively engaged in role playing with professional actors. The School has made a significant financial investment in outfitting rooms for these laboratory sessions.

Professional Skills Content - First year

- Orientation week – A dynamic introduction to the veterinary school experience including experiential team-building activities. Mini lectures on various Doctoring topics, personality assessment
- Prologue week 2 – Introduction to case learning, communication, mental well-being, and financial realities.
- CV development and career panel, stress management, communication, history taking, critical thinking, intro to role playing and simulated clients

Professional Skills Content - Second year

- Students are given real-life case scenarios and role play as doctors with professional actors as clients in simulated client labs. Experienced DVMs serve as mentors, coaching small groups. Students review video recordings of their performance.

4-The curriculum sets a standard for excellence and competence in vet med using scientific and evidence-based methods

Instructors use real practice examples, role playing and situations for learning client communications and standard business practices and expectations.

5-Material is presented to enable students to use critical thinking and problem solving skills throughout the curriculum

Critical thinking is learned and built upon in the Doctoring course through communication coaching sessions, small group analysis of business cases and team based learning sessions.

6-The curriculum is flexible enough to allow for areas of emphasis as well as the ability to adapt to future professional needs

The curriculum, including communication and business practices, is under constant refinement to ensure current information and best practices are used in the course content.

7-The curriculum engenders excitement for learning that lasts a lifetime.

Through interactive approaches, hands-on activities, role playing, and different instructors, we strive to engender enthusiasm for new professional knowledge/skills

- Other topics covered include non-verbal communication, euthanasia, client diversity, critical thinking, money discussions, medical errors, and compassion fatigue.



Professional Skills Content - Third year

- Students interact with “challenging clients” portrayed by professional actors in simulated client labs. Clients may be angry, financially challenged, skeptical, grieving, and/or “runaway.” Experienced DVMs serve as mentors, coaching small groups. Students review video recordings of their performance.
- Introduction to the business of veterinary practice
- Each student completes a “Personal Business Plan” that includes:
 - Realistic review of opportunities and salary in their area of interest
 - Personal SWOT analysis
 - Debt management plan
 - Budget projections, including taxes and living expenses

Professional Skills Content - Fourth year

- All students entering the clinical year complete an introductory business course designed to provide a basic understanding and entry-level skills in veterinary business management. This course has been completely revised and is now taught in a small group, case-based, MBA style learning format.
- Simulated clients with actors and video – working with challenging clients and communicating effectively with colleagues.
- Students rotating through the Community Medicine service attend once-weekly “communication rounds” to refresh principles of professional communications and discuss practical challenges.
- Each of these students is videotaped interfacing with a “real” client. Recordings are reviewed one-on-one with experienced DVM mentor(s) providing constructive feedback.



- Mock salary negotiation and mock interview exercises
- Debt management workshop

“All the practice interactions with clients, while stressful, were incredibly helpful in making me feel more prepared for clinics (and the rest of my career).”

...Senior Student