

Swine Veterinary Internship Program: Enhancing the Value of the Veterinary Internship

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Summary and Implications

The Swine Veterinary Internship Program (SVIP) at Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine (ISU CVM) was developed and implemented to provide students an opportunity to obtain swine specific skills and knowledge that complements the veterinary curriculum early in their veterinary education, to learn how to conduct field research, and communicate the results in written and oral forms. The expertise obtained from the program makes students more attractive to future employers and more likely to exceed in their careers.

Introduction

As veterinary medicine becomes more specialized by species interests, the challenge of providing students with opportunities to acquire the specific skills and knowledge they will need upon graduation becomes increasingly difficult. ISU CVM values SVIP as an opportunity for students to acquire the hands on experience that they may not gain in the classroom. It accomplishes this by a structured training programming, networking opportunities with fellow students from multiple universities and with practicing swine veterinarians, and opportunities to participate in field trials, scientific writing and presentation of their projects.

Description of Program

Eligible students are either currently enrolled, recently accepted or demonstrate strong evidence that they will soon apply to an accredited North America veterinary medicine program. Students meeting the eligibility requirements with an interest in practicing swine production medicine are recruited to participate in SVIP.

The internship program lasts 12 weeks and begins with 12 days of structured training. Following completion of the training, some students spend most of the summer with a single veterinary practice or swine production system; others are based in one location but travel from one location

to another during the summer. The activities for each student vary greatly but the major activities include design of diagnostic sampling strategies and collection of samples; assisting with study design and implementation; collecting and analyzing diagnostic, production and financial data; and completing PADRAP risk assessments.

All interns are required to complete a research project and submit an abstract for the American Association of Swine Veterinarian's (AASV) student competition. Veterinary students whose papers are selected for oral or poster presentation also compete for one of several veterinary student scholarships awarded through the AASV Foundation. The oral presentations and posters are judged to determine the amount of the scholarship awarded. Awards range from \$200-\$5000.

Discussion

The benefits SVIP provides for students include 1) obtaining swine specific skills and knowledge that complements the veterinary curriculum early in their veterinary education, 2) learning how to conduct field research, and communicate the results in written and oral forms 3) networking with fellow students from multiple universities and with future colleagues. Future plans for SVIP include maintaining the number of internships at current levels but improving the delivery of information during the training sessions and expanding the opportunities available.

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