

“Wait, I’m the professor now?”

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Abstract

This session will cover the strategic integration of distributive model veterinary students into your practice. Main topics for discussion will cover logistics of hosting students, day-to-day scheduling tips and clinical teaching. Attendees will be provided resources to take back into their clinics and implement immediately.

Key words: distributive model, clinical teaching

Today, there are 32 schools of veterinary medicine (SVM) that are accredited by the AVMA’s Council on Education (COE) or have a pending accreditation status. There has been a recent increase in the number of SVMs that are choosing to operate under a distributive model instead of the traditional model that incorporates an onsite teaching hospital. The principal difference of the distributive model is the reliance on third-party teaching sites for the entirety of the final clinical portion of the curriculum. Students will spend the first two to three years of the curriculum on the didactic portion, and then at least 12 months traveling to private practices in typically four-week intervals for their clinical rotations. Many practitioners have raised concerns about the shift in burden of clinical teaching from the institution to the private practices and the consistency of educational experiences.

Logistically, there are a number of points to consider when you are hosting students from distributive models. These students are typically at your practice for longer period of times, and you may have multiple students at a time. They will be traveling for months on end, and only able to bring what they can fit in their vehicle. They may or may not have pets that need to accompany them. Besides these considerations, the AVMA COE will have potentially have to inspect your clinic before students arrive. Due to the duration of rotations and the nature of these nomad students, having on-site or provided off-site housing simplifies many concerns. This allows students to check in/out at any time that you deem acceptable, provides welcome amenities and lessens their financial burden of travel. Other items to consider are orientation documents and a frequently asked question sheet that can be sent to students two weeks in advanced. Practices should have established policies for pets, visitors to housing, and cleaning in place. It is also helpful to have a skeleton schedule designed. This can consist of daily and week to week throughout the rotation. Having scheduled time for didactic education and for self-study is important to ensure that students can complete their tasks within your clinical schedule. Potentially the most important preparation to make in case of an emergency is having contact information on file for the student’s family and your point-of-contact with the university.

Classic externships are two-to-three weeks in length and have the flexibility to allow students to focus on whatever opportunities are most important to them. Distributive models will assign each third-party teaching site to one or more rotations to be filled at that location. Clinical rotations come with a specific focus and teaching objectives to be achieved during that four-week interval. The burden of providing a well-rounded, consistent educational experience to multiple students throughout the year is nearly impossible in a private practice setting. Seasonality of herd work is also a consideration when it comes to hosting large animal rotations. However, there are strategies that can be used to supplement clinical case load and to teach students within the pace of your practice. At the beginning of each rotation, students should be assigned a case presentation to be presented before the end. They should also be instructed as to your preferred method of verbal case presentation in order to expedite these between appointments. At least once a week, it is highly valuable to have scheduled time for topic rounds, journal article discussion, hypothetical scenarios or any other research topic assigned during the previous days or week. On a daily basis, students should not be expected to see and workup every case that is on the schedule. They should pick a handful to SOAP and verbally present to you, while the others they can participate in a more passive manner in order to maintain efficiency. Daily self-study time should be utilized to either take care of assignments from the university or supplement the clinics caseload with literature reviews or online CE modules. Expectations can and should be adjusted to each student’s capability and skill level.

Our practice has spent years hosting and developing our student program. The addition of distributive model students created unique challenges, but the further structure that it required, has only strengthened our teaching program and minimized the burden of personalizing the rotation for each individual student while still maintaining a consistent educational experience. We also strongly believe that given appropriate preparations, any practice can streamline the integration of these students into their clinics.

