

Involving veterinary technology students in community veterinary clinics

A service-learning approach

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Why is service-learning important?

- LMU is committed to enriching the lives of the people of the Appalachian region
- In 1863 President Lincoln suggested that the people of the Cumberland Gap region should have their loyalty rewarded with educational opportunities
- Education through service opportunities is encouraged and supported



The mission and purpose of LMU

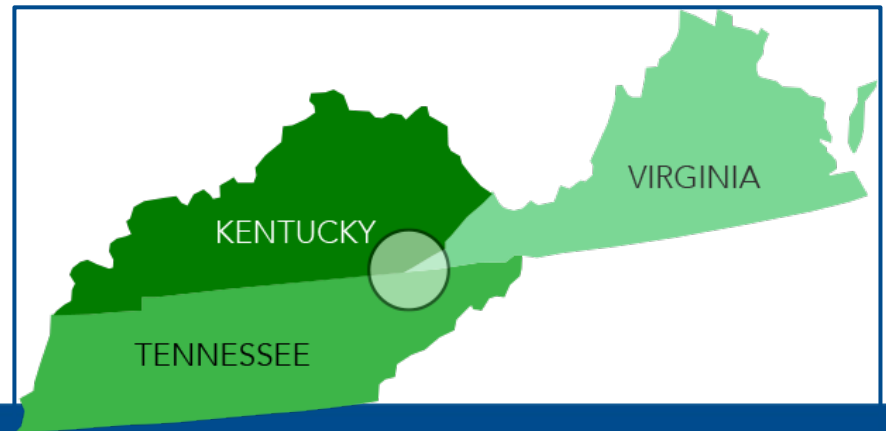
- While primarily committed to teaching, the University supports research and service.
- ...graduates must be able to communicate clearly and effectively...
- ...(graduates) must have an appreciable depth of learning in a field of knowledge...
- ...(graduates) must be able to exercise informed judgements.

Veterinary Technology at LMU

- 1985 – program founded
- 1987 – initial accreditation granted; first class graduated
- 1993 – program fully accredited
- 2004 – partnership with Remote Area Medical (RAM)
- The program also works with local shelters, rescues, and foster networks

The LMU community

- The tri-state area comprised of 3 counties
 - Lee County, VA
 - Bell County, KY
 - Claiborne County, TN
- Many residents live at or slightly above the poverty level



Endemic problems in the region

- Barriers to access to veterinary care
 - Financial, geographical, physical
- Vicious cycle of pet overpopulation
 - Few opportunities for low cost spay/neuter, most of those reserved for individuals living below poverty level
 - Lack of community education
- Small, overburdened local animal shelters

Working with RAM

- Remote Area Medical (RAM) is a non-profit in east Tennessee
 - Founded by the late Stan Brock, RAM is dedicated to providing **free** medical care to those in need, regardless of income level
 - General medical, dental, vision, veterinary
- RAM clinics have been held at LMU in 2004, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2019, and 2020
- Each event staffed by large numbers of volunteers



Where do students fit in?

- Check-in – patient identification, history
- Triage – physical exam, restraint
- Anesthesia – restraint, nursing skills
- Surgery – surgical nursing, anesthetic monitoring
- Post-op – nursing skills, vaccine administration
- Discharge – client communication, client education

What do students gain?

- Real world experience that can't be replicated or simulated
- An opportunity to feel like a “grown up” vet tech in a safe environment
- A glimpse of teamwork in action
- Networking opportunity with outside volunteers, veterinary students, and more

Inspiring students to volunteer

- Be respectful of their time
 - Don't make it mandatory
 - Don't judge those that don't volunteer
- Make volunteering easy
 - Be flexible with scheduling
 - Try to pair their assignment with their strengths
- Make it mean something
 - Give them responsibility for something, even if small
 - Put them in contact with owners

What do we do at a RAM veterinary clinic?

- Spay/neuter
- Vaccines
 - Rabies
 - DHPPC/FVRCP
- Ear cleaning, nail trims
- Flea/tick prevention
- Dewormer

2018 RAM Veterinary Clinic June 30 – July 1

TEX TURNER ARENA

Data from the clinic

- 106 pets treated
- Estimated value of care \$30,000











2019 RAM Veterinary Clinic June 1 - 2

Data from the clinic

- 107 pets treated
- Estimated value of care over \$27,000











Photo courtesy of Remote Area Medical



Photo courtesy of Remote Area Medical



Photo courtesy of Remote Area Medical



2020 Feline Only RAM Veterinary Clinic February 15

- 128 cats treated (in 12 hours)
- 60 cats were scheduled for 2 additional days
 - Total of 188 cats
- Estimated value of care \$35,800

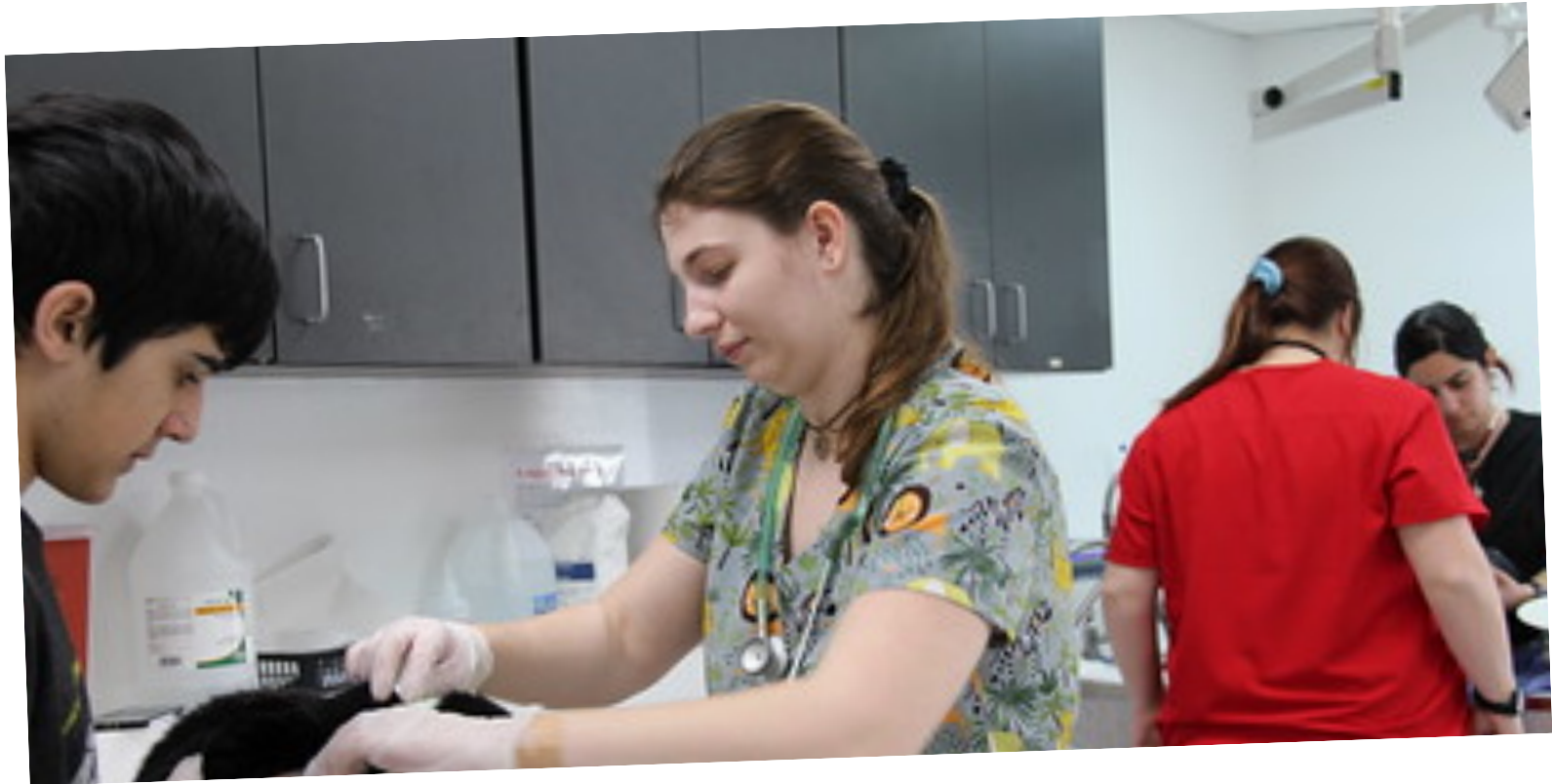








Photo courtesy of Remote Area Medical



Photo courtesy of Remote Area Medical









How do we pay for the clinics?

- RAM covers/reimburses some of the costs
- Donations from vendors and distributors
- LMU supports service projects, particularly those that benefit the community and involve students

Preparing for the future

- A 2-day June 2020 clinic was planned
- Long term plan for quarterly 1-day clinics
 - Less disruption
 - Fewer volunteers needed
 - More opportunities for students, friendlier for their schedules
- LMU CVM awarded a PetSmart Access to Veterinary care grant (2020 – 2022)

Why are these projects important for students?

Looking back to the LMU mission

- While primarily committed to teaching, the University supports research and ***service***.
- ...graduates must be able to ***communicate*** clearly and effectively...
- ...(graduates) must have an appreciable depth of ***learning in a field of knowledge***...
- ...(graduates) must be able to ***exercise informed judgements***.

What can students take away?

- Many LMU VMT students come from rural Appalachian communities and will likely return to them after graduation
- Allows the students to empathize with clients and to see the bigger picture
- Positive contributions to the community
- Connecting students with service organizations like RAM encourages future volunteer experiences

Want more information?

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- Medicine Man: The Stan Brock Story
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