

Unity

*A Lens into Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
in the Veterinary Profession*



Students' Views on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As we continue to explore the many facets of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in our Unity series, we wanted to hear what veterinary students have to say about the topic. In a short survey, veterinary students from UC Davis and WesternU provided their perspectives on the following questions:

- What does DEI mean to you (definition, experiences, etc.)?
- Why is DEI important (in veterinary medicine and in life)?
- How do you promote DEI at your school?
- How can the veterinary medical community improve DEI?
- Do you have any personal experiences or relevant insights you think would help people better understand DEI in veterinary medicine?

Here is what some had to say:

“For me, [DEI] means not only being accepted, but valued in any environment that I am in. My experiences, my opinions, and my presence matters just as equally and as importantly as everyone else, and that does not change because of my ethnicity, culture, sex, or anything else I may be perceived as. The simple answer? It means being seen.”

“DEI means recognizing that there are differences, celebrating those differences by being respectfully curious about each other's lived experiences, and taking joy in the successes made by everyone. It also means that everyone should make the effort to even the playing field by recognizing disparities and working to balance them out so we are all coming with the same resources and opportunities.”



"The diversity of the profession isn't going to change at the drop of a hat. We should work to recognize, respect, and appreciate the differences in our practice and in our clients. Being aware of the language we are using to be inclusive and non-assuming or judgmental is an important start. Recognizing how access to care problems fit in and working to correct those can also help."

"We are an extremely cost-restricted profession. Veterinary internships and externships are expensive. Vet school is expensive. Even living in Davis is way more expensive than anywhere I've ever lived before. I think this really restricts the people who feel able to apply and attend vet school. You're (most likely) not [going to] get some inner-city kid who has lived in poverty their whole life thinking of applying to vet school when each application costs \$120 minimum, and that's a shame."

"If I understand how someone's culture views animals in their life, I can be in a better position to make sure that I am best meeting their needs as a veterinarian."

"DEI to me means understanding and acknowledging that everyone has their own unique life experiences that influence who they are and what they do. [...] And because everyone has different challenges to face in life, that we as a global community, as humans, have an obligation to help those in need however we can to make sure they can enjoy freedoms such as housing, food, education, and medical care."

"Equity is about what we need in order to succeed, not what is fair. Everyone deserves the opportunities and chances to succeed and some need different things compared to others. [...] Fairness does not mean that a person with 20/20 vision gets to have glasses too because it is deemed 'fair'—they do not need them to see, while others may."

"We, in the vet med field, can pave the path for so many other professions on how to integrate and properly understand DEI, not only in our workplace, but in our society as a whole."

"We all have a place in speaking for DEI and when DEI is not being upheld. It is important to correct whatever wrongdoing has occurred."

"It doesn't matter where you came from or how good your English is, but what matters is that we're all here in the same field and should lift each other up and learn from each other's experiences and share what we had to achieve to get here."

"I believe we are all aware that there is a stereotypical demographic that the profession pulls in, which is by no means wrong, but it is harder for future students and individuals to see it as a viable career when they do not see people of similar backgrounds to them. While the profession is becoming more diverse, it still has a long way to go." ■