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Joint program immerses high schoolers in veterinary science

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“Some of these students may want to become veterinarians... We’re helping them make choices for their futures”

August 23, 2018

In a three-week residential program presented by the [Boston Leadership Institute](#) and [BluePearl Veterinary Partners](#), 16 high school students dissected eyes, learned how to perform physical examinations on dogs, presented research findings, and performed lab work.



While summer educational institutes are plentiful, it’s rare to find such an extensive program in veterinary science for teens.

“The students have just been great,” said [William Snell, DVM, DACVS-SA](#), who is the medical director of BluePearl’s [Charlestown, Mass., hospital](#) and who organized the curriculum and instructors. “They are really actively involved; they’ve been asking good questions. ... They are like sponges soaking up knowledge.”

“The veterinary medicine program this summer in particular was extremely successful for a variety of reasons,” said Makayla Karr-Warner, marketing assistant for Boston Leadership Institute, which offers several STEM-related summer institutes. “The students raved about the instructor lineup. They thoroughly enjoyed learning from different veterinary specialists, being exposed to a variety of specialties and potential career paths.”

While living in a nearby college dormitory for the duration of the program, students toured [Southwick’s Zoo](#) and [BluePearl’s Waltham hospital](#), built mock lungs and practiced fracture repairs on lengths of PVC pipe, and learned about zoonotic diseases, CPR, and common toxicities.

“What I really liked about the program was getting to see all the different experts in different fields of veterinary medicine. I feel that really helped me learn about what I want to do in the future,” one student said.

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“It’s really interesting, and I’d really like to be a surgeon,” said another.

Students were taught by a BluePearl ophthalmologist, a surgeon, a criticalist, an anesthesiologist and a veterinary nurse, as well as an instructor from [MIT](#), a conservation biologist from [Boston University](#), a local veterinary neurologist, and a primary care veterinarian.

At the end of the program, students were presented with white lab coats—a high school version of a white coat ceremony.

The three-week experience has been an eye-opener for the students, by showing them many different paths veterinarians can take in their careers, said Dr. Snell.

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“If you show students all these different options, then maybe their views become a bit broader,” Snell said. “Some of these students may want to become veterinarians in the future, and they may also choose to specialize in surgery, ophthalmology, oncology, or another field. We’re helping them make choices for their futures.”

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