

Tufts University Maintains Strong Regional Appeal

All of New England counts on the veterinary program at Tufts University.

The Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, sprawled over 594 acres in North Grafton, Mass., is the only vet school in the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. Sixty percent of graduates stay to practice in New England, a region that could be short 650 veterinarians by 2014, according to a Donahue Institute study.

So important is Cummings' regional role that Maine and New Hampshire subsidize their residents' veterinary education, paying \$12,000 a year toward each student's tuition at Tufts.

"As the only veterinary school in New England, we pride ourselves on building the life sciences work force in the region, providing excellent clinical services and advancing research in key areas such as infectious diseases, neuroendocrine biology, pulmonology, and hepatic and gastrointestinal disease," says the school's dean, Deborah Kochevar, DVM, Ph.D. "The school is also known for its clinical research and training in cardiology, emergency and critical care medicine, orthopedics and nutrition, with an actively expanding program in clinical oncology."

At a Glance

Founded: 1968

Enrollment: 340

Tuition: Up to \$37,910

Degree Programs: DVM; Master of Science in Animals and Public Policy; DVM/Master of Science in Comparative Biomedical Sciences; DVM/Master of Science in Laboratory Animal Medicine; DVM/Master of Public Health; Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Biomedical Sciences

Accreditation: American Veterinary Medical Assn.'s Council on Education

Testing: 98.4 percent of Cummings' graduating DVMs passed the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination.

Class of 2009 Mean Undergraduate GPA: 3.63

Class of 2009 Mean GRE Scores: Verbal, 600; Quantitative, 710, Analytical, 5.0

Website: www.tufts.edu/vet

Cummings' research focus extends overseas. Associate professor Robyn G. Alders, BVSc, Ph.D., splits her time between North Grafton and Indonesia, where she studies avian influenza.

Why Indonesia?

"A lot of people agree that Indonesia is the most likely Ground Zero for an outbreak of avian influenza," says Tom Keppeler, Cummings' associate director of public relations. "We have worked with the government of Indonesia and the United Nations World Health Organization to take a vet-based and evidence-based approach to controlling an outbreak there."

Cummings' standing in the world of veterinary research has the attention of the National Institutes of Health, which has showered the school with grant money: \$25 million to establish a research unit for the national Food and Waterborne Disease Integrated Research Network and \$23 million to build a Regional Biosafety Laboratory focusing on infectious disease organisms.

Though a private institution, Tufts enjoys a thriving relationship with Massachusetts. It was the state, after all, that turned

over much of the Grafton State Hospital property to make room for the veterinary school in 1968. In exchange for continuing financial support, Cummings offers in-state tuition breaks, works in tandem with life science companies and generates property taxes at the Tufts Biotechnology Transfer Center, a business incubator, and the Tufts Science Park.

“It’s a very interesting partnership, but one that has worked out very, very well,” Keppeler says.

Cummings occupies one of Tufts’ three campuses. The main campus is in the Boston suburb of Medford, 45 minutes east. Dental, human medicine and nutrition students do their work in Boston.

“We’ve always had an entrepreneurial nature out here,” Keppeler says. “One of the reasons is our distance from the main campus. Faculty members are free to develop their own identity.”

More than 28,000 cases a year are handled at three teaching hospitals: the Hospital for Large Animals, the Foster Hospital for Small Animals and the Tufts Wildlife Clinic. A 200-acre farm houses goats, pigs, beef and dairy cattle, chickens, horses, sheep and llamas. The llamas, Keppeler says, dutifully protect the sheep from coyotes.

The student body is overwhelmingly female: 87 percent of the 77-member Class of 2009, for example.

“We’ve seen a trend in veterinary medicine over the past 30 years that has gone from an almost exclusively male student body to almost exclusively female,” Keppeler says. “In that time period, young women have been really encouraged to pursue careers in math and science, and veterinary medicine offers a flexibility that’s very appealing to female students. I don’t think we have enough data to really say why more males aren’t enrolling in veterinary school.”

One thing that is diverse is the undergraduate majors of Cummings students. The Class of 2009 has backgrounds in everything from biology, biochemistry and animal science to art history, English and international studies.

“We find that some of our most nontraditional students tend to excel the most,” Keppeler says. “We have a very diverse array of students. What really draws them together is to be active citizens of the world. What’s common among our students is that they care about the world and really want to make difference.”

Dr. Kochevar agrees, saying: “I am impressed with the tradition of active citizenship that is a hallmark of Tufts University. Our students are citizens of the world, leading and serving in ways that benefit the global ‘one health’ of animals, humans and the environment.”

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