

## **Michigan State University**

### **Example of an excellent personal Statement**

*(Used with permission of applicant with minor editorial changes)*

I could feel the renewed power of the red-tail hawk pulsing through my leather gloves; it was as if she knew what was about to happen. After months of feeding, medication, and rehabilitation for a wing injury, I was both excited and nervous to release my first raptor for the Wildlife Recovery Association (WRA). I turned away from our group of spectators, took a deep breath, and counted aloud, One...two...THREE! With an explosion of feathers the red-tail soared from my opened hands, and I smiled with satisfaction as she circled high overhead in full health and wild glory. That, I thought, is the best feeling in the world. Through many such influential experiences, I have gained great appreciation for the challenges, responsibilities, and personal rewards found in veterinary medicine. Ultimately, they have helped guide my preparation to become a capable and dedicated member of the veterinary community.

My enthusiasm for the veterinary profession has been fostered since my childhood by a deep fascination with animals and their health. From this foundation I developed an enduring sense of responsibility and pride in providing care for all creatures, even as my perspectives and aspirations matured. For instance, my understanding of the community role of veterinarians expanded rapidly when I became a WRA volunteer. I participated first-hand in the surgery, medication, rehabilitation and release of hawks, owls, eagles, and falcons. I also eagerly took part in state-wide educational programs employing our resident birds and quickly discovered that I was in my element when sharing my enthusiasm and knowledge of raptors with the public. Over several years I began to realize that combining my concern for wildlife with my commitment to community service was an extremely fulfilling endeavor. My experiences with the WRA sparked my first consideration of a career in veterinary teaching and encouraged me to further explore this interest.

During the last two summers of high school I was employed as an assistant technician at \_\_\_\_\_ Clinic outside of Houston, Texas. There I observed modern veterinary practice and the application of complex procedures such as endoscopic, orthopedic, and laser surgeries. Assisting in these operations was both highly educational and maturing, as I encountered success, failure, and ethical challenges under the guidance of \_\_\_\_\_. Interestingly, I now consider one of the unsuccessful struggles I witnessed there to be amongst my most valuable lessons. One morning, an aging bulldog named Daisy came in for an exploratory laparoscopy, and the entire staff was eager to employ the new camera equipment. I was intrigued by the sharp screen images of the bulldog's viscera and the ability to obtain biopsies without a major incision. But excitement quickly changed to alarm when Daisy's heart and breathing suddenly stopped. Despite direct epinephrine shots and manual palpation, Dr. \_\_\_ was unable to revive Daisy before her life slipped away. When removing the body, I was disheartened, not only for the dog and her owners, but also for the disappointed veterinarian. However, I came to realize that for me the experience was as important as the numerous successes achieved through the same technology; Dr. \_\_\_ continued to employ innovative techniques and never allowed a setback to interfere with his commitment to improving

his practice. With that same determination, I am prepared for the responsibilities of continuous self-education in this constantly advancing profession.

As a result of my experience, I wanted to learn more about the modern procedures, equipment, and medicines in veterinary practice. Consequently I also shadowed Dr. \_\_\_ at Equine Veterinary Associates in Texas and was introduced to equine rhinoscopies, arthroscopies, and ultrasound (and also quickly learned that equine practice has come a long way from the writings of James Herriot). During my stay I was also able to visit the Texas A & M College of Veterinary Medicine and gained an encouraging first impression of university animal research and development.

Through these collective experiences in modern animal practice, I soon decided to pursue a DVM/PhD so that I too could be a part of advancing animal medical knowledge, developing medicines and procedures, and educating others. I believe a career that combines my passion for animal health with a dedication to academics and love of interpersonal interaction will be highly gratifying. Thus my time in Texas encouraged me to continue achieving scholastically in preparation for future opportunities in veterinary academia. By setting and achieving educational goals, such as earning top Advanced Placement scores, I have been able to take advantage of challenging academic opportunities at MSU and explore my various interests in the field.

As part of my undergraduate planning, I am focusing on a major in biochemistry, a degree that satisfies my desire to understand disease and medicinal interaction with living matter at the molecular level. Concurrently, I have enjoyed employment under the guidance of Dr. \_\_\_ in the MSU CVM Aquatic Animal Health Lab (AAHL) and the diagnostic challenges of performing clinical examinations on aquatic species, such as muskellunge and sea lamprey. I have found the research aspects of symptoms of the fish is fascinating work and highly rewarding. I have come to appreciate the problem-solving and critical-thinking nature of veterinary medicine, much like assembling the pieces of a biochemical jigsaw puzzle. With an inquisitive mind and a natural love for learning, I look forward to making a significant contribution to the understanding of animal health.

Without a doubt, my combined veterinary experiences have reaffirmed that animal medicine is a highly diverse and rewarding career. Although I have considered wildlife toxicology, lab animal research, medicinal development, and specializing in avian medicine or orthopedics as future possibilities, I am still finding opportunities every day that intrigue me. After thirteen plus years of preparation, I have learned that the fulfillment to be gained from advancing our knowledge of animals, developing progressive veterinary techniques, or simply releasing a rehabilitated red-tail hawk can foster a challenging and satisfying vocation. With a passion for animal welfare, a high interest in the natural sciences, a desire to be involved in education, and a dedication to life-long learning, my goal is to be a competent and contributing member of the veterinary profession.

**Describe any other experiences you have had with animals that were not supervised by a veterinarian.**

I can still recall our local veterinarian Dr. \_\_\_ gently telling me that he could not employ an eight-year-old to care for the recovering patients in his clinic. After watching my German Short-Haired Pointer die of throat cancer, I was determined to get involved in curing animals. Undeterred, I

requested to volunteer with the dogs and cats in his adoption center, developing their social skills during the summers of my elementary years. That determination led me to pursue as many animal exposure opportunities as possible, which subsequently greatly influenced my perspective on career possibilities in veterinary medicine.

My initial experiences with companion animals involved learning to care for my own menagerie of pets (including a dog, cat, parakeet, cockatiel, hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils, and a koi pond) and pet-sitting for nearly the entire neighborhood. As my ambition to become a veterinarian became known, my neighbors began entrusting me with more demanding responsibilities and medicine administration for their ill or geriatric pets, and I commonly demonstrated to the owners what I had learned from Dr. \_\_\_ and my own reading. Often I stayed with my neighbors' pets for extended periods to monitor their condition while the owners were away. Even at school, my peers frequently brought me their sick pocket pets; after a little research, I gladly helped them purchase over-the-counter medicines and demonstrated their administration.

Upon entering junior high, my desire to expand my animal experience and knowledge developed in many dimensions. Girl Scouts constantly encouraged me to explore new interests, so in 1998 and 1999 I volunteered for the Rainforest Animals Booth at the Annual Earth Exposition. For these shows I presented boa constrictors, macaws, tortoises, lizards, toads, and even spiders from the rainforest. I enjoyed demonstrating proper handling technique and teaching the public about diets, habitats, and behaviors of these exotic animals. This experience fostered my interest in combining animal welfare and conservation with public education and awareness. Through Girl Scouts I also attended horse camp and Mystic Lake for my first encounter with equine care and maintenance. For one week I was responsible for feeding, brushing, bathing, and cleaning the stall of my horse. I also received lessons on basic anatomy and care, as well as improved my riding techniques. This early exposure to horses encouraged me to later volunteer with an equine veterinarian in Houston, Texas.

Throughout high school I took advantage of opportunities to interact with new species. One summer afternoon in 1998 I attended a live raptor program and was so fascinated by the presentation that I introduced myself to the biologist, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. As a result I began volunteering with the Wildlife Recovery Association (WRA). After initial training with the raptors – my first time feeding a dead mouse to an American Bittern remains vivid – I was able to participate in the medication, therapy, feeding, hygiene, rehabilitation, and ultimate release of a variety of birds. I also performed in WRA educational programs throughout Michigan with the resident raptors and developed my handling and presentation skills. During these years I became very involved in caring for the permanently injured birds and pursued several projects with the WRA. This included hosting a disabled mallard at my home for several weeks, creating a prosthetic shoe for her missing foot, and adjusting her to human contact so that we could use her in programs. I also decided to focus my Girl Scout Gold Award Project on designing, financing, constructing, and launching artificial nesting platforms for the threatened North American loon. This project has expanded and produced successful loon nesting efforts on several Michigan lakes. While attending MSU, I developed a website for the WRA to be used as an educational tool for elementary students. The site utilizes video clips and interactive pop-up windows and I plan to continue collaborating with the WRA to update the site with new patients and information. Additionally, this summer I began volunteering in the Wildlife Ward at the MSU College of

Veterinary Medicine, assisting the coordinators after work with the everyday maintenance of their resident birds and medication and care of incoming patients.

The same determination that led me to stay involved at Dr. \_\_\_\_ clinic has also guided me to explore new exposure opportunities throughout the subsequent years. I have consistently aspired to interact with a variety of animals so that I may have as much knowledge and ability as possible upon entering veterinary school. These experiences have consistently reconfirmed my passion for the welfare of animals and promotion of community awareness, as well as my dedication to my career. I anticipate that such diverse exposure will allow me to take advantage of the flexibility and diversity inherent in veterinary medicine.

### **Diversity Form:**

A veterinarian is not only a guardian of animal welfare; he or she is also a teacher, a role model, and an active member of the wider community. So that I might realize these responsibilities to the fullest extent, I have engaged in a variety of professional, academic, service, and personal disciplines throughout my student career. I believe my continuing development as both an individual and aspiring professional will allow me to share these experiences and contribute to the diversity of my veterinary class.

To explore the many opportunities in veterinary medicine, I have pursued experiences in several professional settings, including small animal, equine, and raptor rehabilitation. When I arrived at MSU I was employed as an Honors College professorial assistant in the Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) of the Department of Pathobiology and Diagnostic Investigation. Aquatics was a branch of veterinary medicine with which I was unfamiliar, but my experiences there have been both dynamic and exceptionally educational.

The AAHL has enhanced my clinical skills from a unique and challenging perspective. Because our team at the University Research Containment Facility frequently receives fish presenting a range of ailments, I have had the opportunity to perform clinical and post-mortem examinations on a variety of freshwater fish species in Michigan. This has involved learning to apply familiar veterinary techniques in new dimensions; observation of swimming behavior and reflexes, skin and gill samples, blood drawing, and sample collection through fish necropsy are all employed to study their diseases. Our facility is active in studies to decrease mortality rates in state fisheries and weirs, and collaborating with the DNR on long-term disease and conservation programs. For example, I have traveled with Dr. \_\_\_\_ to the Plate River State Fish Hatchery to perform health inspections and observed how veterinary medicine is active in these institutions. Through my volunteer work at the MSU CVM Wildlife Ward, I was able to observe the anesthetic and surgical techniques used to operate on a carp. Throughout, it has been fascinating to observe the parallels between aquatic medicine and terrestrial medicine.

The AAHL has also allowed me to gain insight into the exciting area of veterinary medical research. In Summer 2003 I was appointed project manager for a study of *Piscirickettsia* in muskellunge from Lake St. Clair and thoroughly enjoyed participating in every step of the project – from gross clinical examination and dissection to isolating bacteria grown on FHM and CHSE cell lines. Along with studies on large mouth bass virus, bacterial kidney disease, and

*Triaenophorus* in yellow perch, I am learning a great deal about animal virology, bacteriology, and parasitology. My career goals have certainly been strengthened by my AAHL clinical and research experiences, as I plan to earn a DVM/PhD and enjoy a career in veterinary research and teaching. I have gained a greater appreciation for the multi-dimensional role that veterinarians fulfill and would like to share my enthusiasm for exploring opportunities such as aquatic medicine with my colleagues.

To supplement my exposure in veterinary medicine, I carefully researched the study abroad opportunities at MSU and have been accepted to go to Leon, Mexico for six weeks in summer 2004. This trip is particularly interesting to me because of the broad range of veterinary topics involved. Not only do the students participate in equine, bovine, and zoological practices, but they also spend a significant portion of the trip learning about the history of the profession and the school in Mexico, as well as Spanish medical terminology. I have long enjoyed studying Spanish and am pursuing it at an advanced level at MSU; thus, Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ has offered to help me arrange personalized Spanish instruction during my stay in Leon. Additionally, I plan to travel to Costa Rica in summer 2005 on a study abroad program to explore the history of health care systems and medical ethics. By doing so I would like to become further aware of global issues in animal and human medicine and broaden my experience in a culture that I enjoy so much.

Beyond professional development, I have participated in community service activities that have greatly influenced my leadership abilities and personal views. This past spring break I traveled to Puerto Rico to volunteer in El Yunque National Rainforest. During our trip, my group and I studied current rainforest conservation programs and also learned about the civil rights movement taking place in Vieques against practice bombing being performed there. I became immersed in the Spanish culture and enjoyed learning about Puerto Rican dialect, food, religious beliefs, and daily lifestyles. Although I had been an instructor in the Midland County Youth Leadership Program throughout high school, I found I benefited greatly from the lessons about group dynamics, teamwork, and goal-setting that I experienced in San Juan. I intend to participate in Alternative spring break service trips in the future, and carry my belief in the importance of community service to veterinary school and beyond.

Finally, I have engaged in many personal activities that have allowed me to become a well-rounded individual with a variety of interests. I continue to enjoy tennis after four years of playing # 1 and # 2 varsity singles at Midland High School (MHS). I also participated in seven drama productions at MHS, and joined the MSU Science Theater Organization to continue my interests in performance and teaching. Scuba diving and snorkeling remain favorite recreational activities that I have pursued in Cozumel, the Grand Caymen Islands, and Hawaii. During thirteen years of piano lessons, I specialized in jazz piano and became a pianist for the Midland High Jazz Band. I also began composing my own songs and lyrics, and enjoyed performing them in talent shows and benefit concerts; I continue to compose and perform while at MSU, as I find music to be an energizing form of self-expression and creativity.

These activities have helped me develop in many dimensions outside of academia, and I plan to continue enjoying music, sports, and theater throughout my career. Along with exploring veterinary medicine opportunities, challenging myself in community service, and gaining

appreciation for other cultures, I am looking forward to sharing my experiences with my peers and continuing to learn from them as well.

#### Honors and Awards:

American Chemical Society 2002-2003 Honors Chemistry Student of the Year; Outstanding Performance in CEM 180 Series; MSU/ACS;04/15/03  
MSU Professional Assistanceship Scholarship; Laboratory research in CVM; MSU Honors College; 05/2002  
Girl Scout Gold Award; Highest award in Girl Scouting; Mitten Bay Girl Scouts; 04/2002  
National Elks Foundation Gold Award Scholarship; Top 8 academically outstanding Gold Award recipients; Nat. Elks Foundation; 05/2002  
Dow Chemical 2002 Science Student of the Year; Excellence in advanced science courses; Dow Chemical/Midland High School (MHS); 06/2002  
National Merit Scholarship Recipient; Competitive scholarship based on PSAT score; National Merit Corp; 04/2002  
Deans List 2002-2003; MSU Dean; 12/2002 and 05/2003  
National Dean's List 2002/03; Top .05% college students accepted; Educational Communications; 05/2003  
MHS HOBT Representative; Selected by teacher consensus to attend MSU leadership program; MHS faculty; 04/2000  
National Society of Collegiate Scholars; Membership for academic excellence; 05/05/2003  
2002 Midland Distinguished Scholarship; Awarded for academic excellence/extracurricular accomplishments and team leadership; MHS Athletics; 10/2000 and 2001 Saginaw Valley Tennis League All-Academic Award; Athletes w/high academic standards; Saginaw Valley Tennis League (SVTL); 10/2000 and 10/2002.  
First Team All Valley; Athletes w/skill and sportsmanship; SVTL; 10/2001  
1<sup>st</sup> Place Talent Show; Original vocal/piano composition; Midland County Fair; 08/2000  
Supporting Actress of the Year; Roles in school productions; MHS Drama Club; 05/2002  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place State Finals; Forensics Due Competition; MI Interscholastic Forensics Assoc; 05/2002

#### Extracurricular and Community Activities:

Wildlife Recovery Association; Volunteer for rehabilitation and maintenance of birds of prey; 06/1998; Current; 4 Wildlife Rehabilitation; Volunteer in MSU CVM Wildlife Ward; 06/2003; Current 3  
MSU Alternative Spring Break Service trip; Volunteer in National Caribbean Rainforest in San Juan, Puerto Rico; 03/01/2003; 03/10/2003; Eight full days.  
Lyman Briggs Chemistry Teaching Assistant; Teaching and laboratory duties for LBS 171/172 and labs; 08/2003; Current; 5 University Chemistry Course Tutor; Tutored two students in CEM 141; 10/2002; 12/2002; 2  
MSU Pre-Veterinary Medical Association; Member with active status and volunteer at Humane Society; 08/2002; Current; 1.5 MSU Science Theater Organization; Educational program participant; 08/2002; Current; 1

Midland County Youth Leadership Program; Community Awareness Committee Chair and team facilitator; 06/1999; 05/2002; 3 Mitten Bay Girls Scout Council; Active member of Troop 318; 08/1989; 08/2002; 4

Jazz piano lessons and composition; Performance of original songs in talent shows and benefit concerts; 08/1991; current; 4 MHS Jazz Band; Jazz Pianist; 11/1999; 05/2002;2

Midland High Tennis Team; Number One and Two Varsity Singles; 08/1998; 10/2001; 10

MHS Drama Club; Performed in seven productions and constructed sets; 08/1998; 05/2002;15

MHS Forensics Team; Multiple and Duo Competition; 02/2000; 05/2002;5