

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, My name is Jen Haugland and I am the President of the Montana State University Pre-Veterinary Club. At this time could I please have all of members and supporters please stand to show support of the commissioners of Higher Education Budgets financial assistance for Veterinary Medicine.

Thank you, you may be seated-

I don't remember the first time I wanted to be a veterinarian. It could have been the time when I got up every hour to check on a first time kidding doe goat, or maybe it was when I slept in the Ag-Shop at high school with a Sow to make sure that when she farrowed all of the piglets were safe. Perhaps it was the time I was left in charge of the Ag-Farm in High school, so I stayed overnight in the field with the 13 year old jersey milk cow during the birth of her final calf. I was born a 6th generation Gallatin Valley animal producer. When I am asked why I have chosen to follow a profession with long cold hours, my answer comes simply, "I Believe in the Future of Agriculture." E.M. Tiffany said it best when he started the FFA Creed with this line. I would like to share with you one of the most influential paragraphs in my life from the FFA Creed, " I believe that to live or work on a good farm, or to be engaged in

any agriculture pursuits, is pleasant as well as challenging; for I know the joys and discomforts of agricultural life and hold an inborn fondness for those associations which even in hours of discouragement I cannot deny.”⁽¹⁾ That to me sums up ranching and farming. It is such a joy to see a new colt in the field on a spring morning and yet such a discomfort and challenge when you have to put your best cow dog down because he put in so many hard years for you.

I was raised in the old ways of agriculture. We are strong, stubborn and set in our ways, but to me, this is the essence of Montana. We can all appreciate the critical time when it is necessary to call on help for the survival of our animals. But the problem most of us have quite often faced is what to do when the vet is hours not minutes away? What do you do when they don't live in the same county as your ranch.

According to the AVMA, Montana has 12 counties that cannot call on a local vet to help in the middle of the night. That is 21% of our Montana counties. And of these 12 counties, 8 have more than 10,000 head of food animals, and 6 of these 8 have more than 30,000 without a vet in the county⁽²⁾. When a life is on the line hours just wont cut it, and most times if the vet cant get there in time the animal could have passed. As outlandish as it seems to have such a low number of food

animal veterinarians as we do, this year alone 30% of our serving veterinarians are eligible for retirement.⁽³⁾ This will leave Montana about 48 veterinarians short of what we now have. With such harsh competition to even get into vet school let alone the rigorous 8 years it takes to complete both the bachelor's degree and doctorate it is no wonder the graduates from the program cannot keep up with the demands of the state. I am a Montanan through and through, and all I ask of you is to have faith. Have Faith that you will be spending your dollars on a worthy cause by improving our state through continued support which will help to protect one of our great state's largest industries.

With that I would like to introduce Alyssa Doering, A Montana State University student who has recently been accepted into Veterinary school, to talk about the financial impact of veterinary school on students.

(1) "The FFA Creed" By E.M. Tiffany Adopted at the 3rd Nationals Convention Revised at the 38th and 63rd National Conventions

(2) "Food Supply Veterinary Medicine-Montana" AVMA "American Veterinary Medical Association" Accessed on January 15, 2011 <http://www.avma.org/fsvm/maps/mt.asp>

(3) Tom Lutey. "Large-animal vet shortage plagues ranches." Helena Independent Record [Helena, MT] April 11, 2009, from helenair.com. Accessed January 15, 2011. http://helenair.com/news/state-and-regional/article_e0ea1573-16bb-50c5-9e3a-4e0fa0c4e185.html

My name is Alyssa Doering and I am one of nine recipients of a WICHE position in the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine programs at Colorado State University, Washington State University, and Oregon State University for the entering class of fall 2011. As a barrel racer and performance horse enthusiast, horses have always been my passion. I have chosen to pair this intense love for the equine species with my strong scientific background by joining the field of Veterinary Medicine.

Upon graduation of veterinary school, I have decided to complete an equine surgery residency. As a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, I will have the necessary skillset and credibility to perform surgery on the greatest performance horses in the World. Even though I am tremendously excited about my future, there are two things that I am uneasy about, first choosing a veterinary school to attend and secondly, how much that school will cost.

I am humbled and extremely thankful to be the recipient of a WICHE position this year. WICHE funding is opening doors to schools that I would otherwise not have had access to. Colorado State is ranked second in the nation of veterinary schools and has a very strong equine medicine program that will prepare me for a highly competitive residency position upon graduation. However, my acceptance into the DVM program at CSU is provisional, based on my support by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. Colorado Legislature has adopted a law that requires payment of a fixed amount in lieu of direct and indirect costs that were in effect in the past. Therefore, my enrollment into CSU is contingent upon the University receiving reimbursement funding from WICHE. Without your continued support of WICHE, I wouldn't have access to this excellent school. Oregon State University is much the same.

I'd like to discuss costs and benefits of vet school for a moment. I received an acceptance letter from CSU last week that said the cost of tuition for a nine month period, for me as a WICHE sponsored student, is \$22,000 each year for four years or \$88,000. Without WICHE funding, I would be forced to pay \$51,000 and that is just for tuition. Colorado does not grant residency after the first year of vet school so this is what I would pay each of my four years. Without WICHE funding I would be well over \$200,000 in debt upon graduation. This daunting number would make me seriously consider starting practice immediately after graduation to pay down my student loans instead of going on to further specialize in equine surgery.

I am not alone in this struggle; the average educational loan debt of graduating veterinary students has increased from \$46,000 to \$120,000 within the last ten years. That's a 260% increase with an average of 90% of this coming from vet school. Pursuit of a DVM seems next to impossible when you pair the average graduating debt with the competitiveness of even being accepted. Last year CSU admitted 139 students into the DVM program from 1756 total applicants, an 8% acceptance rate. However, out of the 139 admitted, 31 were WICHE sponsored students or 22% of the total that were chosen. This dramatically increased the access for students that don't have a vet school in their home state. Washington and Oregon acceptance rates follow this same trend.

Currently this year there is a proposal to add a service payback period for WICHE sponsored students. This would require vet school graduates to return to Montana to fulfill their contractual obligations for receiving these funds. I strongly urge you to consider the implications

of such a policy. With a mandatory payback period like this in place, I would be unable to pursue my ultimate goal of becoming an equine surgeon or reach my full potential.

So what can I, and the other eight WICHE sponsored students offer Montana? How can we ever pay this back? First of all, we're bright young students that are extremely self-motivated. The statistics show that the average GPA for students accepted into vet school is a 3.6. The average GRE Scores are: 519 for Verbal, 643 for Quantitative, and a 4.0 for Analytic Writing portions of the exam. I have researched bacteria in the Dry Valley's of Antarctica and traveled somewhat extensively in undergrad, but I am confident when I say that Montana is the greatest place on Earth to live and raise a family. I would love to eventually start an equine surgery center and practice here. With this I leave you with the strong recommendation to continue funding of the WICHE program so that students like me are able to finish our education and gain practical experience that we can contribute to our great state.

Works Cited

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- Perryman DVM, Lance E. "Acceptance Letter College of Veterinary Medicine Colorado State University." Letter to Ms. Alyssa Krisine Doering. 06 Jan. 2011. MS.
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My name is Amanda Zellar, my home is in Billings and I also am a pre-vet student at MSU.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank you and the committee for allowing us to come and speak to you today.

Montana has the lowest average salary for veterinarians of any US state at \$60,150 per year compared to average salaries of \$74,600 per year in Colorado, \$77,970 in Washington, and \$91,600 per year in California and a national average salary of \$79,950.00 (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition). The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that livestock veterinarians earn significantly less than companion animal veterinarians (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition).

The US Department of Agriculture has set up a program to address the national shortage of rural veterinarians called the Veterinary Medical Loan Repayment Program. In 2010, 18 qualifying Montana veterinarians practicing in rural areas of high need applied for help repaying their veterinary school loans from the US Department of Agriculture under the Veterinary Medical Loan Repayment Program. Only three were awarded (VMLRP Reports and Statistics).

Instituting a service payback requirement for veterinary students will push students towards companion animal practices, due to higher average salaries, out of need to repay their school loans. Many of these students may otherwise have practiced at livestock practices in other states for only a few years to gain experience and pay down their debt before returning to Montana as livestock veterinarians.

63% of all American Veterinary Medical Association registered veterinarians currently practicing in Montana graduated from Colorado State University, Oregon State University, or Washington State University -- the three programs WICHE funding helps support. Over the last 10 years Montana has sent 99 veterinarians to these programs and received 178 (Montana Board of Veterinary Medicine). I urge you not to look at this program as sending one student and receiving that same student back as a professional, but as a 197% return on Montana's investment in veterinarians working and paying taxes in this state. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the entire committee for listening to us today. If you have any questions, we would be happy to answer them for you and our Pre-veterinary advisor Dr. Mattix is also here to answer questions as well.

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"I'm currently studying veterinary medicine at Washington State University. WICHE's PSEP has not only helped make my education affordable, but it will give me the opportunity to go back to my home state of Montana to practice mixed animal medicine and run the family ranch with my husband. Veterinary studies are stressful in and of themselves, but it's such a relief to know that I'll have a manageable debt load to pay off when I graduate. That would not be the case without the WICHE program."

- Perrie, Montana resident

Class of 2014, Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine



"I'm from Montana, and without WICHE's PSEP it would have been almost impossible to (1) gain entry into veterinary school and (2) be able to afford it. This program will help me achieve my dream of becoming a veterinarian and assist me in keeping my debt load low enough to be able to work in a rural setting. As a first generation college graduate I am thankful for this opportunity and look forward to returning to my home state to serve the residents of Montana."

- Tim, Montana resident

Class of 2013, Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine



"Montana does not have a veterinary school and out-of-state tuition is typically \$30K more than in-state. Without WICHE funding, I may not have been able to attend vet school. If I had had to take out student loans, I would have finished with \$250K in debt. I was ecstatic when I received WICHE funding! I cannot express how thankful I am that WICHE has PSEP, and I fully support its continued funding. Once finished, I plan on doing an internship and a residency in equine medicine. Then I'll return to Montana to pursue my career and raise my family."

- Nicole, Montana resident

Class of 2012, Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine

"WICHE's PSEP is essential for those of us that want to enter in the veterinary profession but don't have the financial means to pay four years of nonresident tuition. Coming from rural Montana, PSEP gave me the chance to fulfill my dream of a career in veterinary medicine. Even more importantly, I'll have the option of opening a rural practice, since I will have a lower student debt load when I graduate, and for that I'm thankful! "

- Katrina, Montana resident

Class of 2013, Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine

"The cost of veterinary school is substantial for anyone, but for students from humble backgrounds, especially those that want to return to their home states and towns, the high cost can be a deal-breaker. I would have had to seriously reconsider my dream of becoming a veterinarian without WICHE PSEP support. And, the preferential admission that WICHE students receive substantially increases our odds of getting accepted into vet school as out-of-state residents. I am truly grateful for the support I've received and hope that Montana will continue to fund this vital program."

- Katherine, Montana resident

Class of 2013, Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine



"WICHE's Professional Student Exchange Program made it possible for me to go to veterinary school at Colorado State University. Without my home state of Montana's support through this program, I would not have been able to afford to go to veterinary school at all."

- Katie, Montana resident

Class of 2014, Colorado State University, College of Veterinary Medicine

" Without WICHE I would never have been able to fulfill my lifelong dream of being a veterinarian. Upon graduation, I plan to return to my home state of Montana to practice veterinary medicine. Without WICHE support, this would not be feasible. I am so thankful that I had WICHE as an option, and I hope that others from my Montana with similar dreams will also benefit from this program! "

- Bobbi Jo, Montana resident

Class of 2012, Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine

"Ever since I was five, I knew that I wanted to be a veterinarian but never thought about the cost! Without WICHE support, I would have had to let my dream die and been forced to pursue a second-choice career. I encourage our legislators to continue to support WICHE's PSEP, as it is often the only way for many low income students raised in rural agricultural areas to pursue higher education. It will allow me to return to Montana and serve the state's shortage of food animal veterinarians. It's a "win-win" for both student and the state. Thanks Montana!"

- Kelsey, Montana resident

Class of 2012, Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine



<http://www.wiche.edu/studentTestimonials>