

Working  
to make  
alternative  
tracks the  
status quo

# ALTERNATIVES IN VETERINARY MEDICAL EDUCATION



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Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights

## Accent on an Alternative

### UC DAVIS DROPS TERMINAL SURGERY LABS

#### *AVAR Responds With Reward and Public Recognition*

The University of California, Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine (UC Davis) has now joined the growing list of U.S. veterinary medical schools to end terminal or non-survival surgery laboratories in required courses.

UC Davis has had a required surgical training program for third-year students that consisted of three terminal and six survival surgical and anesthesia exercises. In the survival exercises, dogs and cats from five regional shelters are neutered (castrated or spayed) and returned for adoption; more than 85% of these animals have been adopted. Students not wishing to participate in the terminal surgical exercises did the same procedures on cadavers. The revised UC Davis surgery curriculum has expanded the shelter program by replacing the three terminal surgical exercises with three survival castration surgeries. The surgical training program is integrated with training in surgical anatomy and anesthesia.

“Increasing student interest for participating in cadaver rather than terminal surgery was creating difficulties in obtaining sufficient numbers of suitable-source cadavers and in providing alternative training in anesthesia,” said John Pascoe, Executive Associate Dean for the school. “Because students have an opportunity to perform the same surgical exercises on cadavers in the surgical anatomy laboratories, the faculty decided

to discontinue the terminal exercises and introduce additional experiences in survival surgery. This accomplishes several goals: It provides an appropriate and academically sound foundation level of training in anesthesia and surgery, increases opportunities for adoption of shelter animals, and eliminates student concerns over participation in terminal surgical exercises in a required course.

“Because students are now performing survival surgery without previous surgical experience, the number of faculty instructors has been increased and the class size for each laboratory session reduced so that one-on-one supervision is achieved. Terminal surgical exercises in some elective courses in small and large animal surgical instruction are being phased out as appropriate as academically sound alternatives are developed. When appropriate, students now taking elective courses have an

opportunity to complete the surgical exercises on cadavers,” he said.

UC Davis joins veterinary schools at the University of Florida, University of Pennsylvania, Cornell University, and University of Wisconsin in eliminating terminal surgeries in required courses. Tufts University has no terminal surgeries in either the required or elective courses.

AVAR has provided the school with an award of \$1000 in recognition of its effort to reduce harmful animal use in student training. The money is to be used for furthering alternative teaching programs.

Editor’s Note: A note of thanks would be appropriate to: Dr. John Pascoe, Executive Associate Dean of Curriculum, University of California, Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine, Davis, CA 95616, or e-mail: [jrpascoe@ucdavis.edu](mailto:jrpascoe@ucdavis.edu).

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