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College Cornell People

To be all she can be

Jess Dowling '11 earns Army scholarship.



She's never shot a gun, and the idea of leading enlisted personnel in a potentially life-threatening situation is at the moment a bit intimidating. But Jess Dowling DVM '11 is the poster child for the Army's motto: be all that you can be. Her commitment to service and leadership has been a close companion throughout high school, her undergraduate years at Cornell, and her short tour in the workforce before beginning veterinary school. This commitment was most recently evident as she led the College of Veterinary Medicine to the successful conclusion of the first-ever Pedal for Pets, a fundraiser for the College's nonprofit hospital.

Commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the US Army Medical Services Corps this month, Jess is the most recent recipient of the Army's Health Professions Scholarship, which, she says, will continue to let her serve others. The scholarship program pays tuition and provides a stipend for room, board, and school expenses. Currently a member of the US Army Reserves, upon graduation, Jess will go into active duty for two years and then complete an additional five years in the Reserves. At that point, she can decide to become a civilian or stay with the military.

"When someone has the opportunity and the capacity to help others, it just makes sense to do it," said Jess. "I've been fortunate in a lot of situations to be a small part of a greater goal designed to help others. Serving in the military will let me contribute in a similar way to the veterinary profession on a larger scale. In the Army, I'm part of a huge organization that influences veterinary and human health care, around the world. Who wouldn't want a slice of that?"

After completing the officer's basic training course, her first assignment after graduation will likely be state-side taking care of a wide variety of animals: military working dogs, ceremonial horses, working animals of the Department of Homeland Security organizations, animals supporting human-animal bond programs at military hospitals, the dolphins and sea lions of the Navy's Marine Mammal program and service members' pets. She will also be expected to ensure that the food procured for the installation and deployed service members is wholesome and secure.

Jess expects her second assignment will be overseas, probably as an integral part of short-term humanitarian and disaster relief deployments to developing countries. In this capacity, her predecessors have jumped out of airplanes with Special Forces, worked in submarines with the Navy, on ships with the Coast Guard, or conducted research.

"The opportunities for working in veterinary medicine with the military are endless," said Jess. "At the moment, I don't really know what area of the profession I'd like to do for the rest of my life, which is why this scholarship is such a great match. This will give me more time to explore my options, and I'll be developing a unique set of skills that will let me help people. Veterinarians are in short supply across the globe, and the Army is no different."

Jess is one of two current students at the College who hold this scholarship. Sean Stockwell DVM '11 earned the scholarship and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant last year.