

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

Where Do the Graduates of Veterinary Colleges Live?

By Dr. Donald F. Smith
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As the admission season for the class that matriculates in fall 2014 moves forward, applicants for veterinary college consider various factors regarding the suitability of the institutions to which they apply. In addition to financial value, academic considerations, personal fit and local environment, future veterinarians should also consider the number and location of the college's alumni base. In our competitive employment environment, the ability of a college's alumni to assist their junior colleagues in acquiring professional experience while in college, and finding employment after graduation is more important than ever.

To some extent, the aggregate number of alumni of an institution is reflected by the age of the college. For example, the number of graduates from colleges that began in the 1970s is fewer than those established in the post WWII period or before.^{1,2}

Regardless of total numbers, the distribution of alumni varies greatly by college. The graduates of some institutions tend to remain in the state where they received their DVM degree.

Graduates of other colleges are more broadly distributed throughout their respective region or even the entire country. For entering students, it would be helpful to have an overview of that profile because alumni can be powerful resources in helping with placement for externships, summer jobs and eventual full-time employment.³

Figure 1 below shows the number of veterinarians of US colleges living in the state of the college from which they graduated, and also the total number of veterinarians in that state.⁴ For example, of the almost 5,900 veterinarians in Texas, approximately 3,800 are graduates of Texas A&M (red bar), and 2,100 veterinarians graduated from other colleges (grey bar). The Midwestern states, especially Ohio, Michigan, Missouri, Iowa, Kansas and Oklahoma, have the highest percentage of veterinarians from their home colleges living in their respective states.

As noted, however, the age of the college is an important factor. For example, though 56% of Wisconsin graduates live in the state (see figure 2), they represent a more modest proportion of the total graduates because they are a newer school with only approximately 1,600 alumni.

Many earlier graduates living in Wisconsin came from the University of Minnesota or other colleges in the Midwest and make up a sizable number of practicing veterinarians in the state.

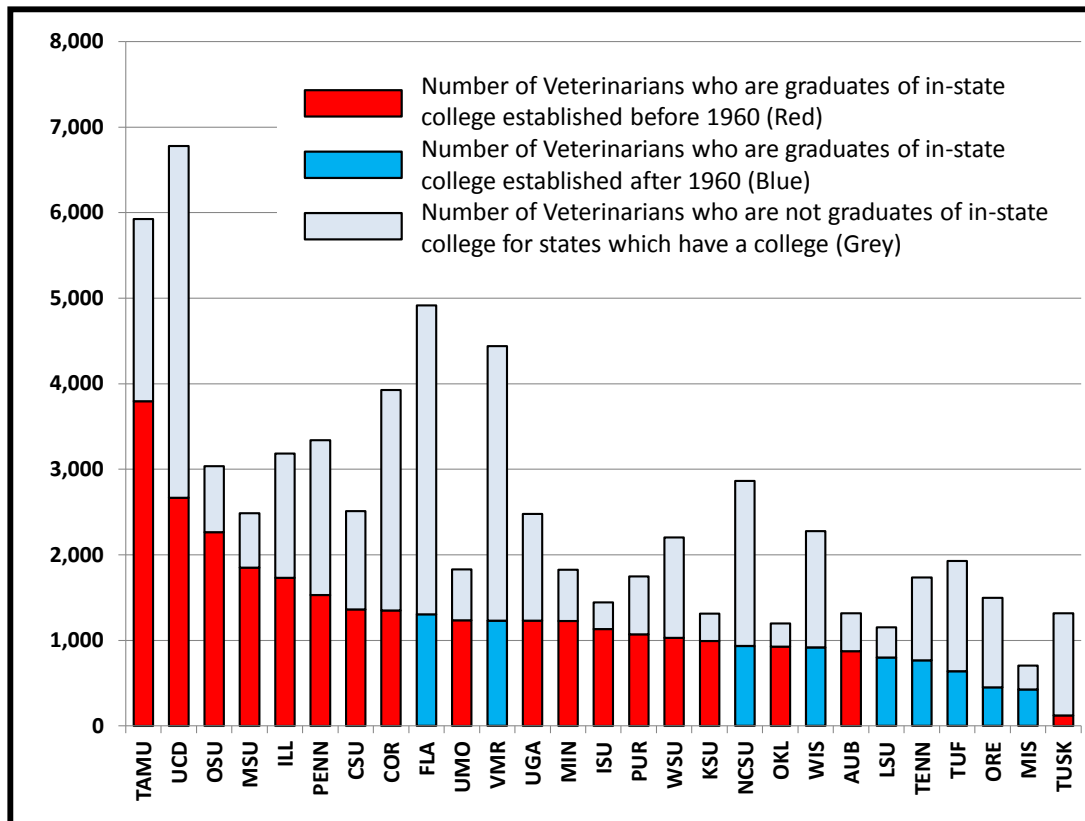


Figure 1. Number of veterinarians of US colleges living in the state of the college from which they graduated as a component of the total number of veterinarians in that state (AVMA members only). Only states with colleges having more than 500 alumni are shown.

The number of graduates of Cornell, the University of Pennsylvania and Tufts University who live in their respective states is relatively low. This reflects not just the large total number of veterinarians in these states (especially New York and Pennsylvania) but also the fact that a large proportion of graduates of these three colleges reside in other states. One contributing factor is the large numbers of out-of-state students these colleges have always admitted. Also, many students from these northeastern colleges choose to secure employment in other states for a variety of reasons, and this desire to move elsewhere is facilitated by the support many receive from their alumni base living throughout the region and across the country.

Figure 2 below shows the percentage of graduates of the colleges who reside in their respective states, differentiated by colleges that were established pre-1960 (red) and post- 1960 (blue).

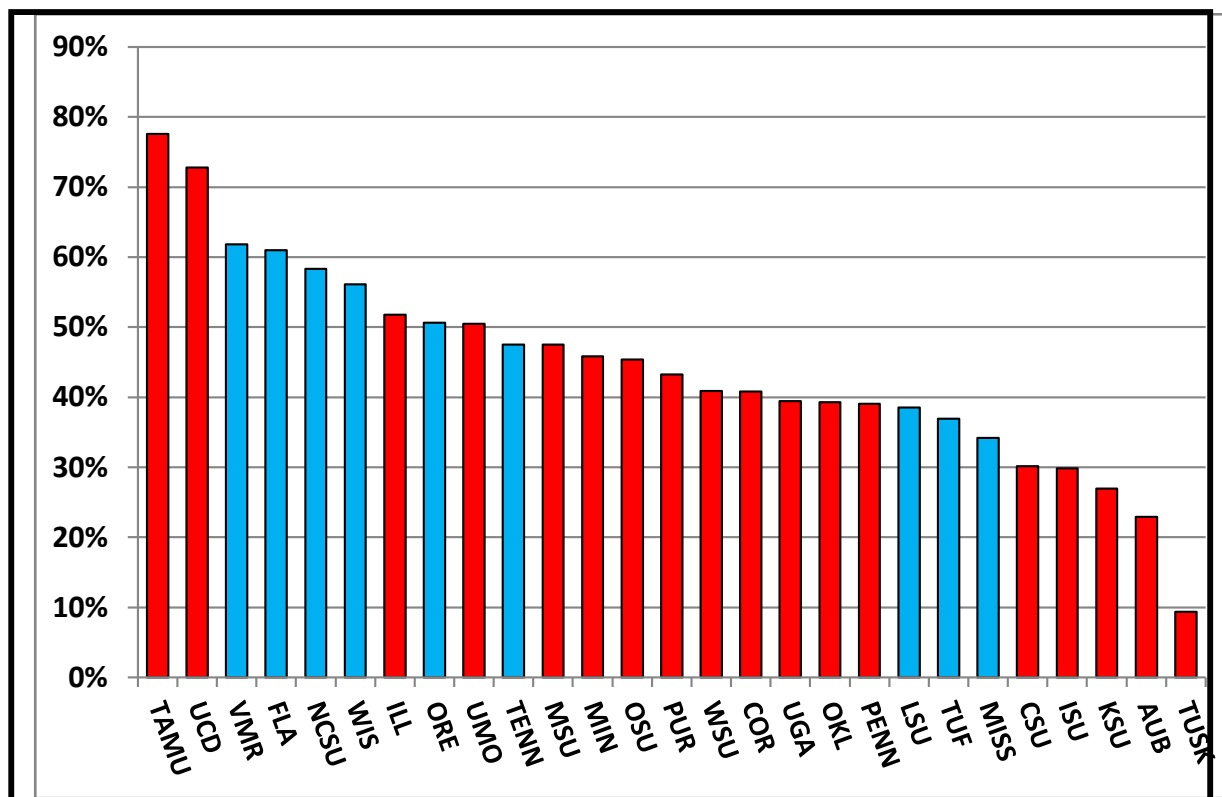


Fig 2. Percentage of graduates of the colleges that reside in their respective states, differentiated by colleges that were established pre-1960 (red) and post-1960 (blue), AVMA members only. Only colleges with more than 500 alumni are listed.

Four of the pre-1960 colleges that are located in some of the country’s most heavily-populated states represent an interesting case study. Over 70% of the graduates from Texas A&M and UC Davis live in their respective states. On the other side of the country, only about 40% of Cornell and University of Pennsylvania alumni reside in the state from which they graduated. Granted, many of the Eastern college alumni are in the northeast region (that is more true for Penn than Cornell), but an abundant proportion of alumni are working in states far from the region.

With respect to the newer colleges (shown in blue), the relatively low percentage of alumni staying in state represents an interesting profile. Being a private school which has always accepted a substantial number of out-of-state students, the fact that fewer than 40% of Tufts graduates live in Massachusetts is not surprising. However, I didn’t expect to find that the percentage of Louisiana State and Mississippi State alumni living in state is also less than 40%. This may in part reflect a lower number of available jobs in states with relatively low populations (4.6 and 3.0 million for Louisiana and Mississippi, respectively).

Older colleges from regions with low populations (such as Kansas State, Iowa State and Auburn), have 30% or less of their alumni base living in their home state. This is partly explained

because each of these colleges traditionally provided educational access to nonresidents before the newer colleges began graduating veterinarians in the 1970s.

A more global view of the above data suggests an asynchrony between the population centers of the country and the location of veterinary colleges as was described in an earlier story on this site.⁵ There are legitimate regional and entrepreneurial justifications for the placement of veterinary colleges. However, I think that it is beyond time for a national discussion and considered action regarding siting of future veterinary colleges.

In the meantime, applicants who will be starting veterinary college next fall may wish to consider these data as they make their decision on where to attend veterinary college.

¹ The only significant exception to this generality is Tuskegee University which began in 1945, but its smaller class size has limited the aggregate number of AVMA-member graduates to fewer than 2,000.

² Smith, Donald F., Suggested Categories for US Veterinary Colleges, *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*. August 13, 2013.

³ Data from three colleges are not included in this paper. Western University of the Health Sciences graduated its first class in 2007. Fewer than 500 alumni are included in the AVMA data base, making it difficult to establish meaningful trends. Midwestern University in Arizona and Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee, do not yet have graduates.

⁴ All data reflect AVMA-member veterinarians as available through the [AVMA Member Directory](#), August 2013 (access limited to AVMA members), accessed August 2013.

⁵ Smith, Donald F., The 28 Veterinary Colleges in the United States, Part II. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*. May 5, 2013.

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Dr. Donald F. Smith, Dean Emeritus of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, had a passion for the value of the history of veterinary medicine as a gateway for understanding the present and the future of the profession.

Throughout his many professional roles from professor of surgery, to Department Chair of Clinical Sciences, Associate Dean of Education and of Academic Programs and Dean, he spearheaded changes in curriculum, clinical services, diagnostic services and more. He was a diplomat of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons and a member of the National Academy of Practices. Most recently he played a major role in increasing the role of women in veterinary leadership.

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine is one of his projects where he was able to share his vast knowledge of the profession.