

## Veterinary Communication and Leadership Development Program (*DECOLE*)

### Faculté de médecine vétérinaire de l'Université de Montréal

#### **The knowledge and skills to intervene, the attitude to succeed!**

The development of non-technical skills, also known as “soft-skills”, is becoming widely recognized as a factor that determines success in the veterinary profession. With this in mind, a series of Initiation to Veterinary Leadership workshops were created for first-year undergraduate veterinary medicine (DMV) students. These workshops have been held at the Centre de Villégiature Jouvence in Orford, Québec since September 2007.

#### **The ILV program's mission**

The ILV program's mission is to promote the human aspects of the profession, by making the future graduates and teachers realize the importance of communication, constructive interpersonal relationships and positive leadership in the veterinarian's environment by encouraging reflection and personal engagement and by offering the opportunities and means to do so.

The mission relies on three values that are considered essential :

- self respect and respect of others
- openness of mind
- commitment



This program highlights the development of non-technical skills. Students begin to apply the communication and leadership skills that they will further develop throughout their studies and eventual career. Through personal reflection, it is expected that they will become sensitive to the importance of these non-technical skills. The DECOLE training relates to the following core competencies of the DVM program:

- to communicate
- to manage human resources
- to act with professionalism

These leadership communication principles are built upon throughout the entire DMV program :

- 1<sup>st</sup> year – Introduction (Initiation to Veterinary Leadership workshops)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> year – Veterinary communication and teamwork
- 3<sup>rd</sup> year – The veterinary workplace
- 4<sup>th</sup> year – Ethical and legal aspects of veterinary medicine
- 5<sup>th</sup> year – Clinical rotations

#### **Development of Veterinary Communication and Leadership (*DECOLE*)**

*DECOLE*, which progresses over the entire undergraduate DMV program, is based on recommendations derived from surveys of recent graduates and their employers. Recent graduates were perceived as having a high level of scientific knowledge and advanced technical abilities (“knowledge and skills”). However, these surveys identified deficiencies in non-technical skills, or soft-skills (“attitudes”). The implementation of quality training focusing on these skills is a challenge for veterinary medicine, requiring specific expertise outside our traditional realms and the accompanying financial support.

It is essential that students acquire and develop these non-technical skills throughout their studies, in order to allow them to rapidly excel in their future profession. The Faculté de médecine vétérinaire (FMV) of the Université de Montréal is therefore actively integrating this aspect of professional development, similar to what is being initiated in other North American veterinary schools. Considering non-technical skills training to be of the highest priority, the Ordre des médecins vétérinaires du Québec (OMVQ) has partnered with the FMV to implement this development.

### **Predicted impacts**

The ability to improve relationships with colleagues and clients will directly and indirectly improve all aspects of veterinary medicine, including the overall image of the veterinary profession. Also, the forging of highly ethical positive relationships with clients, colleagues and employees will increase professional and personal satisfaction, in addition to improving the delivery of patient care in all fields of veterinary practice.

### **Donor Recognition Program**

The Faculté de médecine vétérinaire of l'Université de Montréal values donor contributions as essential to furthering this training program and shows its appreciation via a donor recognition program. Several levels of recognition are available, depending upon the type of donation.

### **Program Budget**

Funding is needed primarily for :

- Various workshops associated with the DECOLE program throughout the curriculum
- Expertise development and training for our instructors
- Preparation of new and appropriate course materials that are adapted to the veterinary profession



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#### **Physical address**

3200, rue Sicotte  
Saint-Hyacinthe (Québec)  
Canada J2S 2M2

#### **Mailing Address**

P.O. box 5000  
Saint-Hyacinthe (Québec)  
Canada J2S 7C6

#### **Website:**

[www.medvet.umontreal.ca](http://www.medvet.umontreal.ca)

#### **For more information:**

Jacynthe Beauregard  
Development officer  
Office of Development and Alumni Relations  
Phone : (450) 773-8521, ext. 8552 or  
From the Island of Montreal : (514) 345-8521, ext 8552  
Email : [jacynthe.beauregard@umontreal.ca](mailto:jacynthe.beauregard@umontreal.ca)