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McMaster Undergraduate: Honours Biology Program

Current Area of Study: Ontario Veterinary College – University of Guelph

## **Undergrad**

When I was at Mac, I was studying under the Honours Biology program. During undergrad, I was never a TA and never worked in a lab, and many of the extra-curriculars I did were less academic based. I was involved with Welcome Week every year that I could be, and I really loved participating with the MSU Horizons conference. These were definitely the two favourite things that I looked forward to in school each year. I found that getting involved with these events opened up tons of other opportunities for me to explore under these umbrellas.

My marks in first year really weren't good, and I went through a bunch of mini-crises where I tried to figure out my future. I remember times when I would be walking back from a test, telling myself "I'm going to drop out". I remember, ***the very first midterm I ever wrote at mac, I failed.*** It was a huge jump in my academics from high school to university, and I had a lot of trouble staying motivated. I needed to figure out how to study in a new environment and explore different methods that would work best for me. I also received help from my profs; I had a meeting with my professor after I failed that first midterm, which was Physics 1B03 by the way. My prof sat me down, and we carefully went over all the questions I had missed.

I switched gears to Biology in second year because it was something that I was starting to like more. At this point, I had the thought of becoming an ecologist, because it integrated different aspects of biology. In second year, I took more environmental science courses and realized that they weren't really for me, but I became very interested in animal physiology. I was stuck on which direction to take, and right before exams I contemplated switching into the Medical Radiation program because I had no idea what was going on in my life. Somehow during this existential crisis this thought popped into my head - "If I get good grades back from this set of exams, maybe I'll look into becoming a vet." To this day, I have absolutely no idea where that thought came from. So I got my grades back and they were okay, and I told myself that I'm going to gear up and go for this. The icing on the cake was when I got to volunteer for a veterinary clinic in my hometown. I ended up absolutely loving it. So having that experience really solidified this idea for me. I jumped all over the place before ending up here, and I had multiple crazy freak out moments, but eventually it worked out for the better.

## **Ontario Veterinary College- University of Guelph**

I didn't realize before coming here that there were so many different specializations you can pursue under the field of Veterinary Medicine. So again, I'm quite overwhelmed with all the decisions and choices I have and I'm in the process of rediscovering my interests and exploring

what I would like to specialize in later on. In vet school, you do 3 years of coursework, and your 4<sup>th</sup> year is composed of all clinical rotations. Then afterwards, if you want to specialize in a field you typically have to complete an internship, along with a residency, which is at least another 3 years added. That would bring me to 11+ years of post-secondary, which is extremely daunting and quite the commitment to education. We'll see what happens!

The biggest difference I'm experiencing compared to my undergrad and being here is the unbelievable amount of help and support you get from fellow students and the faculty here. It can be quite the competition to get into veterinary school, but once you're in everyone realizes that they're on the same team and regardless of anything, all of your classmates are going to end up with the same degree and will all be doctors.

### **Words of Advice**

I would never have ended up here if it weren't for the experience I got from volunteering in that clinic and saw what it was like firsthand. Go out into the world and seek opportunities, and look into courses that may tug at your interests even in the slightest bit. If you don't like it, then you never have to do it ever again, but ***you might even end up falling in love with a subject that you never expected to.*** Don't take anything too seriously in undergrad and approach things with an open mind. If you try something out and it's not for you, you can just cross it off your list and try something else. There's no need to have multiple freak out sessions (as I did) whenever something doesn't seem right! There will always be more opportunities and more ways for you to "test the waters". Don't hold back, just go for it.