

FLVS Student Pursues her Passion for Animals

This post was written by tenth grade high school student Madison Toonder. Read about Maddie's oyster research in a previous blog post [here](#).



In October 2015, I was awarded a scholarship to attend any pre-collegiate program of my choice for winning second place in the nation in STEM mathematics at the Broadcom MASTERS national science fair competition in San Francisco, California.

I chose the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University's two-week summer intensive in Massachusetts because it is directly related to my career path.

Tufts' program is designed to give high school students insight into the rigors of veterinary school. During the program, we attended lectures, studied animal anatomy through fascinating dissections and hands-on palpitations, completed hospital rounds with fourth-year veterinary students, and explored the many different possible career paths within veterinary medicine. My daily agenda was varied and included activities such as learning proper techniques for handling animals, observing surgical procedures, and learning how to perform routine check-ups on a variety of different animals. One of my favorite activities was suturing bananas to practice proper technique.

I aspire to become an exotic animal veterinarian, so attending Tufts was important to me. It required scheduling flexibility. In addition to being able to attend Tufts, virtual learning at FLVS has afforded me the ability to pursue other career-related activities.

I regularly intern at my local veterinary hospital where I shadow the veterinarians, observe surgical procedures, learn how to do basic animal exams, and learn how to conduct lab tests. I also volunteer at a zoo where I handle a variety of animals and educate the public about them. Without the flexibility of FLVS, these invaluable experiences would not be possible because it requires time outside of school to participate in the activities.

Acceptance into veterinary school requires as many career-related hours as possible.

In the end, although it was my research that contributed to the scholarship for this veterinary intensive, it was FLVS that allowed me the flexibility to win it in the first place! Without the support that FLVS provides, my education would not be at the level at which it is currently. Instead of traveling around the country to attend science-related events and activities and spending countless hours on my research or in the veterinary hospital, I would be confined to a brick-and-mortar school, following the typical path devoid of stimulation from individual-based learning.

Students interested in a career in STEM can seek out the many different science competitions and symposiums held throughout the country by conducting an internet search or speaking to a science teacher. Pre-collegiate programs are offered at many different

universities throughout the United States and abroad that focus on a wide variety of career paths. (Search the internet for pre-collegiate summer programs.)

In addition to the virtual school itself, I would also like to thank my FLVS teachers over the years – and my wonderful parents for recognizing the potential of FLVS and always pursuing a better learning environment for me and my crazy big aspirations!