

# What You Need to Know About... The Student Experience



## Take it from Ashley Danowski: a full calendar is a good calendar.

With one year to go until her anticipated graduation, Ashley Danowski's already got quite the resumé. She was president of Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine's (RUSVM) Student Government Association (SGA), an avid volunteer, and a voracious learner. Here's what she had to say about the student experience both on and off the island.

### ON THE SGA...

"As our student government president, I am the primary liaison between students and administration," she says. Her role includes sitting on the curriculum committee, representing the school at conferences, speaking at white coat and other university events, and addressing issues as they arise. The key to keeping it all on track is a clear goal: "My primary focus has always been on facilitating the needs of the student body," she says. That ranges from bringing opportunities to their attention (scholarships, internships, conferences), to bettering the island experience overall, to providing student organizations with financial support. Some of the SGA's latest projects include:

- An ongoing relationship with PAWS, an island animal rescue group working towards building its first shelter on St. Kitts.
- Providing over 20 scholarships enabling current students to attend the Student American Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA) Symposium, where they can

represent RUSVM, network, and bring ideas and potential speakers to campus.

- Facilitating scholarships to offset expenses for internships, conventions, or anything related to gaining veterinary experience.

### ON VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES...

"I obtained a fake ID in high school, not to sneak into bars or get a tattoo, but because I needed to be 18 to volunteer at the local animal control," Danowski says. "I have volunteered and worked in the field as long as I can remember."

Her experience includes working in small animal shelters in addition to hospitals and centers at home and in South Africa. She has also assisted in wildlife and marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation efforts, including those in the aftermath of the BP oil spill—and all before even setting foot on the island.

Today, Danowski continues to dedicate herself to volunteerism by working with SAFE St. Kitts, a student-developed and student-run animal rescue organization. She's also participating in a parasitology research study that examines the different parasites and rickettsial organisms found on the island. In April, she was part of a group of RUSVM students who traveled to Central America to offer veterinary care and services, including spaying and neutering procedures, in less fortunate areas. "I will additionally be doing a similar program in August, run through The Humane Society,



offering veterinary services and animal sterilization on Native American Indian reservations," she adds.

### ON FINDING A NETWORK OF RUSVM ALUMNI...

While returning home to New York on a school break, Danowski, in an effort to determine if specialization would suit her, had the opportunity to shadow veterinarians at nearby East End Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center. "I was overwhelmed by the caliber of veterinarians at this practice, many of them graduates of RUSVM. While it was a very humbling experience, it was amazing to think that many of these veterinarians started exactly where I am now," she says. "It is amazing to share stories about terrible cars, pesky monkeys, and other 'island-isms' while simultaneously gaining more veterinary knowledge and experience." ■