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While a senior at Penn State, Daniel Adams was in a physiology lab, performing a spay on a rat to learn about the endocrine system, when he realized he loved surgery. “I was describing the lab to my brother and he asked me, ‘What if you did that on a dog or a cat?’” recalled Adams, now in his second year at Penn Vet. “I was going down the medical school route, but that’s when it all seemed to come together. My love for animals and medicine could be combined into one awesome profession.”

Adams had experience working with animals as a summer intern at the Philadelphia Zoo, helping the trainers and veterinarians. It was mostly a husbandry job, feeding and cleaning up after the animals, as well as giving educational talks to the public. “The guy with the bird on his arm in the walkways, that was me,” said Adams. “Interacting with and teaching the public about the animals under my care was my favorite part of the job.”

When applying to veterinary school, Penn was first on the list, he said, because of its great reputation and the proximity to family. Adams grew up in Philly, first in the Mayfair section of the Northeast, and then in Bucks County, where the family lives with a yellow Lab named Buddy.

Adams is a Penn Vet Opportunity Scholar, which not only gave him financial assistance, but also paired him with a mentor, Dr. Peter Herman, V’69, of Providence Animal Hospital in Chester, Pennsylvania. “Dr. Herman has been really helpful,” Adams said. “If I have questions about anything, he is there to answer and offer guidance. I’ve been out to his practice to help out and gain more experience.” Adams’ experience there has ranged from routine wellness visits, to scrubbing in for orthopedic surgery.

Adams would like to become a small animal surgeon himself, in part because of his experience last summer with Darwin Animal Doctors. He worked in the Galapagos Islands, specifically Santa Cruz, performing spay and neuter surgery on cats and dogs. Darwin Animal Doctors has been crucial for population control of stray animals on the island, helping to preserve the delicate ecosystem of the national park.

Adams had studied parasites in rabbits at Penn State. While in the Galapagos, he studied tick-borne parasites in dogs. Currently, he is assisting Dr. James “Sparky” Lok with his work on intestinal parasites in dogs. Adams hopes to continue broadening his research experience in an internship this summer.

Adams also volunteers at the Delaware County SPCA once a month to perform various surgeries such as spays, neuters, hernia repairs, and mass removals. “It’s a really good way to get hands-on experience and practice what we learn in the classroom,” he said. He works with Penn Vet alum Dr. Kimberly Boudwin, the SPCA’s Director of Shelter Medicine.

Adams is on the Penn Vet Admissions Committee and in the veterinary fraternity Alpha Psi, which recently supported New Leash on Life—a nonprofit organization that pulls dogs out of kill shelters to have them trained by prison inmates, in an attempt to assimilate both back into society.

He’s also part of the Christian Veterinary Fellowship, a group of about 30 students who meet twice a week to pray and talk about their faith. “It helps with the pressure of school,” he said. “It keeps my head on straight and helps keep me focused on what’s important.”

Although he’s not sure where he will go with his veterinary career, Adams is happy where he is now, at age 24. “I love this place,” he said. “I feel really at home at this school and I’m extremely lucky to be here.”