



Veterinary Communication Faculty Position

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To Apply:

For full consideration, please submit a letter of intent, curriculum vitae, teaching or coaching philosophy statement, and names and contact information for three references. Please post materials electronically to: <https://jobs.colostate.edu/postings/70862>

For further information regarding the position:

- 1. [Veterinary Communication for Professional Excellence website](#)
- 2. [Veterinary Communication for Professional Excellence Program Video](#)
- 3. [Faculty Spotlight Video](#)

Starting salary for 9-month position is commensurate with experience:

\$55,000-65,000 - Instructor

\$60,000-75,000 - Assistant Professor

\$70,000-95,000 - Associate Professor

Deadline: November 20, 2019

A. Discipline: Veterinary Communication

1. **What is veterinary communication?**

Veterinary communication (veterinarian-client-patient interactions) is a specialized subcategory of medical communication (provider-patient interactions). Communication skills education is a core competency in veterinary curricula and one of the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education accreditation standards. Communication was identified as one of the seven professional competencies recognized by the North American Veterinary Medication Educational Consortium.

Communication competency includes effective communication with clients (caregivers), patients (animals), colleagues, other healthcare professionals, and the public, in oral, electronic, and written formats. Important routine veterinary communication tasks include agenda setting, eliciting and recording relevant patient histories, educating and counseling clients, and presenting diagnostic and treatment options. Difficult conversations comprise delivering bad news (e.g. patient with a terminal disease), disclosing an adverse event or medical error to clients, colleagues or employers, and financial and end-of-life discussions.

2. **What is the history of Veterinary Communication?**

In 2000, Cindy Adams, MSW, PhD, developed and implemented the first veterinary communication curriculum at the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph.

3. **Who are the leading experts in veterinary communication in North America?**

Currently a handful of experts exist in veterinary communication with varied backgrounds in veterinary medicine, surgery, epidemiology, social work, communication, and education. The following veterinary colleges host dedicated faculty positions in veterinary communication, and the remaining veterinary colleges employ veterinary specialists or counselors to teach communication.

- a. Cindy Adams, MSW, PhD – University of Calgary, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
- b. Kathleen Bonvicini, MPH, EdD – Institute for Healthcare Communication
- c. Julie Cary, DVM, MS, DACVS-LA – Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine
- d. Jason Coe, DVM, PhD – University of Guelph, Ontario Veterinary College
- e. April Kedrowitz, PhD -- North Carolina State Veterinary Medicine
- f. Suzanne Kurtz, PhD -- Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine – retired
- g. Jane Shaw DVM, PhD – Colorado State University, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

4. How is veterinary communication associated with outcomes of care?

Research began in medical communication in 1968 in pediatric medicine, and there are over 800 publications related to provider-patient interactions. As an emerging discipline, there are currently 100 published manuscripts related to veterinary communication education, or research. Veterinarian-client communication is significantly associated with clinical outcomes for veterinary patients, clients, and veterinary teams and practices:

1. Open-ended inquiry elicits more concerns and client dialogue and decreases the odds of a new concern arising at the closing of the interaction. (Dysart, Coe, Adams, 2011)
2. Client compliance or adherence to veterinary-recommended treatment is positively correlated with clear recommendations, relationship-centered care, client satisfaction, an empathetic and unhurried atmosphere, longer appointment time, and the use of positive rapport-building statements by the veterinarian. (Kanji, Coe, Adams et al, 2012)
3. Clients surveyed after their veterinarians underwent a communication skills intervention (training program) reported an increased intent to comply with veterinarian recommendations. (McArthur and Fitzgerald, 2016)
4. Positive talk (i.e. statements of approval and agreement or compliments) by veterinarians is positively correlated with veterinarian satisfaction with preventive care visits. (Shaw, Adams, Bonnett et al, 2012) Likewise, veterinarians who engage in building rapport with clients and talk to their patients report being more satisfied with patient visits for health problems (versus preventive care visits). (Shaw, Adams, Bonnett et al, 2012)
5. Veterinarian expressions of empathy are also positively associated with client satisfaction. (McArthur and Fitzgerald, 2013)

B. Program: Veterinary Communication for Professional Excellence

5. How is the CSU VCPE program internationally recognized as a model program?

1. Dr. Jane Shaw received the Academy of Communication in Healthcare Communication Teaching Excellence Award in 2018, recognizing educators who advance the field of healthcare communication.
2. In 2008 and 2015 the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education identified the communication curriculum as a standout during their accreditation visits. Year-in-and year-out the communication curriculum earns extraordinarily high praise from alumni.
3. In 2018 veterinarian alumni ranked communication as one of the strongest aspects of the veterinary medicine education program, and 97% ranked communication as their skill of greatest competence.

6. What is the history of the CSU Veterinary Communication for Professional Excellence (VCPE) Program?

VCPE began in 2014, resulting from a restructuring of the Argus Institute founded in 1985, defining two separate programs of emotional support (Argus) and communication professional development (VCPE). These programs were outgrowths and expansions of the Flint Animal Cancer Center, the leading animal cancer care center in the world. The founder, Dr. Stephen Withrow, instilled a culture of compassionate communication and care for clients and animal patients.

Professor Jane Shaw, DVM, PhD, developed the 52-hour core communication curriculum over the past 14 years. The developmental, integrated and experiential communication curriculum includes Foundations in Veterinary Medicine in Year 1 (Client Perspectives) and Year 2 (Preventative Medicine Communication and Ethical Communication), followed by Year 3 immersive practicum courses, and Year 4 Primary Care Rotation.

7. How is the CSU communication curriculum designed and implemented?

The communication curriculum is innovative, experiential, and transformative. A communication skills toolbox is developmentally-constructed over four years, and learning is integrated with professional domains (ethics and preventative medicine) and clinical service areas (primary care, avian, exotic, and zoo medicine, and equine ambulatory service). Communication skills are initially introduced through readings and two-hour lecture/workshops. This is followed by practice in communication laboratories in small groups, videotaping of client interactions, and formative peer and coach feedback.

Communication skills are taught in an additive and sequential approach, beginning with introductions and eliciting client goals and agenda, moving into soliciting patient history through open-ended questions; demonstrating empathy and working in partnership with clients; and providing simple and succinct explanations, finishing with summaries, checking in, and contracts between veterinarian and client for moving forward.

In the communication laboratory, veterinary students are videotaped with professional simulated clients who are highly trained actor-educators from the Center for Advancing Professional Excellence at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Clinical scenarios are based on actual cases and client interactions. Students are also videotaped in appointments with real clients in their fourth year on the primary care clinical rotation. Coaches are veterinary faculty and practicing veterinarians, who receive extensive communication and coaching training. Historically, 85% of the simulated clients and coaches return to continue teaching.

C. Position: 9-month Non-Tenure Track Faculty Position

8. What are the two types of veterinary faculty appointments?

There are two types of faculty appointments: contract and continuous. Contract appointments have a specified end date and a term of at least two years. At least one year prior to contract expiration, the faculty member shall be either given a new contract or the contract may be allowed to expire.

Continuing faculty appointments are “at will” and subject to termination by either party at any time. After ten semesters of employment, a continuing faculty member shall be given serious consideration for conversion to a contract faculty appointment.

Both types of appointments shall participate in annual reviews and the annual salary exercise in the same manner as tenured faculty. They have voting rights and are eligible to participate on departmental and college committees, except for decisions related to tenure. After at least twelve semesters of employment, both appointments are eligible for funding for release time to pursue scholarly development (i.e. sabbatical).

9. What are the opportunities for advancement and promotion for non-tenure track faculty?

Within the college and departmental culture, non-tenure track faculty status is equivalent to that of tenure-track faculty members. Non-tenure track faculty have an equal opportunity for promotion. The criteria for promotion and the timeline (6-year limit) for non-tenure track faculty are the same as for tenure track faculty.

Promotion is based on annual performance reviews. Faculty meet with an individualized faculty mentor committee twice a year and participate in annual reviews with the department head. The mentorship process is focused on outlining a path to successful promotion. College and departmental programs support grant writing and review, and the VCPE program provides opportunities for professional development and conference travel.

10. What are opportunities to generate summer salary?

The VCPE program will provide the first two years of summer salary. Afterwards as a 9-month position, there are opportunities to obtain support for summer funding. Depending on the candidate’s areas of expertise, various paths can be explored for summer salary, including additional teaching, research grants, continuing education, consulting, and community outreach.

11. What is the department and college culture related to communication faculty?

The communication curriculum is a recognized program of excellence within the DVM program. Veterinary students regularly evaluate the communication curriculum as highly effectual, relevant and strong. Numerous faculty members participate as communication coaches and support the integration of communication into their coursework, laboratories, and clinical rotations.

The veterinary faculty are highly collegial, and respect colleagues with communication expertise, and seek their counsel for themselves, clinical service team, and students. The Veterinary Teaching Hospital fosters a culture of compassionate care, and veterinary faculty are highly receptive to communication as part of professional development. Overall, the veterinary profession recognizes the importance of communication in developing collaborative relationships with clients to sustain the health and welfare of animal patients.

D. Position Description: Teaching, Research and Service Responsibilities

The distribution of teaching, research and service is negotiable based on the candidate's rank and background.

12. How does teaching differ in the veterinary communication curriculum?

The veterinary program is a four-year professional healthcare degree, post-baccalaureate. Veterinary students are highly focused, dedicated, and accomplished and as a result rewarding to teach. Currently, students progress through two-years of pre-clinical sciences and then a hybrid third year of clinical medicine courses and rotations. In the final clinical year, students rotate between clinical services within and outside of the CSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital. The end goal is to graduate Day 1-ready veterinarians prepared for success in diverse careers in veterinary medicine. Over 85% of the students choose companion animal practice and the remainder livestock, equine, industry, government, or research careers.

The format and structure of the communication curriculum includes modules and clinical rotations, resulting in short, focused, and intense teaching times. This allows for dedicated windows of time to meet research and service responsibilities. The teaching methodology is skills-based to foster relevant and practical application. Instruction occurs through a focus on communication skill development.

The bulk of the communication curriculum features interpersonal communication and focuses on veterinarian-client-patient interactions in the clinical setting. The end goal is to equip veterinary students with communication competency for success in client, team and professional interactions. Given the emphasis on skill development, the faculty member will contribute instructional expertise as a course coordinator,

instructor, and communication coach for small groups of students in the communication laboratory.

13. What are potential areas of research focus?

Veterinary communication is a young field of investigation, so research topics needing attention are wide open. Communication scholars and practitioners are respected by CSU veterinary faculty and there are numerous opportunities for collaborative research. Research topics might include intercultural communication, organizational communication in veterinary practice, environmental communication, and veterinary communication, professional development or social media. The new faculty member may continue current research paths and interests and receive credit for that scholarship on annual reviews. Additionally, there are myriad opportunities for collaborations with graduate students in communication departments at Colorado State University, University of Colorado, University of Denver, and University of Northern Colorado.

14. What are potential opportunities for service?

Depending on the individual's background and expertise, the faculty member might be well-suited to participate in curriculum-related communities, such as the DVM Steering Committee, Admissions Committee, Curriculum Committee, or Residents in Training Committee. S/he will also serve as a coach for veterinary professionals in continuing education FRANK® (fostering open and "frank" veterinarian-client conversations) Communication Workshop Series. The FRANK Workshop Series is an outgrowth of the CSU communication curriculum to equip veterinary professionals in practice with a strong communication toolbox. Multiple consulting opportunities exist for communication workshops or in-practice communication coaching.