

University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine

Policy on Corporate Interaction

(*abridged)

Introduction

The University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine (UGA CVM) acknowledges that interactions between corporate entities and their representatives occur regularly between UGA CVM faculty, staff, house officers, and students (hereafter “personnel”). These interactions have the potential to educate UGA CVM personnel regarding therapies, product lines, medical devices, and diets that may be helpful to patients and clients of the UGA CVM and elsewhere. These interactions also prepare veterinary students for interactions they may have as veterinary practitioners after graduation. When interactions between corporate entities and students occur under the oversight of a UGA CVM faculty member or house officer, they may provide an opportunity to educate students on concepts such as conflict of interest, bias, and transparency in clinical practice and research. However, interactions between corporate entities and UGA CVM personnel also have the potential to introduce bias in clinical practice that may be harmful to patients or clients. Therefore, the UGA CVM has developed policies for corporate interactions with UGA CVM personnel, with an emphasis on interactions between corporate entities and veterinary students.

Background and overarching principles

Overarching principles that have been considered in development of policies are as follows:

1. The UGA CVM is committed to ensuring transparency in all dealings between UGA CVM personnel and corporate entities and their representatives.
2. In clinical practice, the primary responsibility of UGA CVM personnel is to the patient and client.
3. Research has shown that receipt of even small gifts from corporate entities can influence the clinical practice of physicians (PLoS Med 2012;7:1-22). It is possible that veterinarians are similarly influenced, however this has not been definitively proven.
4. Because of the current organization of veterinary practice, veterinarians in clinical practice are more likely than physicians to be required to interact directly with corporate representatives to make decisions regarding medications, medical devices, feedstuffs, and supplements that may be necessary for appropriate care of their patients. Therefore, within certain limits, interactions between veterinary students and corporate entities and their representatives provide an opportunity for students to develop skills and knowledge to help them recognize and minimize bias and conflict of interest in their clinical practice that may arise from such interactions after they graduate.
5. Corporate entities and their representatives should not have undue influence on veterinary students. UGA CVM faculty staff should be aware of corporate interactions with veterinary students in the UGA CVM, and guidelines will ensure that interactions between corporate entities and UGA CVM veterinary students operate within appropriate limits.
6. All corporate entities should have equal opportunity to interact with students, including the ability to solicit students to serve as company representatives within the UGA CVM.

*entire policy can be found at www.vet.uga.edu/academic/cip