

## **VETERINARY DEBT INITIATIVE ROUNDUP**

**December 1, 2019**

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Led by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges and the Veterinary Medical Association Executives, the Veterinary Debt Initiative (VDI) is focused on helping veterinarians thrive in financially sustainable and rewarding careers. The VDI's primary purpose is to raise awareness and provide access to resources that enable pre-veterinary students, veterinary students and veterinarians to make highly informed financial decisions. **We want to bring your attention to these important resources and happenings:**

### **VDI Strategy Tied to 2019 Veterinary Wellbeing Summit**

The American Veterinary Medical Association, American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) and Zoetis teamed up to present the [2019 Veterinary Wellbeing Summit](#), "Putting the WE in Wellbeing," Nov. 16-19 in Rosemont, Illinois. Veterinary Debt Initiative (VDI) leadership was on hand to educate attendees on the wide-ranging importance of addressing educational debt— from the wellbeing of individual veterinarians to the viability of the profession itself. The VDI session "The Collaborative Approach to the Veterinary Debt Initiative," outlined the VDI's strategy for addressing this issue as well as multitude of debt-related resources available to participants. AVMA and AAVMC lead the Veterinary Debt Initiative with the Veterinary Medical Association Executives.

### **Followup stories related to the [2019 AVMA Economic Summit](#) held Oct. 22-23 in Rosemont, Illinois:**

Malinda Larkin of *JAVMA News* [summarized the comprehensive results](#) from the AVMA survey of the 2019 graduating class presented by Dr. Bridgette Bain, AVMA Associate Director of Analytics.

Financial planner Isaiah Douglass summarized his key learnings from the AVMA Economic Summit in the Oct. 31 blog post "[AVMA Economic Summit-Takeaways](#)" and "The Veterinarian Success" podcast Episode 21, "[Disability Insurance 101 & AVMA Economic Summit Review.](#)" Amy Snyder, Amanda Bates, and Andrew Rotz shared their [highlights from the 2019 AVMA Economic Summit](#) in the North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine podcast Season 2, Episode 10.

### **WSJ Scorecard: Compare by school and major to see who has the highest income—and the most debt**

The [interactive graphic](#) on *The Wall Street Journal* website\* Nov. 20 allowed readers to visualize student debt and expected initial salary for every college or university and career, including veterinary medicine. “Fundamentally, the results for higher education, including veterinary medicine, aren’t any different than the debt-to-income ratios the AVMA has been sharing with the profession. However, to see the data presented on *The Wall Street Journal* website is striking,” said Dr. David Granstrom, Assistant Executive Vice President of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). The AVMA partners with the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges and the Veterinary Medical Association Executives to lead the Veterinary Debt Initiative.

\*access requires *WSJ* subscription

### **Lawsuit: CFPB Ignores Mismanagement of Public Student Loan Forgiveness Program**

Chris Arnold of National Public Radio provided the [latest details](#) Nov. 25 on a lawsuit filed by the nonprofit student loan group, Student Debt Crisis, against the Consumer Financial Protection Agency Bureau (CFPB): “[The lawsuit](#)...alleges that the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has abandoned its obligation to oversee companies that manage student loans, in particular a troubled loan forgiveness program.” Natalia Abrams, the founder of the Student Debt Crisis said: “We are suing the Department of Education and the CFPB because they are not doing their jobs.” Abrams continued, “Over the past year, I have spoken with hundreds of borrowers, sometimes multiple borrowers, every single day and had to break their hearts” because “they’ve fallen victim to problems with the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.” Alex Sands, Assistant Director of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Government Relations Division, asks for veterinarians who have been affected by the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program to share their story [here](#). Sands also encourages veterinary students and veterinarians to [visit the AVMA site](#) to sign up for updates and get involved in advocacy efforts on this issue. The AVMA leads the Veterinary Debt Initiative with the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges and the Veterinary Medical Association Executives.

### **Financial Wellness Alliance Launches Next Month**

The Higher Education Financial Wellness Alliance ([HEFWA.org](#)) officially launches next month. HEFWA is for professionals dedicated to bringing together post-secondary organizations to inform national conversations that impact financial wellness, public policy, and educational support services. “Any alliance that generates fresh ideas for sharing information about teaching financial wellness concepts can only help the students in our profession,” said Dr. David Granstrom, Assistant Executive Vice President of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), a Veterinary Debt Initiative co-lead organization. If interested in joining the discussion, there is a link to sign up for the HEFWA listserv at the bottom of the HEFWA webpage. The AVMA partners with the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges and the Veterinary Medical Association Executives to lead the Veterinary Debt Initiative.

### **New Statistics on State Taxpayer Support for Public Institutions are Challenged**

InsideHigherEd.com contributor F. King Alexander provided commentary Nov. 26 in [“The Reality of State Disinvestment in Public Higher Education”](#) on recent studies that have “produced an avalanche of questionable statistics to the effect that public institutions do not warrant taxpayer support.” One [study](#) by Andrew Gillen of the Texas Public Policy Foundation was challenged in particular: “[The study] disparages reports of degeneration in state funding, maintaining that no real decline has occurred over the previous decades. The report claims that any alleged decrease in public investment in higher education is more perceived than real.” Alexander concluded: “This study inaccurately attempts to let our states off the hook for what the vast majority of higher education finance studies have shown time and time again: that the primary culprit for increases in student cost and indebtedness among our nation’s public higher education students is a decrease in state commitment and investment.” Ralph Johnson, CEO of the Veterinary Medical Association Executives (VMAE) commented, “The sobering fact is that there are several studies that show a clear decline in state funding, paralleling the rise of student tuition and debt. A continuous and substantial reduction in state fiscal support for higher education will further impact veterinarians and their student debt burden. The federal government should take a more proactive role in prioritizing higher education and support state efforts to help the profession.” VMAE leads the Veterinary Debt Initiative with the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges.

### **Forgiving Student Debt Would Boost Economy, Economists Say**

Chris Arnold of National Public Radio reported on [economists’ latest views on student debt proposals](#) from presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren Nov. 25: “Economists say the dramatic proposals from Sanders and Warren to free millions of Americans from the burden of student debt could boost the economy in significant ways and help combat income inequality.” Arnold added, “The reason debt forgiveness could have a big impact on the overall economy is that a generation of Americans is making major life decisions differently because of student loans.” Arnold provided input from William Foster, a vice president with Moody’s, which recently reported on student debt forgiveness and Lawrence Yun, the National Association of Realtors chief economist. Yun said, “Home sales could be, say, 300,000 higher annually if people were not saddled with large student debt” which would be “a boost to the housing sector as well as the economy.”

### **ASAE Webinar Explores Student Loan Repayment Programs as Employee Benefit**

The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) hosted a free webinar, “Student Loan Benefits and Your Organization’s Retirement Program” Nov. 21. Different retirement plan programs and reasons why employers should offer student loan repayment as an [employee benefit](#) were discussed. Pharmaceutical and health care products company Abbott Laboratories was featured as a case study for its [innovative](#)

[program](#) designed to encourage employees to pay down their student debt by helping them save for retirement at the same time.

*For employers interested in benefits programs, the Veterinary Debt Initiative recently [published an article](#) from an employer who implemented one type of benefit program.*

### **A Closer Look at Financial Literacy in New Veterinary Graduates**

Darby Affeldt, DVM, RICP, is a financial advisor to veterinarians at North Star Resource Group in Seattle. In a recent [dvm360.com](#) article, [“Why are so many veterinary grads financially illiterate,”](#) Affeldt explored reasons why financial literacy is so variable among veterinary graduates. She said, “I ask students to rate their own financial literacy on a scale of 1 to 10—1 is Snoopy and 10 is Warren Buffett. The average is 3. It turns out that where they go to school makes a big difference.” Affeldt also examined loan forgiveness (she said it was not for everyone), insurance and her duty to help the profession by providing complimentary advising: “I pray that my experience will inspire others in this industry to step in, step up and bring our veterinary colleagues the resources they desperately need to start out on the right financial foot.” The Veterinary Debt Initiative (VDI) is led by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges and the Veterinary Medical Association Executives, and is committed to raising awareness and providing access to resources that enable pre-veterinary students, veterinary students and veterinarians to make highly informed financial decisions. For more information and valuable resources, visit [www.VeterinaryDebtInitiative.org](http://www.VeterinaryDebtInitiative.org).

### **Veterinary Debt in the Spotlight: VDI Speaker Events**

Check out how the Veterinary Debt Initiative is leading efforts in the student debt crisis at these upcoming VDI-sponsored speaker events:

- [2020 AVMA Veterinary Leadership Conference, Chicago, IL](#)  
Friday 1/10/20 at 3 pm: Beyond Dollars and Cents: Leadership in Student Debt Strategies
- [2020 AAVMC Annual Conference, Washington D.C.](#)  
3/6-3/8: Time and location TBD