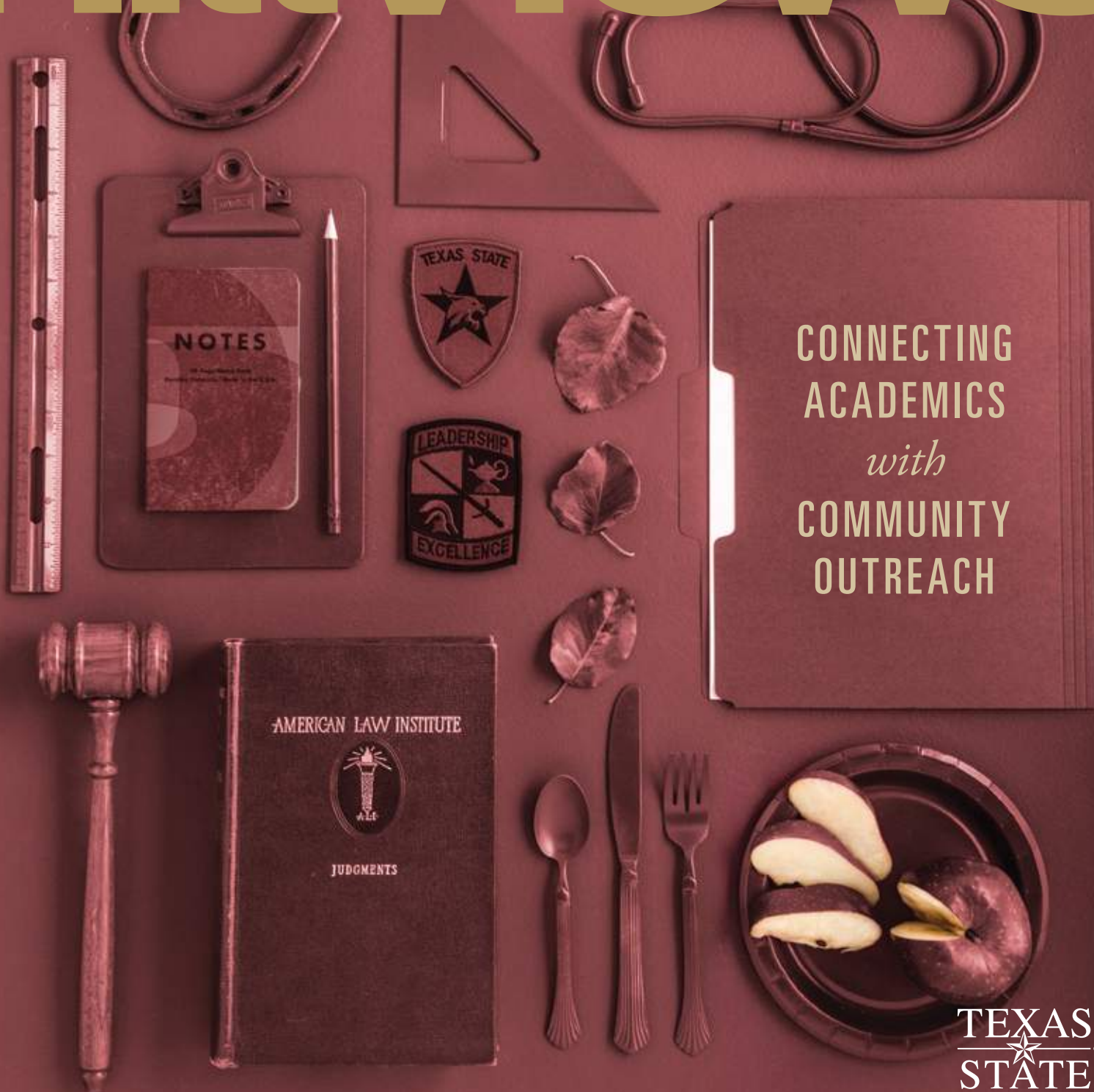


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OUTSTANDING in her field

Ag major Sara Moreman
ready for vet school

By Ashley Festa

For someone who wasn't certain she was good enough to be a veterinarian, Sara Moreman sure makes the quest look easy.

She began her studies as a freshman at Texas State majoring in wildlife biology because she knew she wanted to work with animals — but believed a career as a doctor was out of her league. Clearly she was wrong, judging by her undergraduate academic success and her recent acceptance into Texas A&M University's College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, one of only 28 veterinary medicine schools in the nation.

"I was one of those nerds who actually enjoyed going to class," Moreman says. "The agriculture department was supportive of me. They've been on my side since Day One."

And she has made the department proud. Moreman earned the Outstanding Student Award for her sophomore, junior and senior years. As a senior, she also earned the Outstanding Undergraduate Award for the entire College of Applied Arts.

This fall, she'll begin studying to become a doctor of veterinary medicine at Texas A&M, which accepts only 25 percent of the students who apply.

Moreman isn't only academically talented. She also spent her time in voluntary and leadership positions, including serving as president of the pre-veterinary society of Texas State, teaching horseback riding lessons at summer camp, and donating time at veterinary clinics and an animal rescue shelter.

In fact, it was during a vet clinic internship that it dawned on a 17-year-old Moreman that she wanted to be a veterinarian. Even with all her experience with animals, she still felt uncertain about her future as a successful doctor. One of her professors, Dr. Hardin Rahe, finally convinced her that her aspiration was an attainable goal.

"Dr. Rahe is a tough professor, and his expectations were really high," Moreman says. "He inspired me to learn and do as well as I could and never accept second best. His expectations had me in the right mindset to start vet school."

The retired professor and former chair of agriculture has nothing but praise for Moreman, who graduated in May. "I taught almost 10,000 students in my life many of whom wanted to be veterinarians, so they were usually above average in college intellect," says Rahe. "Sara was one of the crème de la crème. For someone to pull off the grades that she does and have the leadership skills that she does, it's incredible. With her intellect and leadership, she will continue to make significant contributions to society."

Like most veterinary medicine schools, Texas A&M doesn't require students to have an undergraduate degree. They must, however, fulfill 12 prerequisite classes such as animal science, genetics, and nutrition, as well as English composition and public speaking. After spending her freshman year in the biology department, Moreman discovered that Texas State's agriculture-animal science major, with specialization in pre-veterinary medicine, would ensure nothing was overlooked in her pursuit of vet school and also provide her a bachelor of science diploma. She also took electives such as human anatomy and physiology — "to get my feet wet studying humans" — before studying animal anatomy in veterinary school.

"With her intellect and leadership, she will continue to make significant contributions to society." — Dr. Hardin Rahe

When she finally decided to follow her dream, Moreman's first thought was to work with cows, horses, and other large animals. She was, after all, studying in the agriculture department. "When you think about veterinarians, most people think domesticated pets," Moreman says. "But vets are important to food safety and production. Herd health is important to society because we eat these animals, and vets help with the world's food supply."

After much hands-on experience working with farm animals at Freeman Center, the university's animal research ranch, she realized that as a woman just 5 feet, 4 inches tall, it might be difficult to handle the large livestock. Instead, Moreman plans to focus on small companion animals and will consider specializing in exotic pets.

"Larger animals aren't out of the picture, though," she says. "There are lots of petite vets who take care of larger animals. If that's something I decide to do, I'll find a way."

For now, Moreman is leaving her options open to explore and pursue the specialty that most suits her. Eventually, her goal is to open her own practice, preferably in the Hill Country. The Houston native says it's her favorite place in the world since her parents moved to Wimberley four years ago.

Research also interests her as a future possibility, and ethics are high on her list of priorities. "If I do research and testing on animals, I want to give those animals the best life possible and treat them humanely," Moreman says. "I want to get my foot in the door and make changes. I know animal testing is necessary, but I want to do it humanely."

That's vital, she says, in working with animals because they don't have the ability to communicate like humans do. That's also one of the reasons Moreman believes veterinary medicine is more difficult than human medicine.

"Your patients can't tell you what's wrong," she says. "And sometimes they try to attack. But they don't sue. That's the one good thing." 🐾