

Hello. My name is Lauren Feinman, and I am a second-year student in the veterinary technician program at Middlesex Community College.

My journey to this point starts in Midtown Manhattan, where I was standing outside of a high rise, where I worked as a transcriptionist in a multinational translation firm. I was outside, having a cigarette with my boss, when she turned to me and said, “You can’t possibly want to do this for the rest of your life.” There was no upward mobility in my job, and I was struggling to make ends meet. You’d think, working in Midtown Manhattan, for a multinational company, I would be making good money, but this was not the case. I was merely a drone. However, when my boss asked me, “What do you want to do with your life,” I flippantly replied, “Well, I like cats.” The truth is, I really had no idea. I had a bachelor’s degree in theater with a minor in philosophy, which, at the time, all of the college-prep books said would, if nothing else, be guaranteed an office job and a six-figure salary, because everyone wants to hire someone with good people skills. Obviously, in the early 2000s, this turned out to not be the case. I was going nowhere fast, barely able to pay my bills, and always tired, falling into a depression, because I was struggling and spending most of my time in a job I didn’t care about.

My flippant response, “I like cats,” kept banging around in my head. In high school, I had always done well in science classes and was so interested in science that, even though I majored in theater, I took at least one science class per semester in college. A year after giving that flippant response, I had quit that dead-end job and started on the journey I’m on now.

I moved to Connecticut, did some research, had some false starts, and finally heard about the veterinary technician program at Middlesex Community College. I knew right away that it would be the right fit for me. I was impressed with the small, cohort-style classes, as well as the partnership with Pieper-Olson Veterinary Hospital, but I really had no idea how wonderful this program was until I was accepted.

It is truly amazing to be taught by the people who work in the field. Not only have I learned the science and technique, but I’ve learned real-life expectations from the kinds of people who will be having those expectations of me in the future. I now work as an emergency room technician at Central Hospital for Veterinary Medicine in North Haven, and although I know there are certain things that can only be learned through experience, I feel prepared to communicate effectively with my colleagues in the appropriate language, to understand what they expect of me, and to be able to perform, the tasks which I am assigned. I never feel lost on the job, like I don’t know what the people around me are talking about or like I don’t know what to do next. The combination of experience and what I’ve learned in class is helping me anticipate my patients’ needs and the needs of my doctors and colleagues.

The veterinary field is moving in the direction of human medicine. More and more people see their pets as part of their families and demand the best care possible. Veterinary hospitals now offer specialties ranging from internal medicine, oncology, neurology, dermatology, ophthalmology, and so much more. With expectations of care increasing and veterinary medicine advancing so quickly, well-educated technicians are in high demand, and that demand is only increasing. And as the demand for well-educated technicians increases, the importance of

programs like the veterinary technician program at Middlesex Community College will increase. In our climate of uncertainty, where a four-year degree does not necessarily mean that one will be able to attain a well-paying job, it is comforting to know that there are programs like this, where it is all but guaranteed that, upon graduating and becoming certified, a well-paying job is waiting for you.

We all know that a four-year degree is not the answer for everyone, so I hope that everyone here understands the importance of supporting community colleges and technical schools, so that those of us who have a passion have the opportunity to pursue it.

I want to thank you so much for taking the time to listen and for your continued support of Connecticut community colleges and, in particular, Middlesex.