



# Student Advocate

Making a difference for animals  
used in education at  
colleges and universities





Many colleges and universities use animals for dissection or in experimentation as part of science classes and/or in scientific research. Every year, millions of animals, including cats, frogs, fetal pigs, rats, mice, crayfish, shark, and pigeons, are killed and dissected in classrooms. Although many animals are purchased as dead specimens, others are subjected to painful and lethal procedures while still alive. Due to the pain and suffering inflicted on animals used in education, many students ethically object to the use of animals as mere educational tools. In fact, students throughout the country have influenced their college or university communities to pass policies allowing students to learn without harming animals.

**You can also make a difference  
for animals used in education!**



# What You Can Do

## Object to Dissection

### 1. Voice Your Objections Early

Find out what the requirements are before enrolling in a course, and if it does involve an animal lab, speak to the professor about your concerns. When you state your objections to using animals you should do so calmly and pragmatically. Your professor may not hold your philosophical beliefs, and will likely respond best to a rational discussion based on fact instead of one based on emotion. Be sure to ask questions and find out what your professor wants you to learn from the discussion or lab exercise so that you can select an alternative that will cover the same materials without harming animals.

### 2. Contact Animalearn

Contact Animalearn at [info@animalearn.org](mailto:info@animalearn.org) or by phone at 800-729-2287 to receive guidance on how to voice your objections and to borrow, for free, alternatives to animals used in dissection or live animal labs.

### 3. Speak to Other Students

There may be other students who feel the same way you do about dissection but are afraid to speak out publicly. Your argument will be more persuasive if you collectively voice your concerns.

### 4. Speak to the Department Chair or Dean

If your professor is unwilling to discuss alternatives or provide an alternative project for you, take your request to the Department Chair or Dean.



## Start a Student Animal Group

Individual students can help to eliminate the use of animals in education at college campuses. However, there is strength in numbers and when like-minded students collaborate and form student groups at colleges and universities, they make significant progress for animals. If your college or university does not have a student group that promotes and supports animal issues on campus, take the initiative and start one. Working with a student group can often be helpful when trying to make positive change in areas such as objecting to dissection and live animal use and creating student choice policies.

## Propose a Student Choice Policy

If you don't want to harm and/or kill an animal as part of your education, consider starting a student choice policy to protect your rights, and the rights of other students. Student choice policies ensure that those who refuse to participate in lab exercises that utilize animals will be afforded non-animal alternatives without penalty.

For K-12 students, laws have been passed in ten states (California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Vermont) that guarantee a student the right to choose an alternative to an animal lab. However, unlike elementary and secondary schools, most colleges and universities do not have an overriding school code that is dictated by the state or overarching governing body. As a result, individual institutions prescribe their own guidelines on issues such as dissection and vivisection in the classroom.

Although some colleges and universities have formal student choice policies that afford students the right to use an alternative, such policies may not exist on your campus. At schools that do not have a formal policy, students must discuss the issue with their professors or department heads. This can be a frustrating process for students who must then state their objections and request an alternative each time they want to take a class that includes the use of animals.

In response, students across the U.S. are implementing student choice policies at their colleges and universities. The first formal student choice policy was established at Sarah Lawrence College in 1994. Building on Sarah Lawrence's precedent, student advocates at Cornell University, Bryn Mawr College, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Hofstra University, and others have initiated and helped to pass student choice policies for ethically-minded students in biology, psychology, and other courses.

# How to Pass a Student Choice Policy

## 1. Speak to Other Students

When like-minded students are brought together, your collective voices increase the likelihood of the policy passing. Seek out biology and psychology majors so that you have voices from students who this policy will most affect. Non-majors are also helpful, because some may have avoided certain science classes because of dissection or animal requirements.

## 2. Petition

A good way to generate additional support is by sponsoring a petition advocating for a student's right to choose.

## 3. Speak to the Alumni Association

If you are circulating a petition, the Alumni Association may be able to e-mail the petition to post graduates. Having alumni support the student choice policy could have an influential effect on the campus administration, especially if some of the alumni are donors to the college or university.

## 4. Student Government

Contact your student government to discuss passing a resolution in support of a student's right to choose an alternative.

## 5. Speak to Professors

Meet with the biology and/or psychology professors and chairs. Introduce yourself and explain that you want to ensure that those students who request an alternative to dissection or live animal use are provided one. Contact Animalearn to borrow alternatives to dissection and vivisection for free ([www.Animalearn.org](http://www.Animalearn.org)). Then ask to meet with professors or the entire department to demonstrate alternatives and to further discuss a student choice policy.



## 6. Develop Supportive Faculty Member Relationships

Identify a supportive faculty member to help spearhead student choice policy efforts.

## 7. Speak to the Administration

If the biology and psychology chairs or departments are not agreeable to instituting a student choice policy, be persistent and go to the school's administration, including Deans, Provost, or President. Respectfully, present the issue as you did to the professors and chairs.

## 8. Speak to the Press

Submit a thoughtful, reasonable letter to your campus paper and local television stations and newspapers to begin a dialogue regarding dissection alternatives and student choice policies.

# How to Draft a Student Choice Policy

Animalearn and Dr. Lynette Hart of the University of California, Davis, conducted a study regarding the development of student choice policies at the college and university level, and the following criteria are recommended considerations for passing a successful student choice policy:



- **Address academic requirements and curricular issues.**
- **Review existing student choice policies at major universities for content and supporting documentation.**
- **Identify specific courses that will be affected by the policy.**
- **Assess whether it will be more effective to offer alternatives in affected courses or to offer 'alternatives only' courses in specific semesters.**
- **Decide whether the policy will be university-wide or just relevant to specific departments.**



- **Clarify students' options for choice and clearly designate classes with animal use.**
- **Ensure that students are made aware prior to class registration, i.e. on the course syllabus, that animal dissection and/or experimentation is part of the course.**
- **Decide if students and/or faculty are responsible for acquiring acceptable alternatives.**



## About Animalearn

Animalearn, the education division of the American Anti-Vivisection Society, is dedicated to assisting educators and students in finding non-animal methods of teaching and studying science. Towards that objective, Animalearn created The Science Bank, a comprehensive lending program with hundreds of CD-ROMS, realistic models, and many other humane products that enable educators to teach and students to learn anatomy, physiology, and psychology lessons without harming animals. Compassionate students and educators can access this program online at [www.Animalearn.org](http://www.Animalearn.org) or call 800-729-2287.



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