

Name: Will Richner  
Home Town: Stamford, CT  
Year of Graduation: 2014  
Current School: The University Of Rhode Island  
Major: Pre Veterinary, Animal Science

Two weeks ago I walked out of my house into my car and then a few hours later into my new home at The University of Rhode Island. I am but a number in a vast pool of 15,000 undergraduate students. It is an intimidating moment, walking into a new place not knowing many people. You are scared, you are nervous; you don't know how you are going to make it through your next four years. This exact situation happened to me four years ago as a high school freshman, I went from a middle school with maybe 100 kids in my grade, to a High School with nearly 500 in my grade. Once again I was scared, nervous, and did not know how I was going to make it through the next four years.

Then I found my home away from home. Without telling me, my mom had signed me up for the Stamford Regional Agriscience Program. I walked into my AG 1 class that first day having no clue what it was or why it was on my schedule. Ms. Jeffries got up in front of the class and started to talk about how we would be learning about all different kinds of animals and that on Tuesdays we would have a doggie daycare (people would bring their dogs in for the school day and the students would take care of them, bathe them and groom them if they wanted). Later in that class, Dr. Lisy came in and announced that a few people had not gone through the correct process to get into the program; my name was called. Now, at this point I was pretty upset, I was just told that I was going to get to play with animals as a class, and now I was being told I was not. As soon as I got home that day I told my mom that she did not go through the right process of getting me into the program and that I was really interested in the subject matter of the class. So we drove over to Westhill and walked into the Agriscience building and found Dr. Lisy. He informed us that there were a few open spots in the class and that I would have to go through the application process. After two weeks of sitting in a class room and watching Dirty Jobs, I was accepted into the program and could rejoin the class. I was not disappointed by my decision and loved every second of the class.

In the following years, I settled into the program and found my interest point to be dogs. I grew up with a dog my whole life but never thought I would want to work with them. One of the requirements of being in the Agriscience program is completing a pre-determined number of hours in a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE for short). My Junior year I decided to go and try to get a job at a local animal hospital. Bulls Head Pet Hospital answered my application and invited me in for an interview. I got the job and later moved through the ranks of kennel staff to doctor's assistant and eventually to a surgical technician. Drs. Zeide (Nolan and Steve) would always say to people who brought their new puppies in "set them up for success, don't put them in a situation where they can fail". Thinking back about that quote, that is exactly what the Agriscience program had done with its new students when we started. We made resumes, cover letters, practiced public speaking skills and even competed in competitions that would prepare us for the

working world. My senior year I took the hardest class the program had to offer, ECE biology, which is UCONN's introduction to biology class. It was an eye opening class. I was learning college material in High School and honestly struggling with it. However, that class while extremely challenging taught me more about my self than any other life experience had. Now I am taking a similar class in college and am receiving 100% on assignments, and I attribute that success to Dr. Lisy, the program director and teacher of ECE bio for preparing me and challenging me to be and become a better student. This testimonial is running quite long as you are probably noticing and I have not covered even a tenth of how amazing my experience in the program was. But to sum it up, I made the Stamford Agriscience Program the best part of my High School experience and in return the program prepared me for the road ahead. If I had to give any advice it would be to get involved, and I don't just mean going to the chapter meetings once a month and listening to the speaker. I mean GET INVOLVED, become an office of the program, if you don't want a leadership position compete in a competition, there will be one for you. Set yourself up for success by joining the program and the teachers won't put you in a position to fail.