College Students and Pet Ownership: A Good Combo?

The love and affection that comes from owning a pet is undoubtedly one of the best feelings a person endures. However, is owning a pet right for everyone? Entering the new and intimidating world of college, students may encounter a maelstrom of uncomfortable emotions such as loneliness, stress, and even depression. Many students decide to get pets in order to solve these issues, but what many do not realize is that owning pets is not easy. In fact, most colleges do not allow students to own pets (with the exception of fish) making it very difficult for students to have pets with them during school. Do these college campuses underestimate the capability of college students owning pets, or are they correct in their assumptions that college students are just not ready for the additional responsibility? While many studies have found that keeping a pet can provide several benefits to college campuses and students, there are other studies that say it is too much of a risk and burden to allow students to own pets in college housing.

The following research attempts to discuss the varying issues and benefits that arise from college students owning pets and whether or not it is appropriate for college campuses to be more pet-friendly towards their housing.

Review of Literature

*Coping with the Stresses of College*
Research has indicated that interaction with pets may trigger physiological responses that reduce stress in people (“College Students”; “For Stressed”; Odendaal and Mejintes; Reynolds and Rabschutz). Being around pets not only lowers blood pressure, but also raises neurochemicals such as oxytocin that are associated with bonding and pleasure and decreases neurochemicals such as cortisol that are associated with stress (Odendaal and Mejintes). Some sources say that allowing students to own pets in college will lower the anxieties that they face on a day-to-day basis including final exams, financial pressures, work load, and other demanding burdens (“For Stressed”). Based on a survey by the Ohio State University, “Many [students] feel their pets will help get them through these difficult and stressful situations (“College Students”). Several pet programs across the country such as Paws to Relax at the University of Connecticut testify to the positive impact that animals have had on students during the time of finals week. In response to the University’s pet program, one student exclaimed “I have a really rough finals schedule and… I was really upset. To be able to see a doggie and play with him made my life so much better today and my finals so much easier to do” (Reynolds and Rabschutz). However, some sources against the idea of college students owning pets say that a better option would be for students to volunteer at local shelters so that they are still able to be around animals and release stress but without the responsibility of owning a pet (Felix).

Social Support and Facilitation

Research has indicated that owning pets allows people to cope with the difficult transition into college and as a real adult (“College Students”; Kurdek; Lytle; Steinberg). After moving away from close friends and family, students are pressured into forming new connections with new people. During this time, young adults are “reorganizing their attachment systems” from parents and siblings to friends and romantic partners making pets and their unconditional
attention a great need (Kurdek). Sometimes during this process, students feel lonely, isolated or depressed. Therefore, the companionship of an animal serves as “social support” for college students (Lytle). “Students who chose to live with at least one dog, one cat, or a combination of the two were less likely to report feeling lonely and depressed; something they directly attributed to their beloved pet” (“College Students”). Other sources exclaim that pets serve as social facilitators because pets can serve as a “ready-made topic of conversation” with others which allow students to bond and form friendships easier (Lytle). However, some worry that pets may actually slow the social transition. “By having your pet there, you could have an excuse not to go out and talk to people” (Steinberg). Nevertheless, while pets should not be substitutes for human socialization, they do however “provide important interaction for these kids who might otherwise feel isolated from their current environment” (“College students”).

*College Student’s Lifestyle*

Research also debates whether or not students should own pets solely on the basis of the perceived lifestyle of college students (Felix; Lytle; Peters). While there are exceptions, most would agree that the life of a college student is unpredictable or even unstable. “The chaos of campus life, the tendency among young people to make impulsive choices, and the vagaries of post-graduation life” make owning pets a difficult challenge in college (Peters). The distractions of school, work, friends, and other commitments cause most students to have no time left to give a pet the proper care and attention it needs. In addition, most pets are abandoned or dropped off at shelters at the end of the school year when students move out of housing, commonly known as “end-of-semester dumping” (Felix). However, some sources debate that allowing students to own pets in college will actually increase the student’s level of responsibility by giving them “more structure and organization to their day because they have another being they are
responsible for” (Lytle). Furthermore, many students do not have the finances that are required to own a pet. “Just food and routine vet care can cost hundreds of dollars a year, and if a pet is hurt or sick, the tab can be thousands” (Peters). With tuition and other college expenses that are already burdensome, many say that students need to be honest with themselves about their budget and their ability to afford and take care of another living thing (Felix).

**Impact on College Campuses**

Some research indicates that the impact that pets have on the school itself is an important factor as well (Hess; Peters; Steinberg). Allowing pet-friendly housing causes animal lovers to be more willing to live on-campus, which ultimately affects the colleges’ housing income in a positive manner (Peters). Others say that allowing students to own pets in a school’s housing increases the school’s attraction and likability to prospective students. “In an increasingly competitive recruiting market for top students, becoming known as pet-friendly is another way for a college to differentiate itself” (Steinberg). At Stephen’s College, students have even announced that their pet-friendly housing was the reason why they decided to attend that particular school (Peters). However, many others have said that building a pet housing program will be too much of an administrative burden to keep up with (Hess). Starting and effectively maintaining a successful pet program will require “time, attention, policymaking and monitoring than many administrators are willing to tackle” (Peters). However, if the school is able and willing, some say that a pet housing program could work to the animals’ advantage because a program that is “well-structured with regular monitoring” will make sure college students are taking care of pets correctly (Peters).

While there are many viewpoints regarding college students and owning pets from a variety of different people, there is not a lot of research that directly asks or questions a college
student’s point of view on the subject. The following research intends to dive into the minds of college students to see what their stance is on students owning pets and to see how they feel regarding college campuses becoming more pet-friendly based on their own opinions and experiences.

Methods

Interview

I decided to conduct an interview with Caitlyn Miller, a Sophomore at the University of Central Florida. I chose to talk to Caitlyn because she is a college student that has owned a pet during her time at college so she would provide a great outlook on the topic. We met outside of the breezeway on the UCF campus on Wednesday, March 19, 2014 for about 30 minutes where I asked her questions. I originally tried to use the Dragon Diction application on my iphone where it writes out your conversation, but it was the first time I used it and it got too complicated to use so I switched over to Voice Memos. Unfortunately, I missed a little bit of the beginning conversation during this time. For the remainder of the interview, I used the voice memos application to record our interview. I then went back and listened to everything we talked about that was recorded through voice memos and I wrote it all down in a Word document (see Appendix A).

Survey

I decided to generate a survey through Survey Monkey which was posted on both the UCF Class of 2017 Facebook group and the UCF Pre-Veterinary Facebook Group. The UCF Class of 2017 page has over 5,000 students and requires a @knights.ucf.edu email account, so it was fairly certain that most of these students were college students. The Pre-Veterinary Facebook group consists of mainly UCF pre-vet students and contains 428 members. Because
Survey Monkey only allows a maximum of ten questions, I could not ask all of the questions I originally wanted to ask. Instead, I asked questions such as if they were college students, if they had pets, what their experience was like with owning those pets, and if they believed college campuses should be more open to students owning pets. I tried to make the questions as short and easy as possible. I also tried to stay away from short response answers (although I did have one short response question) because I knew people would not want to spend the time on those questions. So instead, I mainly asked multiple choice questions. I also put “Other” as an option for all of the questions so that if none of the answers provided suited them, they could always have another option to say what they wanted to say. The information provided by the survey was mainly to see what opinions college students have on owning pets in college and to see what their own experiences have been like while owning pets if they ever have owned a pet.

Focus Group

My intent on a focus group was mainly to observe many different college students’ opinions and beliefs over the topic of pet ownership. Whereas my interview mainly focused on the specific experience that one college student had with owning a pet, my focus group was to learn more on the general thoughts and concerns college students may have about the subject at hand, regardless of pet experience. In order to conduct a focus group, I asked a couple friends if they would be willing to participate. There were four participants in total, Chad Owens, Ashley Smith, Allison Newman, and Caitlyn Rosen, all of which were college students at UCF. I had no knowledge on any of their backgrounds or experiences with pets before starting this focus group. I recorded our conversation using the voice memos application on my phone so that I could go back and review everything that was said. I then went back and typed out everything I was able to hear on the recording onto a word document (see Appendix C). To start off the discussion, I
asked them about their outlook on college students owning pets and if college campuses should be more pet-friendly with their housing. From there, the conversation extended into various tangents such as the cost of owning a pet, responsibility of students, and the stress relieving factor of animals. As seen in Appendix C, I did ask questions to provoke the discussion if I felt that they did not touch on everything I wanted to know.

Strengths and Limitations

There were several limitations involved in this study. One substantial limitation was the fact that I could only create a survey with a maximum of ten questions. This restrained my ability to obtain the entire picture of the topic. Originally, I had about twenty questions I wanted to ask, but was then forced to pick and choose the ten that were most important. Of course about 3 to 4 of these questions were general questions like “Are you a college student?” or “Where do you live?” so that limited by ability even further because that left only about 6 or 7 questions free for me to ask about the survey participants and their experiences with pets. Another limitation with this study is that the college student I interviewed, Caitlyn Miller, only has experience with owning a cat while in college. Therefore, her experiences may not relate to someone who owns another type of pet, like a dog, which may require different attention and care than a cat does.

However, despite these limitations there were also several strengths to this study as well. While Caitlyn Miller may only have experience with owning a cat, her experience with owning a pet in general creates a lot of ethos, or credibility to this paper. She understands the time commitment, financial obligations and companionship that accompanies with owning a pet as a student. Her opinion is very powerful because she has actually lived and experienced what it is like to be a full-time college student and to own and take care of a pet at the same time. She is not just someone on the outside forming a mindless opinion on the subject, but is actually an
insider who is able to form her own opinion because of events that have actually happened to her. Another strength to this research is that the survey included an “other” answer choice in addition to the choices created (see figure 1) because I wanted the survey respondents to feel like they could express what they wanted to say if needed. I did not want to restrict the participants in anyway with only 2 or 3 choices to choose from. For example, when asked “Do you feel that owning a pet provides a sense of comfort during stressful or difficult times?” one person used the other answer choice by writing “Yes and no. It’s a lot more work so it can be stressful but it’s comforting to have them around.” This person was not restricted to the “yes” or “no” answer choices available, but was instead able to express their full opinion by using the “other” option.

*3. Do you own or have you ever owned a pet while in college?
- I currently own a pet
- I have owned a pet in college but not anymore
- I live with a pet, but my parents or someone else mostly takes care of it
- I have never owned a pet while in college
- Other (please specify)

Figure 1

Results

Interview

During my interview with Caitlyn, she exclaimed that she and her best friend live in a UCF-affiliated apartment complex with a cat named Pongo. Although the cat originally came from her best friend, she acknowledged that they both equally take care of the cat. Where they live however does not allow any pets at all, so in order to keep Pongo in their apartment she
expressed that they had to make sure cat items were in places that did not make it obvious that they owned a cat. Overall, she said that owning Pongo was not extremely difficult because cats are “very independent and kind of do whatever they want to do and they are content with just sitting there.” However, she acknowledges that owning a cat is probably much easier to handle than owning a dog. She revealed that the cost for the cat is not too much to handle. Although she is not sure of the exact amount of money that is required to take care of Pongo, she says that overall the cost is easy to handle. Typically, they only have to buy food and litter on an occasional basis and they have never encountered vet bills but that could possibly be because Pongo is a younger cat.

However, she does mention that due to being a college student it is hard to pay a whole lot of attention to the cat, particularly during the day when they are in classes. Nevertheless, she mentioned that because Pongo is a cat he does take care of himself most of the time so it is not a huge problem, but she does admit that they could spend more time with Pongo by saying “Overall he probably deserves more attention than we probably give him. It’s okay, but it could be better.” She did describe a time this year when Pongo “clawed and destroyed the apartment’s furniture” so now they have to keep sheets down everywhere to prevent the cat from destroying more of the furniture. Because they are not allowed to have Pongo in the first place, the destroyed furniture does pose as an additional stress for them to deal with. Caitlyn says that sometimes when Pongo becomes too much for them to handle, her best friend will take the cat back to her parent’s house for a little while to recoup. “She’ll usually bring him home and then bring him back so it’s kind of like back and forth.” As a matter of fact, at the time of the interview, Pongo was actually back at her best friend’s house.
Despite some of the negatives, Caitlyn had much to say about the positive side of owning a cat as well. When I asked Caitlyn if she felt owning a cat has helped her cope with the stresses of college she replied with “Yes! It has helped me to relax and just laugh randomly at all of the silly things that he does. They just put you in a better mood.” Caitlyn said she does not regret owning a cat at all even after her experiences because she strongly feels that pets do make you a less stressed person at the end of the day and as a college student this is especially important.

Due to her experiences, she actually encourages that more college students own pets. In her attitude regarding college campuses becoming more pet-friendly she questioned why housing does not allow pets in the first place. She says, “I guess the reason why they don’t allow pets is because of the damage they could cause and also if you’re allergic to pets. I think those are the only reasons why they don’t, but I think all of the other reasons outweigh it.” She adds that if college campus housing were to become more pet-friendly it would stop people from sneaking in their pets and causing problems. Overall, Caitlyn said that owning a cat in college has been nothing but a good experience for her and she highly recommends that college housing be more open to allowing students own pets.

Survey

In order to retrieve quantitative data for my research, I used a survey to look into college students and their experiences with pets. After releasing my survey, I received a total of 53 respondents all of which that said they were current college students. However, it is unknown as to which college most of these students went to or whether or not these students were full-time or part-time students. About 45.28% of participants lived off-campus, while 26.42% lived on-campus and 26.42% lived with parents. In addition, about 69.81% said that they currently own or previously owned a pet while attending college. The other 30.19% have never owned a pet as a
college student. In this category I included the respondents that said they had pets at home with their parents as well since they are either not technically living with the pets while attending school or are not taking full responsibility of the pet if they live at home. Surprisingly, about 49.06% of those that did own pets said they owned their pets in a housing facility that did not allow pets (figure 2).

Of the students that have owned pets as a college student, most said that owning pets was not a burden. Only 5.66% said they found it difficult to own a pet, while 32.08% said only sometimes it can be difficult and 30.19% answered no it is not difficult (see figure 5). While most of the respondents said that owning pets was not too much of a burden, there were still some concerns many of them had about college students and the idea of them owning pets. When responding in the “other” section regarding college pets living in college housing, some expressed ideas like pets should not be allowed in dorms, but should be allowed in off-campus apartments. Others said “It depends on the individual. Some people (especially students) just don’t make good pet owners” or “Depends on what animal as the pet. Some pets need more attention (dogs, cats) while others do not (fish).”

When answering the question about what makes owning a pet difficult if they have owned a pet, about 68.75% said that time and scheduling was one of the major problems of owning a pet because as a college student you are always gone for classes and work among other responsibilities. One respondent exclaimed that “If you're stuck in class all day and live off campus, it's hard to make time to come take them potty during the day.” Interestingly enough, one participant even expressed that if college housing actually allowed students to own pets on campus it could reduce this time issue immensely because students would then not have to
commute so far to take out their pets. Surprisingly, only 12.5% of those that owned pets said that cost and budgeting was a major issue for them.

However, despite these concerns majority of respondents agreed that owning pets does provide a sense of comfort during stressful or difficult times (Figure 3) and most believed that college campuses should be more open to students owning pets (Figure 4) and that it is a good idea for students to own pets (Figure 6). However, regarding the question about if it is a good idea for students to own pets, many of the respondents that wrote in the “other” choice exclaimed that they really felt that it depended on the individual. One student wrote, “Depends on each student’s situation. Some have lifestyles that make it impossible to devote appropriate time and attention to pets, but others can. It really just depends.” Many were open to college students owning pets as long as they understood the commitment for these animals and to know that owning a pet is a long-term obligation, not just a cute puppy to have for a semester or two.
Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6
**Focus Group**

The participants of the focus group, Chad Owens, Ashley Smith, Allison Newman, and Caitlyn Rosen were all college students discussing the idea of owning pets during school. Before starting this focus group, I had no knowledge of any of the participants’ pet experience past or present. However, upon conducting this focus group I learned that Allison Newman had in fact owned a cat in one of the UCF housing dorms during her freshman year despite the fact that owning pets was not allowed. While the participants were not completely against students having pets, they were mainly concerned with how many students were realistic about the responsibility of pet ownership. Newman exclaims how a college friend of hers once owned a cat and refused to spend as little as $15 for flea treatments and would lock the cat in the bathroom all day during work or school. “I don’t think there’s bad people that are necessarily going to torture a pet, but they need to understand what it takes [to own a pet] because too many people leave their pets in the bathroom for 5 hours, and that’s not okay” she says. It was apparent that she and the rest of the group agreed that this was not humane behavior. Newman continued by saying, “I think there needs to be a fee or some kind of background check if you want to have a pet because from my experience I just know that if you don’t have enough money then you’re not going to be taking very good care of the pet.” Smith brought up the point that pets can be beneficial to students if you do take good care of them, however if you neglect your pet it can also cause negative consequences. She says, “If you take care of it, it can lower your stress levels. But, if you’re unprepared it can probably raise them a lot because you got in over your head and you’re like, ‘What do I do with this thing? I don’t want it anymore.’”

However, Owens pointed out that it really depends on the type of person. While some students may be capable of owning pets, there are always going to be people out there that will
forget to feed their gerbil for a month. In response to this, the others suggested the idea of a “pet literacy test” or even a “background check” on students that want to own pets. Rosen also brought up the idea that it also may depend on the type of pet too because caged-animals such as birds or rodents “don’t need a lot of room and they don’t need a whole lot of maintenance.” With these types of pets, students would not have to worry about time for their pet or about heavy financial obligations as much as pets like cats and dogs that require more maintenance and care.

Furthermore, when asked about their attitudes toward college housing allowing students to own pets but under rules and guidelines, the participants appeared to be more accepting of this idea. They felt this would be a safer option for the animals because when colleges don’t allow pets the students that disregard these rules “have to hide [the] pet and that’s not good for it.” Also, all of the participants felt this would be a great way for the college to make profit. Smith brought up the idea of a “$200 pet fee” that students would need to pay. She says, “You know people will pay it. So, I think the university could profit off it if they did it right.” All of the others agreed and Owens even added the fact that he would most definitely pay it if it were an option at UCF.

In addition, Rosen brought up the idea that colleges should have a separate dorm or building segregated to only pet-owners or people that want to be around other people’s pets. This could help solve issues with people that don’t particularly like animals or may have allergies to pet hair. For example, Smith says that at UCF they could make one of the buildings in Lake Claire or even one floor in the Towers pet-friendly where students would have to pay a fee and sign a pet waiver in order to live there. Newman in response to this idea says that, “students would kill to [live] there.” Smith even says making the dorms pet-friendly could give reason for UCF (or any other college for that matter) the opportunity to raise up prices and make a bigger
profit on housing. In addition to profits, the participants also felt that having pet-friendly dorms would attract more prospective students. Newman adds that “If you’re really stuck between two schools and you have a childhood pet…then you’re going to choose the school that is going to allow the childhood pet.”

**Discussion**

It is apparent that there is a lot of heated debate on whether college students are ready to take on the additional responsibility of a pet. A point that that was frequently brought up in all three research methods was the idea that pet ownership really depends on the person. From my research I have found that many college students are open to the idea of students owning pets as long as they are aware of the responsibility and commitment that comes with it. Most students get pets because they are fun to have and forget that this pet will be around for another 8-10 years to come. College is a busy and unsteady time with resume building, job hunting, marriage, moving around, etc. This instability is what makes people skeptical about students’ ability to take care of a pet in the first place. However, what people forget is that everyone is different. Some people can balance this crazy lifestyle with a pet, while others cannot. So that is where it all narrows down to: it really just depends on the person. Although, it is very important not to stereotype college students as bad pet owners because anyone can be bad pet owners. There are adults out there that are just as irresponsible, busy and broke as any other college student. However, it is more likely for college students to not be able to handle a pet than let’s say a 40-year old man with a stable job and home who, yes, may not have all of the resources to take care of a pet (i.e. time, money, big yard, etc.), but definitely has more of them than the average college student.
Unfortunately, while you can caution college students as much as you want about the responsibility of pet ownership, there will always be college students sneaking pets into college housing despite the rules against it. Approximately 50% of the college students that participated in my survey admitted to living in a housing facility that did not allow pets. Caitlyn Miller from my interview owned her cat in UCF-affiliated housing that did not allow any pets at all. Allison Newman from my focus group exclaimed that as a freshman she kept a cat in her UCF dorm even when she knew it was against the rules. Instead of fighting against this issue, college campuses need to be more open to pet-friendly housing that allows students to own pets in a safer and more controlled environment. When they do not allow students to have pets, this generates “illegal” pet ownership in housing that can cause problems such as health issues and/or neglect for the pet, allergic reactions, furniture damage, liability concerns, etc. If college campuses were to label one or two buildings as a pet-friendly dorm, many of these problems would be resolved. Students would not have to hide their animals and keep them in an unhealthy environment. They can openly take the animal outside without the fear of being caught. If the building is characterized as a pet-friendly dorm, people with pet allergies or fears of animals would not live there. Colleges could provide a $200 pet fee for owners to cover any future furniture damage and if students signed a contract then the housing facility would not have any accountability over issues such as animal bites. By allowing pets on campus, colleges would actually be increasing their profit and increasing attraction for students with pets. It is a win-win situation.

Conclusion

After looking more into this topic, I have found a great deal of information that can still be looked into. Studies should definitely look into comparing the lifestyles for pets that are
allowed versus those that are not allowed to see which pets contain a healthier and less neglected lifestyle. Studies can also go more into depth on the subject as a whole by observing and evaluating college students and their pets for a prolonged period of time so that they can have a better understanding of the benefits and difficulties of students owning pets. This topic as a whole is very important because pets are a big part of humanity and that means college students are going to want to have pets just like anyone else. However, if college students are going to own pets, it is very important to make sure that the pets are getting the best care and attention that they deserve.
Works Cited

"College Students Find Comfort In Their Pets During Hard Times." *College Students Find Comfort In Their Pets During Hard Times*. Ohio State University, n.d. Web.


Appendix A: Interview Questions and Answers

Q: What year are you?
A: I am currently a sophomore at UCF!

Q: Do you live off-campus, on-campus, or at home?
A: I live off-campus in an apartment called Knights Circle. It is UCF-affiliated housing.

Q: Do you currently have any pets with you in college?
A: Yes, I have a cat named Pongo. It’s not really my cat, but is Lauren my roommate’s cat.

Q: Does the place that you live allow pets in their housing?
A: Actually no. We snuck Pongo in our room.

Q: Do you ever run into any difficulties with owning your cat?
A: He basically has a mind of his own and he’s not declawed and he really loves scratching things especially furniture that is not meant for scratching, so we have to put sheets and covers over our couches and chairs whenever we’re not home and it’s kind of annoying because then he just tears the cloth down and there’s no point in it, but we try our best.

Q: Has Pongo ever torn up your furniture?
A: Oh yes, he tore up our chairs and the cushion is coming out and there’s marks on them.

Q: Does the place the you stay at know about the torn furniture?
A: Oh it’s theirs, yeah. So that’s why we’re like “Crap!”

Q: So what did you do about the furniture!?
A: We don’t know, it’s still like that. We just need to put something over it and pretend like it’s not there.

Q: Do you still have Pongo?
A: Right now, Lauren just took him back [to her parents’ house]. She usually likes to take him back usually when he becomes too much for us to handle. So she’ll usually bring him home and then bring him back so it’s kind of like back and forth. Like right now we don’t have him because she just brought him back home.

Q: Do you think it’s hard taking care of a cat considering being a college student?
A: I’d say it’s easier than dogs, but overall he probably deserves more attention than we probably give him. I mean, it’s not too hard because cats are very independent and kind of do whatever they want to do and they’re content with just sitting there and licking themselves and eating food. I mean, it’s okay, but it could be better.

Q: Was having a cat costly for you?
A: Personally, I did not buy all of the stuff, but it can be costly. I don’t think it’s as much as dogs though. We had to buy litter and bowls and we already had a litter box. We just had to buy the food, but we didn’t have to buy the water since that was free. I think that was
honestly it. Our cat was pretty healthy, like younger so he didn’t really require any vet bills or anything. I guess if he was older he might have more health issues.

Q: Do you feel that owning your cat has helped you stress-wise?
A: Yes! It has helped me to relax and just laugh randomly at all of the silly things that he does. He’s just so cute and funny and it’s relaxing and it’s scientifically proven that petting cats will make you less stressed and I believe it’s true because it’s happened to me. Whenever I’m freaking out I’m like, “Okay, pet the cat.”

Q: Do you regret having a cat?
A: No, I love him.

Q: Would you encourage other college students to own pets?
A: Yeah, as long as they won’t tear up furniture and as long as it’s their own furniture and that they’re allowed to have them. But honestly, I think the biggest thing for me is the stress thing because they do help a lot and they’re just something to talk about, they’re nice to have, and they’re just funny. They just put you in a better mood.

Q: Do you think colleges should be more open to having pet-friendly housing?
A: Honestly, yeah I think they should because otherwise they wouldn’t have to sneak them in and like I said they’re good to have. I honestly don’t know why… I guess the reason why they don’t allow pets is because of the damage they could cause and also if you’re allergic to pets like if people rent out the rooms and they have allergies. I think those are like the only reasons why they don’t, but I think all the other reasons outweigh it.

Q: Do you feel that owning a cat makes you more responsible?
A: It should. I mean, I’m still the same Caitlyn, but I think yeah you have to make sure you’re feeding it. It’s something you have to think about and pay attention to because you’re taking care of something. So whenever you are taking care of something that is definitely responsibility so you are improving on that.
Appendix B: Survey Questions

1. Are you a college student?
2. Where do you live?
3. Do you own or have you ever owned a pet while in college?
4. When you owned your pet, did the housing facility that you stayed at allow pets at the time?
5. Do you feel that owning a pet provides a sense of comfort during stressful or difficult times?
6. What kind of pet(s) do you own or have owned as a college student?
7. Do you think college campuses should be more open to allowing students own pets?
8. Have you ever found it difficult to take care of your pet due to being a college student?
9. If answered yes to the last question, what makes owning a pet difficult?
10. Overall, do you think it's a good idea for college students to own pets?
Appendix C: Focus Group Questions and Answers

Participants: Chad Owens, Ashley Smith, Allison Newman, Caitlyn Rosen

General participant description: current UCF college students, ages 18-20, Caucasian

Question: What is your general opinion on students owning pets in college housing?

Allison: I think there needs to be a fee or some kind of background check if you want to have a pet because from my experience I just know that if you don’t have enough money to be having a pet then you’re not going to be taking very good care of the pet. I also know of instances where in this particular instance where this girl had a cat with fleas and she wouldn’t spend $15 just for it to take a pill and get rid of the fleas and she just kind of keeps the cat in the bathroom all day. I just don’t think that having a pet in a dorm is very humane.

Ashley: I think it depends on the pet.

Allison: Oh, for sure. But I still think there should be like a background check. I don’t think there’s bad people that are necessarily going to be torturing a pet, but like they need to understand what it takes because too many people leave their pets in the bathroom like when they go to work for five hours, like that’s not okay.

Ashley: I concur.

Question: So you would say it depends on the pet?

Ashley: Yes. I mean a fish is one thing…

Caitlyn: Fish are not pets.

Ashley: But I mean, it’s a good place to start because it’s like a living thing that they have to take care of and if you can’t handle a fish well then…shouldn’t have a cat or a dog

Caitlyn: I don’t know about cats and dogs, but rodents or birds or something that’s a caged animal where you can just take it out when you want to. They don’t need a lot of room, they don’t need a whole lot of maintenance.

Chad: It’s all about the person though. I think there should be some sort of test.

Ashley: Like a pet literacy test!

Allison: Like, “How often should you feed your gerbil?” because I know there is just someone out there that will not feed their gerbil for a month
Question: What you be okay with students owning pets if the school were to allow students to have pets but with certain rules and regulations? Maybe even a council and paperwork and stuff to sign?

Ashley: If I think if the university could cover their butts it could be beneficial because aren’t there studies and stuff that are like “Petting an animal makes your stress levels go down”? Like, stuff like that. I mean, they could make a ton of money off of having a $200 pet fee. People would pay it. You know people will pay it. So, I think the university could profit off of it if they did it right and they covered their butts.

Chad: I would pay it.

Allison: I agree.

Caitlyn: They would need to have a separate dorm, maybe.

Ashley: Ooh yeah, that’s a good idea.

Allison: I think that would be good because I know when I brought my cat to Lake Claire I got in trouble because the dander would go through the AC vents because we all shared one AC vent and someone that is deathly allergic could have had a reaction.

Ashley: Like maybe one building in Lake Claire, or even one floor in the Towers or something that was like “pet-friendly.” And they’ll put you there if you sign the pet waiver and stuff like that.

Allison: People would kill to get in there

Ashley: Oh yeah! For sure. And they could even hike the price up too, ya know? University, this is like a great idea we should tell someone about this. Be like, “you guys could make so much money!”

Question: Would you guys be more willing to stay on-campus if they did have a pet-friendly housing facility?

Allison: I feel like, no.

Caitlyn: There’s off-campus housing. They’re kind of further but…

Allison: But, they’re never student-affiliated.

Ashley: I feel like the people that are like, “I WANT A PET” would want to.

Caitlyn: I think I would be happier with my year on campus

Ashley: Yeah, if I could have had a pet and paid $200 for it, I might have.
Question: Why kind of effects do you think pets would have on students?

Ashley: If you take care of it, it can lower your stress levels. But, if you’re unprepared it can probably raise them a lot because you got in over your head and you’re like “What do I do with this thing? I don’t want it anymore.”

Allison: And animals do cost a lot of money. Even putting down a pet is a lot of money. Like my cat last semester had to be put down and that was a lot of money. And that’s stress.

Question: I know a lot of students sneak in pets regardless of the rules anyway. Do you think if colleges were more lenient towards students owning pets do you think this could help create a safer environment?

Allison: Yeah.

Ashley: I think it would make it safer for the pet because I feel like when you’re a student you have to hide your pet and that’s not good for it.

Allison: It needs to see the light of day.

Question: Do you feel that if colleges allowed students to own pets more do you think this would attract more prospective students?

All: Yeah!

Ashley: Yeah because they’ll be like “I want to go to UCF because they let me have a pet.”

Allison: If you’re really stuck between two schools and you have a childhood pet that your parents are going to let you bring then you’re going to choose the school that is going to allow the childhood pet.

Question: That’s pretty much it, unless there is anything you want to add?

Allison: Well, with stuff like worms and fleas that’s another thing because if you just go and pick up your cat from the nearest person that is selling cats on the side of the road. I feel like because they’re only like $2 college students will be like “Yeah! I’ll take it!” And then they’ve infected your whole dorm. And then they’re not willing to go spend the money to get these issues fixed.