Graduating from veterinary school and entering the “real world” has always been daunting for veterinary students. Finding a job and a place to live, as well as starting to pay back what can often amount to a mountain of debt, has in recent years been a challenge that most veterinary students have come to expect. These days, however, the downturn in the economy has added a new level of stress to what these students face upon graduation. According to *Veterinary Practice News*, veterinary school tuition has been steadily rising over the past decade, with the median state resident tuition increasing from $9134 in 2001 to $18,316 in 2011, and the median nonresident tuition increasing from $21,100 to $38,788 over this same period.\(^1\) While tuitions have been rising, financial assistance has been declining, particularly over the past 2 years. As it stands now, the cost of going to veterinary school is about $41,000/y, which puts a new graduate in debt for $140,000 upon graduation. To make matters worse, the number of students receiving job offers before graduation has declined, and it’s getting harder and harder for students to find jobs once they’re out in the workforce.

With all these economic pressures in place, you have to wonder, would these new graduates do it all over if they had the choice? What would they have done differently? How are they coping now? To address these issues, I have invited 6 new graduates from different geographic locations to let us know how they feel. They are Katherine Baine, DVM, resident, Avian and Exotic Companion Mammal, University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine, Knoxville, TN, USA; Cynthia Chan, DVM, intern, Gulf Coast Avian & Exotics, Gulf Coast Veterinary Specialists, Houston, TX, USA; Julie DeCubellis, DVM, MS, resident, Avian & Small Mammal, Ocean State Veterinary Specialists, East Greenwich, RI, USA; Brynn McCleery, DVM, intern, Gulf Coast Avian & Exotics, Gulf Coast Veterinary Specialists, Houston, TX, USA; Alicia McLaughlin, DVM, intern, Center for Bird and Exotic Animal Medicine, Bothell, WA, USA; and Michelle Ravich, DVM, intern, Avian/Exotic Animal Medicine and Surgery, Veterinary Center for Birds & Exotics, Bedford Hills, NY, USA. I think their responses will make even us older, more seasoned practitioners think twice.

Laurie Hess, DVM, Dipl ABVP (Avian) Associate Editor

**Question: What is the single biggest pressure you feel in your career now?**

**Dr Baine:**

The single biggest pressure at this point in my career is to find time to publish on top of my busy clinical schedule.

**Dr Chan:**

Financial stability. I graduated with a 6-figure educational debt, and, as an intern, I am barely able to make ends meet, let alone make repayments on my student loans.

**Dr DeCubellis:**

At this point, my single greatest pressure is my massive student loan debt accrued during graduate and veterinary school.

**Dr McCleery:**

Balancing my career goals with my financial limitations is a major concern. It is challenging enough to live on an intern or resident salary, much less repay student loans.

**Dr McLaughlin:**

The biggest pressure is the need to finish/publish my first research paper. I love doing research, but I hate scientific writing!

**Dr Ravich:**

There is so much information to learn that I feel like it’s hard to have time to read/research...