

Pet therapy should be on campus

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It's common knowledge that pets can reduce stress and enhance happiness. Many studies have shown reduced stress hormones when they pet or play with a dog or cat.

College students have some of the most stressful lives of anyone, so why not try to get rid of some of that stress by getting a pet? Well, because it is against the U's policy to have pets on campus.

This should be changed.

According to a USA Today article from last May, dogs on college campuses help relieve stress for students. Emory University in Atlanta, Ga., allows dogs in its law library, and students take part in "puppy therapy" during finals week.

This seems like a good idea to me. Who wouldn't like to have a dog to pet and play with when they need to relax? I know whenever I am feeling down or upset, my boxer, Hugo, is there to cheer me up. He seems to know when to come over and lick my face to let me know he knows I'm having a hard day. His prancing and jumping when I get home puts a smile on my face every time.

But what do you do if you don't have a pet or had to leave a beloved companion behind at home when you moved to Utah for school? There are foster programs, and if your landlord agrees, there are always animals in need of a temporary home before being adopted. You can volunteer at a local shelter — bus and TRAX routes conveniently take riders all across the valley.

An excellent idea I wish the U would try out is a program similar to the ones at Harvard Medical School and Yale Law School. These universities allow students to check out a dog much like you would check out a book at the library. Granted, it's only for medical and law students, which I don't think is fair to the rest of the student body.

If the U would allow this type of program for any student, I would definitely let my fellow Utes "borrow" Hugo. Of course, I would want it to be in a public place to guard against anyone who had cruel intentions. I think other students and faculty would also bring their dogs.

Even if the U would allow us to bring well-behaved pets to class, I think this would benefit students. There are times when I would love to bring Hugo to a class with me. Just seeing his happy face makes me grin, and I know he brings smiles to other people as well.

Dogs are loyal, friendly and most of them love to be around people. This makes them great candidates for therapy programs. Why shouldn't college students benefit from a program like this?

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