

Preparing to Become a Health Care Practitioner

As you begin to think about your collegiate experience and where you hope to be following graduation, you may consider a career as a health care practitioner. This document is meant to serve as a guide to assist successful applicants in being thoughtful about planning your experiences both inside and outside of the classroom.

4-Year Coursework Plan

Pre-health students may and do major in any discipline without adversely affecting their admission into a health professions school. However, there are basic pre-requisite courses that must be completed prior to matriculation into a health profession school.

Each applicant's secondary school preparation (including AP/Acceleration credits) and primary area of academic interest are quite different. When planning out your academic schedule, **always** confer with your faculty advisor and major department for proper planning because they are your primary academic advisors, while also working in conjunction with the Health Professions Advising Program for which specific courses fulfill the pre-requisites.

Applicants can begin applying to health professions schools beginning after their junior year; however, many people also take time off after graduation before beginning the application process. The following is only one example of how someone can complete his/her pre-medical courses beginning freshman year. The timeline for when you take certain pre-requisite courses may depend on the requirements for your major or when you choose to apply to medical school.

Freshman Year

- Inorganic Chemistry or Freshman Organic Chemistry
 - Refer to the [Chemistry Department](#) for placement options
- One term of Math (preferably calculus)
- One term of English

Sophomore Year

- Organic Chemistry
- Biology (especially if you plan to major in this discipline) or Physics

Junior Year

- Physics or Biology (depending on what courses you took sophomore year)
- Biochemistry (some medical schools require this course, others highly recommend it)
- Statistics
- One term of English (if you haven't already completed)

Senior Year

- Biochemistry (if not previously taken)
- Additional upper division science courses
- Statistics (if not previously taken)

Any other pre-requisite courses not already completed

Qualities Sought by Professional Schools

Admission to a professional school is **not** just a numbers game. Schools also look for certain personal attributes in their applicants. Several of these are listed below, followed by suggestions on how to demonstrate/achieve these qualities:

Academic Achievement: Substantive letters of recommendation from carefully chosen instructors who know you well • Strong performance on standardized tests • Participation in research experience • Strong science GPA • Significant breadth in curricular choices • High degree of difficulty in curricular choices.

Emotional maturity, character, and integrity; sensitivity to and compassion for others: Choice of volunteer activities • Depth and duration of involvement • Impact of volunteerism on your personal development as explained in personal essays, letters of recommendation, and responses to interview questions • Overall medical or other professional school interview performance.

Understanding of a Career in Medicine: Significant exposure to patients through in-depth volunteer work in a clinic/hospital, and/or as an EMT, shadowing physicians, etc. • Participation in programs that offer clinical preceptorships as part of their summer programs (for example, AAMC's SMDEP, summer research programs) • Ability to speak knowledgeably about the challenges facing health professionals today.

Excellent Communication Skills: Writing compelling, genuine, focused essays that will encourage the schools to interview you • Performing well in an interview situation.

Leadership: Active involvement on campus and in your community • Leadership roles in your organizations (president, social chair, community service representative, etc.) • Demonstrate that you have been “in-charge” of a specific event or organization • Part of leadership is being a role model--think about tutoring, mentoring, or becoming a freshman counselor.

UCS Resources

Get Involved: Opportunities that interest you to engage in activities for gaining experience in each major health professions area are listed on our website.

- [Allopathic](#)
- [Osteopathic](#)
- [Dentistry](#)
- [Veterinary](#)
- [Public Health](#)

UCS Events: Visit the [UCS event calendar](#) for listings of upcoming program offerings.

Publications: Resources to help you prepare to become a health care practitioner.

- [Local Community Service and Volunteer Opportunities in New Haven \(PDF\)](#)
- [MD / PhD Brochure / MSTP \(PDF\)](#)