

PREPARATION FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL, DENTAL SCHOOL, AND OTHER GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS

SELECTING A MAJOR

Students planning to enter a medical, dental, optometry, podiatry, osteopathic, chiropractic, or physician assistant program after receiving a bachelor of science (BS) or bachelor of arts (BA) degree should select a major department in the field of their greatest interest and ability. Many students choose a major in the sciences. However, a major in the humanities, arts, or other field is perfectly acceptable. The required courses for most health professional schools can be completed with little difficulty in virtually any major.

COURSES

Students can complete the courses required for preparation for health professions programs during their undergraduate years. Prerequisite courses vary depending on the type of professional program and sometimes vary within a field. Students can find information about prerequisite courses on the UMass Amherst College of Natural Sciences Pre-Med/Pre-Health webpages, or by going to the admissions requirements pages of individual graduate programs.

STUDY ABROAD

Although students are discouraged from getting medical experience abroad, the cultural exchange of a study abroad program can help students gain an awareness of and appreciation for cultural diversity, making them more competitive candidates for graduate programs in the health professions. Therefore, students are encouraged to consider spending one or two semesters studying abroad. Contact the International Programs Office for more information (413-545-2710, umass.edu/ipo).

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Gaining direct patient care experience in a healthcare setting through volunteer or paid positions is recommended to give students a knowledge of the field of their interest and to make them competitive applicants. Typically, pre-health students will complete training to become certified nursing assistants (CNA) or emergency medical technicians (EMT). These trainings are offered by Red Cross, community colleges, and local ambulance services. Pre-dental students should contact a dentist to find shadowing opportunities, as many dental schools require that students have a significant number of shadowing hours as a prerequisite for admission.

PRE-MED/PRE-HEALTH ADVISORS

Pre-med/pre-health advisors consult with all students interested in medicine, dentistry, physician assistant, chiropractic, and other allied health fields. All interested students, regardless of academic major, should make an appointment to see a pre-med/pre-health advisor so they can take advantage of advice and counseling from the advisors. Pre-med/pre-health advisors also write letters of recommendation for medical and dental school applicants. These letters assess the student's academic and extracurricular performance at UMass Amherst relative to the academic performance of other students applying.

The Pre-Med/Pre-Health Office also maintains a website (cns.umass.edu/advising/pre-med-pre-health) and publishes a newsletter with relevant and timely information, to which students are encouraged to subscribe.

Office: Shade Tree Lab

Phone: 413-545-1969

Website: cns.umass.edu/advising/pre-med-pre-health