Parent’s Guide to Pre-health Studies

Congratulations on helping your son/daughter gain acceptance to the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Your student’s success was in no small part due to your support, persistence, and caring.

As a student, your child is now in charge of making decisions that affect his/her education and future. We encourage you to continue to be supportive. The college years are an appropriate time for students to change plans, examine new ideas, and explore academic and career goals. This guide will help you understand a bit more about what it takes to be admitted in a professional program after graduation so that you can support your student in his/her efforts.

What You Should Know and Can Do

- A major should be chosen based on the interest of the student. Prehealth is a vocational interest—not a major. Professional schools have no preference for majors but do generally identify key classes (prerequisites) that students must have.
- Good grades will be required. For most professional programs a 3.0 is the minimum. Encourage students to have a reasonable workload and healthy study habits.
- Shadowing someone in the medical field helps show that applicants have explored their vocation.
- Students need to be involved in community volunteering to gain leadership experience and to show that they are service-oriented.
- Encourage them to partake in the many available opportunities, but do remind them to only take a manageable workload.
- Encourage your student to get to know faculty, seek help with classes, and generally make the most of his or her time at the University.
- Academic advisors and pre-professional advisors can always offer help with solidifying classes and career paths.
- He/She may need to take an admission test. These are: MCAT for medical school, DAT for dental schools, and the GRE for many other health fields. These are intense exams and students are often under a lot of pressure.
- Professional programs require several letters of evaluation/recommendation. While letters from faculty in the sciences are important, faculty letters from other fields help showcase the student’s strengths.
- Not all graduated students from the university enter medical/dental schools directly. They may take time to explore engaging in service, research and/or alternative academic programs.
- The process of preparing for and applying to professional schools can be difficult. Your student will always appreciate your support.

Research Says that the Successful Student:

- Interacts with faculty
- Has at least one mentor
- Is involved with clubs or organizations.
- Has good study skills
- Has or is searching for experiences in anticipated field of study (summer programs, internships, or volunteer opportunities)
- Has academic self-confidence
- Has good time-management skills
- Has extracurricular activities
- Knows what to get and where to get it