

Preparing for a Career in the Health Professions

**A Guide for First and Second-Year
Students**

**Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising
University of New England**

Preparing for a Career in the Health Professions: A Guide for First and Second-Year Students

I. The Pre-Health Professions Advising Office

The University of New England offers an excellent preparation for students wishing to pursue a career in the health professions. This guide is intended for those students who are considering a career in this broad field to assist in your planning to enter a health professions graduate or professional program.

The health professions field is wide-ranging, and includes everything from doctors, nurses, and veterinarians to biomedical researchers and public policy advocates. Persons of diverse interests and backgrounds work in the health professions to provide health care to individuals, families, and communities; to solve emerging health problems here and abroad by conducting laboratory and field research; and by acting as advocates for health through education and policy initiatives. The field of health profession is extremely broad and now is the time for you to start exploring your interests in it.

The Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising is available to assist you with exploring your interests in these growing fields. Those careers that are science and medicine based, such as doctor, physician assistant, or physical therapist, require rigorous academic and experiential preparation. Through the Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising, students have access to a professional advisor to assist in navigating the health professions and the requirements for successful admissions.

Your first step is registering with the Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising through our website at: <http://www.une.edu/cas/biology/php/index.cfm> . By registering with the Pre-Health Office, you will be notified of workshops covering everything from health profession panels to perfecting your medical school interview. Staying connected to the advising office is imperative as you plot a course for a career in the health professions. The Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising will also be your contact for the Pre-Health Professions Advising Committee, whose charge it is to submit recommendations on behalf of UNE students applying to health profession schools.

Come visit the Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising in Decary 123A or contact via email at wmills1@une.edu .

II. The Basics

Academic Major

The academic major you chose is extremely important to your future in the health professions but for reasons other than is usually assumed. While there are undergraduate course requirements in math and science for admissions to many graduate health professions schools, **a major in science is not a requirement.** Majoring in Biology or Chemistry will provide the science and math courses students are expected to have before being admitted to medical programs, but they are not necessarily the only way to proceed. Graduate schools are looking for a diverse student body with the ability to think creatively and make intelligent decisions. If you are passionate about a liberal arts field, it should be pursued to its fullest! Graduate schools look for depth and breadth of classes, not a superficial path to med school. Pursue your passion in subjects like sociology and English. The Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising will assist you in planning ahead to complete graduate pre-requisites at the same time.

All health professions programs will want to see a strong foundation in the sciences and a strong GPA. While each professional program has its own required courses for admissions, many undergraduate course requirements include:

General Biology (w/ lab).....	2 semesters (BIO 105 and 106)
General Chemistry (w/ lab).....	2 semesters (CHE 110 and 111)
General Physics (w/ lab).....	2 semesters (PHY 110 and 111)
Organic Chemistry (w/ lab).....	2 semesters (CHE 210 and 211)
English.....	2 semesters (ENG 110 and elective)
Math.....	2 semesters (MAT 190, 195 and MAT 150)

Other recommended courses include*:

Biochemistry

Cell Biology

Genetics

Psychology (Human Development/Intro to Psychology)

Microbiology

Anatomy and Physiology

* Many of the recommended courses may be required depending on your field of interest and school. Be sure to check admissions requirements for EACH school.*

Health Care Experience

Health professions programs are seeking well rounded, mature students who are confident in their pursuit of a specific health profession. Graduate health professions programs want students to demonstrate their knowledge of the field both academically and practically. Health care experience is often a required piece of the admissions process. If it is not expressly required, the experience is still a vital part of your application. Health care experience can be gained through internship, volunteer, study abroad, paid work, or research experience. It is from these experiences that you will come away with invaluable knowledge of yourself, valuable lessons, strong personal statements and letters of evaluation.

Professional schools are looking for students to do MORE than transport or act as an office assistant in a medical setting. You should plan to have hands-on experience with patients. For example, students can volunteer in a hospice setting, working as a CNA at a local hospital, or spending time in health clinics or health education sites are great ways to get direct patient contact. The CAS Internship Office is another great resource to find health care experience.

Community Service and Volunteering

Health care professionals give time and compassion every day on the job. It is important to you as a future health care provider to be an active member of your community, both for your future career and your application. As a mentor to a child, a tutor to an adult learner, or volunteer in a local soup kitchen, you have a valuable contribution to make to society. The exposure to the needs of different populations will shape your future practice. Students learn more about themselves and their interests through volunteering. The scope of your plans may be changed by volunteering with specific populations in need.

Job Shadowing

The admissions committee at the professional school of your choice wants to know that you understand what a professional in that field really does every day. Find out for yourself and know that this field is your true passion. Some schools may *require* job-shadowing a professional. You should consider getting between eight and sixteen hours of shadowing per academic year and treat these experiences as separate from health care and volunteer experiences. Arrange to spend time multiple health care providers in different settings too.

Research and Scholarly Opportunities

Becoming involved in research on the University of New England campus is a great opportunity for students. Our faculty members are involved in many research projects that welcome the involvement of students. It is important that you approach faculty early and regularly about potential opportunities.

Student Life

Get involved with campus life. There are many clubs that are health and community service related. There are great opportunities to do what excites you and also to take on a leadership role within the UNE community. These experiences can also help shape your future plans in regards to health professions.

All of the preceding sections are things to start working on NOW! As a first and second year student, it is important to start planning ahead for your career in the health professions. Get out there and see what it's all about!

III. Words to the Wise

Summer Classes

It is not recommended that you take science or math courses over the summer. Such classes are often offered in a condensed manner over a shorter period of time. This is not ideal for learning material well enough for admissions tests, especially for those classes which provide a foundation for future science courses. Many admissions committee's want to see that you can handle rigorous science courses as part of a full course load. The summer is a better time to get health care experience, do an internship, study abroad, and rest and recoup for a rigorous schedule during the academic year.

Alternative Credits

AP, CLEP, community college, junior college, foreign institution, or online coursework may be accepted by UNE to meet graduation requirements. Many health professions programs will not, though. Again, schools want to see you taking a rigorous curriculum during your undergraduate career and may want to see you take Biology, for instance, even if you have an AP Biology credit. Some professional programs will overlook this rule if a strong presence of upper level science and math is present. It is important to take this into consideration when planning your schedule.

Reputation and Integrity

Adhere to all academic rules and regulations in your studies and college life. Medical schools now conduct background checks on interviewees. Applicants may receive letters of acceptance PENDING background checks.

Transcripts

Pay attention to the add/drop deadline every semester. It is very important to maintain a strong GPA. Trust your instincts and see your advisor to make adjustments to your course load before you fall behind. Plan ahead!

Advising

Register with the Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising in your first semester at UNE. Look for announcements, workshops, and events offered and attend those events.

IV. Timeline for Preparing: Start Now

Students interested in the health professions field should work with the Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising to plan their course of study and preparation for the health professions, regardless of major. Most professional schools require a basic set of courses, standard admissions test, a working knowledge of the field of intent, and participation in community service. The following timeline assumes students wish to matriculate to professional school immediately following graduation.

First Year:

- Register with the Pre-Health Professions Advising Office online or in Decary 123A.
- When possible, take one full year of biology and chemistry and at minimum one semester of math working towards Calculus.
- Focus on a strong academic start and getting acclimated to UNE. Introduce yourself to your professors and find ways to get involved on campus.
- Plan early for relevant internship, volunteer or paid opportunities for spring semester or next year.
- Make summer plans for health care experience in an area of interest, do a summer internship, or study/volunteer abroad in a health care setting.
- Spend two to five days this academic year job shadowing with a practicing professional in your area of interests. Take notes and get feedback.
- Attend summer school if necessary. Avoid taking key science courses over the summer or at community college.

Second Year:

- Continue taking relevant science and math courses in preparation for admission tests.
- Get involved on campus, developing your team and leadership skills.
- Attend the Pre-Health Professions Advisory Committee (PHPAC) information session fall semester and other Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising events.
- Volunteer in a community service.
- Participate in an internship, research or work in the area of interest in your field.
- Start thinking about whom to ask for letters of recommendation.
- Meet with Career Services to begin compiling your resume.
- Spend two to five days job shadowing with a different practicing professional in your area of interest.
- Begin researching schools of interest, noting prerequisite and standardized test score requirements.
- Begin prepping for admission tests over the summer.

Third Year:

- Continue working on required science courses.
- Spend time preparing and studying for admission tests.

- Continue research, internship, paid or volunteer experiences, assume leadership roles, take responsibility for extra projects.
- Discuss recommendations with professors, instructors, and supervisors.
- Submit portfolio to PHPAC by March 1st.
- Register for and take appropriate admissions test in spring semester.

Fourth Year:

- Complete your major and core requirements.
- Begin centralized application services when they become available.
- Prepare for admissions interviews with the Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising.
- Stay informed about issues related to your interests by reading relevant current events and journals, attend conferences and seminars on campus whenever possible.
- Complete secondary applications within two weeks of receiving them.
- Keep the Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising up to date on your progress.