Begin with the End in Mind: Preparing for a career in the Health Professions

A Guide for First and Second Year Students

Offered to Students at the University of New England by The Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising,
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1. Introduction:
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 and for those who are planning to enter a health professions graduate or professional program.

The health professions field is wide-ranging, and includes everything from doctors, nurses, veterinarians, to health science 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. This field 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 this growing field. Those careers that are science and medicine based, such as doctor, physician assistant, physical therapist, require rigorous academic and experiential preparation. This guide is meant to provide you with the information and steps you need to be taking to best prepare you for admission into a professional program and careers in this field.

Come visit The Office of Pre-Health Professions Advising at DECARY 144 to make your appointment.

2. The Basics:
There are many science-related majors at UNE that will prepare you for a career in the health professions. However, many of you may be wondering if you have to be a biology major to go apply or attend a health professions school. The answer: No! Health professions programs are seeking a diverse student body, and thus are accepting students from majors across the liberal arts field. You should choose a major based on your interests, abilities and aptitude, as you are most likely to be successful in that area.

Important: 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:

- One year of General Biology for majors, with lab (BIO 105, BIO 106)
- One year of General Physics, with lab (PHY 110, 111)
- One year of General Chemistry, with lab (CHE 110, 111)
- One year of Organic Chemistry, with lab (CHE 210, CHE 211)
- One Year of English: This must include at least one semester of composition or a writing intensive course (ENG 110)
One Year of Mathematics: Health professions schools will expect to see one semester of statistics (MAT 120 or 150) as well as one additional semester of college-level math, such as Calculus.

Other recommended Courses Include:
Biochemistry (CHE 310 or CHE 350/CHE 351)
Genetics (BIO 200)
Psychology and/or Sociology (PSY 105, 250 and SOC 150)
Microbiology (BIO 245, BIO 345)
Anatomy/Physiology (BIO 245/BIO 345 or BIO 208/209)

3. Make the experience COMPLETE!

Health Care Experience:
Health professions programs are seeking well rounded, mature students who know of their interest in a specific field based on experience. Students should “get to know themselves” through their health care experience. Know for sure that this health professions field is your passion! Such opportunities may be through an 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 or receptionist in a medical office. You should plan to have hands-on experience with patients. For example, students can volunteer in a hospice setting, in a local hospital, or in health clinics or health education sites.

Community Service and Volunteering:
It is important to spend time volunteering and being active in your community. Professional schools want to know that you are a responsible member of the community and that you have valuable contributions to make. Make time to volunteer in a non-health related, but people oriented community service project. For example you can volunteer to mentor a child in your community, serve as a tutor in the Student Academic Success Center, or give your time at a local soup kitchen or shelter. You will develop strengths and learn more about you interests through these kinds of experiences!

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 day-to-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 8 and 16 hours of shadowing per academic year and treat these experiences as separate from health care and volunteer experiences. Avoid spending all your time with the same practitioner, ask them for names of other colleagues you might contact so that your shadowing experience is diverse.
**Research and Scholarly Opportunities:**
In addition to local research opportunities, UNE faculty members conduct research as a part of faculty appointments. If you are interested in research, it is important that you approach faculty early and regularly about potential opportunities. Research opportunities will contribute to a strong application.

**Student Life:**
Get involved with campus life. UNE offers many clubs that are health and community service related. Experience what interests and excites you. Whatever extra curricular activities you choose, do not jeopardize your academic standing. After committing to a student club increase your involvement by taking a leadership role.

**4. More Words to the Wise!**
**Summer Classes:**
It is not recommend 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 admission 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. Return to UNE ready to excel!* 

AP, CLEP, Community College, Junior College, Foreign Institution or On-line coursework:
UNE will accept some transfer credits from alternative sites (such as AP testing or community colleges) to meet graduation requirements. Many professional programs look for these courses to be taken during the academic year as a part of a rigorous course of study during the regular academic year. Some professional programs will overlook introductory courses at alternative sites if a strong presence of upper level science and math courses is present.*

*If because of extenuating circumstances you need to take courses in the summer or at alternative sites you will need to pursue a pre-approval process via your advisor and the registrar’s office prior to taking such courses, and should be prepared to explain this decision is your personal statement and admissions interview.

**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 often receive acceptance letters based on pending background checks.

**Transcripts:**
Pay attention to the add/drop dead line of every semester. It is very important to maintain a strong GPA. Trust your instincts, if your course load feels too heavy work with your advisor to make adjustments to your educational plan. Plan ahead, don't fall behind!
5. **Timeline for Preparing: Start Now!**

Students interested in the health professions field should work with 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:**
- When possible, take one full year of biology and chemistry, and at minimum one semester of math working towards Calculus
- Focus on getting a strong academic start and getting acclimated to UNE and college life.
- 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 four days this academic year job shadowing with a practicing professional in your area of interest. Take notes, and get feedback from a supervisor.

**Summer One:**
- Plan early how you will spend the summer with paid/volunteer health care related experiences.
- Attend summer school if necessary. Avoid taking key science courses over the summer or at community colleges

**Second Year:**
- Continue taking relevant science and math courses as required
- Get involved on your campus, develop your team and leadership skills
- Start thinking about registering for a minor in an area that interests you
- Volunteer in a community service that benefits others and/or the community
- 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 and begin compiling your resume
- Spend two to five days this academic year job shadowing with a practicing professional in your area of interest

**Summer Two:**
- Begin preparing for admission tests (MCAT, GRE, PCAT, etc)
- Participate in internship, job or volunteer experience relevant to your field of interest
- Research schools you are interested in, noting prerequisite and standardized test score requirements
Third Year:
• Continue Working on required science courses
• Spend time preparing and studying for admission tests
• Continue research, internship, paid or volunteer experience, assume leadership roles, take responsibility for extra projects
• Discuss recommendations with professors, instructors and supervisors
• Submit Portfolio to PHPAC by March 1st.

Year Four:
• Don’t Let up! Complete your major and core requirements!
• Begin centralized application services when these become available online
• Prepare for admission interviews by utilizing the moc interview services offered by Career Services.
• 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!

We want to know how you do!