

Pre-Health Professions Advising Program

Advising Program

While Colorado College does not offer a specific major called “pre-health,” the college has a long tradition of preparing students for careers in health professions. The Colorado College supports the Pre-Health Professions Office, which advises students in any major.

At the beginning of the academic year, usually during Block 1, the Health Professions Office holds a meeting to answer questions and give general advice to students interested in pursuing medical careers. Although most of these students are interested in becoming physicians, more students each year show interest in other careers, such as dentistry, physician’s assistance, physical therapy, or veterinary medicine. Beginning with this introductory meeting, students get to know the Health Professions Advisor, who will advise students on course scheduling and other matters.

New students who are interested in a pre-med program have time to explore their options before diving into a strict program; most students come to Colorado College with only vague plans for a major or career. The college encourages students to explore many subjects within a liberal arts curriculum, and to declare a major at the end of the sophomore year. Many students interested in health professions major in one of the sciences, but are not required to do so. Since practically all professional schools want intelligent students with diverse backgrounds, pre-med students may choose to major in fields such as history, psychology, biology or chemistry, for example. The important thing is that a student excel in the courses in his or her major, as well as in the required science courses. Admission to a professional school after graduation is based primarily on the quality of the undergraduate education, grade point average and required entrance tests. Personal interviews and letters of recommendation are also important, but usually after the initial screening of applicants.

Although Colorado College has a pass/fail grading option for all courses, the Health Professions Advisor strongly urges students to take required science and major courses for letter grades.

The list below details some course requirements for different kinds of professional schools. A complete set of this information is available to interested students from the Health Professions Office.

Medical and Dental Schools

Most medical and dental schools require as a minimum the following courses at Colorado College:

- Two blocks of biology with laboratory.
- Two blocks of general chemistry.
- Two blocks of organic chemistry.
- One or two blocks of calculus (depending on the school in question).
- Two blocks of physics with laboratory.
- Two blocks of English.

In addition, classes related to human structure and function, psychology, and bioethics are highly recommended. Remember, a student may major in any area as long as these required courses are completed. The science courses listed above should be completed by the end of the junior year when the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) or the Dental Admission Test (DAT) is taken. These tests lean heavily on science and mathematical skills, but are designed so that students who have mastered the basics of math, chemistry, physics, and biology should do well. Some of the highest scores on these exams have been achieved by students majoring in areas outside the natural sciences.

Some schools have slight variations in their requirements. It is wise to browse through a copy of *Medical School Admission Requirements* published by the American Association of Medical Colleges or *Admission Requirements of American Dental Schools* published by the American Association of American Dental Schools. Copies are available for short term use from the Health Professions Office. Students may obtain their own copies at a cost of \$15.00.

Veterinary School

It is a little more difficult to give an overall picture of course requirements for veterinary schools since they differ considerably. For example, some may require courses in animal nutrition, developmental biology, or other specialized areas, while others may not. The problem is compounded by the fact that there is no single reference source listing the names and requirements for each veterinary school.

Consequently, students interested in veterinary medicine should request catalogs early (during the middle of the sophomore year) from all the schools they are considering. Some, though not all, require the student to take the Veterinary Aptitude Test (VAT). The student interested in veterinary medicine should plan on obtaining a job (either paid or voluntary) with a veterinarian during one or more summers. This is a critical part of gaining admission.

The science requirements are basically the same as for medical school, except that a few more biology courses are required:

- Two blocks of biology (with laboratory)
- Two blocks of general chemistry.
- Two blocks of organic chemistry.
- Two blocks of physics (with laboratory).
- Two blocks of calculus (varies by school).

Several courses in biology, such as zoology, cell biology, microbiology, and biochemistry, are also recommended. Please note that some veterinary programs may require courses in botany and developmental biology as well. Since numerous biology requirements must be fulfilled, most pre-veterinary students major in biology, though this is not absolutely necessary.

Physician's Assistant School

The programs offering a degree to practice as a Physician's Assistant are widely accepted and increasing in popularity. The Physician's Assistant (PA) is able to practice medicine under the supervision of a licensed physician, including obligations previously limited to the domain of the physician. Our program is currently under the supervision of the Department of Sports Science.

Physical Therapy School

Competition for entry into the physical therapy programs is growing rapidly. The entry requirements and prerequisites are also on the increase. Our program is under the supervision of the Department of Sports Science. A separate, and more detailed, description of the pre-physical therapy advising program is available from the Admission Office.

The Application Process

In 1996, Colorado College had 38 graduates apply to medical schools throughout the country. 47% were accepted, and of these 18 enrolled at schools such as Yale, Dartmouth, New York University, Northwestern, the University of Colorado at Boulder, the University of Wisconsin, St. Louis University, the University of Kansas, the University of New Mexico, the University of Pittsburgh, Tulsa Osteopathic College, and the Philadelphia Osteopathic College. Colorado College does not select which of its students may apply to medical and other schools in order to artificially improve its enrollment statistics.

Most students today wait a year or more after graduation before applying to health professions schools. Many medical schools look favorably upon applicants who have taken an extra year or two to mature, gain some work experience, and thus be able to make a better decision regarding a career in health professions.

For more information, please contact:

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