

Attention all First Year Students with an interest in Health Professions!

1. Please **first** attend the following meeting where your first year questions will be addressed by one of the Associate Health Professions Advisors for the College, Professor Jumi Hayaki:

Health Professions Meeting for First-Year Students

Thursday, September 5, 2019

5:30 – 6:30 PM

Seelos Theater

2. If you attended the meeting and have additional questions, please first contact your **First Year Advisor**.
3. If you have additional questions and wish to speak to a Health Professions Advisor, please contact the office by telephone or in person during office hours to make an appointment. **We do not accept email requests.** You must have an **appointment** to speak to a Health Professions Advisor.
4. Please **refer to this handout**, as well as our **Health Professions Advising website**, for other questions:
<https://www.holycross.edu/academics/programs/health-professions-advising>

Welcome to Holy Cross. Have a great year!

Health Professions Advising Office Staff and Contact Information

Health Professions Advising Office
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Professor Kirsten Hagstrom, Biology
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IMPORTANT: To receive access to information from our office (e.g., advertisements for special events, advising information, enrollment instructions for certain classes), you **MUST** be on our **e-mail distribution list**. If you are not on the list, you may miss important announcements and opportunities. It is your responsibility to make sure you are on our list. If you are not receiving our e-mails, contact the office to verify that you are on the list!

Health Professions Advising at Holy Cross: A *Brief* Guide

Health Professions

- “Health Professions Advising” (HPA, or “premed”) is **not a program, major or concentration**.
- The Health Professions Advisors will offer advice and assistance to **any student planning to attend a health professional graduate school** – medical, dental, veterinary, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, physical therapy, pharmacy, optometry, etc.
- Students must formally request a Health Professions Advising Committee advisor when they are preparing to apply to **medical, dental, or veterinary medicine school**, usually in the junior or senior year (or later). Before then, they have access to advising from the First Year Advisor (first year students), the two Associate Health Professions Advisors (first and second year students), or the Health Professions Advisor (third and fourth year students and alumni).
- Students who are interested in **all other health professions programs** do NOT need a formal advisor on the Health Professions Advising Committee. Such students can receive advising from the First Year Advisor (first year students), the two Associate Health Professions Advisors (first and second year students), or the Health Professions Advisor (third and fourth year students and alumni).
- Although Health Professions Advising is not a formal program, major, or concentration, students can **“register” by declaring their interest in health professions**. Incoming students will be automatically listed in the health professions advising system by answering the first-year questionnaire that completed over the summer. Students may also register for health professions advising later by contacting the HP office at x2533 or stopping by Stein 129A. There is no reason to do both!
- Registration with our office will place you on our e-mail distribution list. We use the list to contact pre-health students about special events, priority enrollment for certain courses, and other important information. **Registration is critical for learning about opportunities and deadlines**.
- Registration **does not guarantee placement in any particular course in any particular semester**, but we will do our best to help a student plan a program to meet the requirements of her or his chosen career.

Medical school requirements

- The **MCAT** tests content from five chemistry courses, two biology courses, two physics courses, introductory psychology and sociology, and a statistics course. In addition, medical schools require a semester of calculus and a year of English. Some medical schools have additional requirements, often in biology.
- While some medical schools use “competency-based” requirements instead of course requirements, in practice students to meet these competencies by taking standard courses.
- Students may successfully complete these courses **while completing any major at the College**. We encourage students to think broadly about majors – while integrating MCAT coursework with some majors will require careful planning, we are here to help. Likewise, studying abroad requires planning. However, many non-science majors are easy to integrate with medical school requirements.
- Students may elect to take **summer or Worcester Consortium courses or use AP credit** to fulfill some requirements, but using summer courses to satisfy core lab science (Chem, Biol, Phys) requirements is not recommended. Likewise, using AP credits to satisfy these core lab requirements is **strongly** not recommended.
- It is going to be **very difficult for a student to attend medical school straight out of college** (i.e., with no so-called “gap time”), as this requires taking all (up to 15 or sometimes more) courses, scoring well on the MCAT by May at the end of the third year, and gathering the necessary other experiences. Most students are better served by spreading courses over four years, and it is easier for students to get into medical school if they are older. This is typical for students across the country.

What should a health professions student take first?

- **Start with any of the sciences.**
There is **no single course sequence** for any health professional graduate program. If you plan to be a science major, follow the guidelines for that major. You may want to start by taking Chem 181 *Atoms and Molecules*, Biol 161 *Introduction to Cellular and Molecular Biology*, or Phys 115 *Introductory Physics 1*. You should take chemistry in the first semester if you are considering studying abroad in the junior year or wish to complete requirements in three years. You should try to start the chemistry sequence by the second year, particularly if you are considering medical school.
- **Think about your mathematics choices.**
The courses required for most health professional schools are **a semester of calculus and a statistics course**. *Calculus 1* (or a 4 or 5 on the AP AB exam) is required for *Introductory Physics* and *Equilibrium and Reactivity*. Some majors require *Calculus 2*. But, whether you have had an AP course or not, if you had a year of high school calculus, you may be ready for

Calculus 2 (Math 136). If you take Math 136, you do not have to substitute an additional mathematics course; Math 136 meets medical school requirements for calculus. You will likely not take statistics in your first year; many majors include a statistics course that you will take later in your career.

- **Don't neglect the humanities and social sciences.**

The MCAT includes content on **psychology and sociology**. Enrollment in Psych 100 *Introduction to Psychology* and Socl 101 *The Sociological Perspective* is restricted to first and second year students, so these should be taken early. The new Critical Analysis section of the MCAT will also test your ability to read and understand passages on philosophy, ethics, humanities, and social sciences. While no specific courses are required for this section, exposure to these disciplines (as you meet your Common Area Requirements) will be helpful. Consider taking a course in ethics later in your career. Use Montserrat to take a non-science/non-social science course as you will take plenty of these already.

Additional thoughts

- **Take an objective view of your readiness for laboratory science courses, and don't overdo it.**

Think carefully about taking more than one lab course in the first semester. This is only recommended for students with strong high school backgrounds (e.g., having taken an AP science course). **Many students should take at most one lab course**, perhaps with calculus, potential major courses, or introductory psychology or sociology. There is plenty of time to meet science requirements over your four years. It is easier to accelerate coursework later than to get overwhelmed and "dig out" of an early hole.

- **Most labs should be taken in sequence.**

Chem and Bio allow a **limited number of students to start the sequence in the spring semester**. So, you could consider starting with one lab in the fall and add another in the spring if the fall goes well. Some students might consider starting with Biol 159, which is a course to help students get ready for Biol 161 and Chem 181.

- **Science majors should take a typical major schedule.**

If you are considering a science major, you should just **concentrate on major coursework**. You can take introductory sociology or psychology or an English/literature course if you are concerned about completing your pre-health requirements. (But do make sure to take sociology and psychology by the second year – see above.)

- **The MCAT requirements are only for MD and DO schools.**

Dental schools have similar requirements to medical schools but the DAT does not test the same material. Other health professional programs have similar but not identical requirements. Nearly all health professional programs require at least one semester of general chemistry (*Atoms and Molecules*) and introductory biology (Biol 161). Some (e.g. PA, NP) do not require physics. Graduate programs are not standardized, so if you are interested in a particular career, you should do some research and speak with a Health Professions Advisor when making a course plan. The Health Professions Advising web page (see down below) has links for several allied health fields.

- **Consider many different majors!**

There is no one best major for health professional graduate school. Requirements overlap the most with biology and chemistry, but health professional graduate schools **value students from all majors**. We have had successful medical school applicants from essentially every major at the College. Find your passion, even if the coursework logistics are challenging. Think broadly, including the humanities and social sciences!

- **Advanced Placement credit**

Most medical and health professional graduate schools will allow applicants to use AP credit (4 or 5) to fulfill requirements like calculus, English (only one of the two required credits), statistics, and psychology, but this is not universal. If a student is considering medical school, it is important for her or him to consider whether the AP class prepared her or him sufficiently to do well on the relevant sections of the MCAT. Many medical schools and many other health professional schools will not accept AP credit for core science courses in chemistry, biology, or physics. Schools that do accept science AP courses usually require advanced laboratory electives in those disciplines.

Resources

- **The Holy Cross Health Professions Web Page**

This website includes a list of medical and other health professional school requirements, a link to the *Medical School Preparation Primer*, a course planning tool and other useful resources.

<https://www.holycross.edu/academics/programs/health-professions-advising>

- **Health Professions Advising**

Any first year student with questions should first contact their First Year Advisor. If you have met with your First Year Advisor and have additional questions, you may make an appointment to speak with Prof. Jumi Hayaki or Prof. Kirsten Hagstrom (Associate Health Professions Advisors) by contacting the office at x2533 or Stein 129A. (Prof. Miles Cahill is the Health Professions Advisor but mainly advises 3rd & 4th year students.)