

Health Professions Advising at Holy Cross

Health Professions

- “Health professions” (HP, 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 school – medical, dental, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, physical therapy, pharmacy, optometry, etc.
- Students are formally assigned a health professions advisor in the junior or senior year, when they are preparing to apply to a health professional school. Before then, they may get advising from the associate health professions advisor (for first and second year students) or health professions advisor (for older students).
- Incoming students will be automatically listed in the health professions advising system by answering the first-year questionnaire that you will complete over the summer. Students may also register for health professions advising later by sending contacting the HP office at x2533 or stopping by Stein 129A. There is no reason to do both!
- 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 will test 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 medical schools are changing to a language of “competency-based” requirements instead of course requirements, in practice students should continue to take standard courses to meet these competencies.
- Students may successfully complete these courses and have any major, but integrating MCAT coursework with some majors will require careful planning. Likewise, studying abroad requires planning.
- Students may elect to take summer or consortium courses or use AP credit to fulfill some requirements, but it is not recommended that summer courses (and certainly not AP) be used to satisfy core lab science (Chem, Biol, Phys) requirements.
- It is going to be very difficult for a student to attend medical school straight out of college, as this requires taking all (up to 15 or sometimes more) courses and taking the MCAT by May by the end of the third year. 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.

Resources

- **The Holy Cross Health Professions Web Page**
This 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.
- **Health Professions Advising**
Any first-year student with questions may make an appointment to speak with Prof. Jumi Hayaki (associate health professions advisor) by contacting the office at x2533. (Prof. Miles Cahill is the health professions advisor.)

What should a health professions student take first?

- **Start with any of the sciences**

There is no single course sequence for medical, dental or 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 Biology 1* or Phys 115 *Introductory Physics 1*. You should try to start the chemistry sequence by the second year, particularly if you are considering medical school. You should take chemistry in the first semester if you are considering studying abroad in the junior year.

- **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 general physics. However, many 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. There are limited seats in Psych 100 *Introduction to Psychology* and Socl 101 *The Sociological Perspective* for third and fourth year students, so these should be taken early in your career. 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 courses are required for this section, exposure to these areas (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**

Many students are not ready to take a "traditional" first-year premed/biology college course load of introductory biology with lab, general chemistry with lab, calculus and Montserrat. 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. However, students with a strong high school background who are considering a biology major may want to take two laboratories in the first semester.

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

If you are considering a science major, you should just concentrate on major coursework, and worry about other MCAT requirements later. You can take introductory sociology or psychology or an English or literature course if you are concerned with completing requirements.

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

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 has links for several allied health fields.