

# Health Professions

Think of your journey toward becoming a successful competitive applicant as putting a puzzle together. The pieces include:

## 1. Strong GPA

Achieving strong academic credentials in your coursework during your college career-- goes without saying. Most students will apply to their respective health professional programs after completing the junior year in college which reflects three years of strong performance when submitting the application. Science GPA: Schools will split your GPA into two categories, a science GPA known as the BCPM which reflects courses in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics. The second part of the GPA is the overall or cumulative GPA of all courses you have taken. Your goal is attain a suggested GPA of a 3.5 or better to be a competitive candidate.

## 2. Test Scores

The second objective piece of the puzzle is your test scores. Each health profession will require an entrance exam to help them determine, in the application process, your competitiveness to other candidates. If you are applying to medical school, either allopathic (MD) or osteopathic (DO), a MCAT (Medical College Admissions Test) is required. You may also use the MCAT to apply to Podiatry (DPM) schools. The exam should not be more than three to four years old. Your goal for medical school is to achieve at least a 30 or more to be a competitive candidate.

Those pursuing a dental degree will need to complete the Dental Admission Test, known as the DAT. Your goal is to achieve a DAT score of at least an 18 or higher. Admission to most Pharmacy schools requires a PCAT, Pharmacy College Admission Test.

The OAT, Optometry Admission Test, is required to enter an Optometry program. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is the entrance exam that you will need to take if you are planning to apply to master or doctoral level programs in Physical Therapy (PT), Occupational Therapy (OT), Nursing, or Physician Assistant (PA). The GRE General Test is a standardized examination graduate and professional schools use along with your application to admit students into their graduate programs. The exam is a computer adaptive test (CAT) administered year round. It is important to note that only minimal computer skills are required to take the test.

### 3. Application Process

Applying to a health professional school is basically producing a résumé to be entered on each specific application. Although you do not forward your résumé, all that you have accomplished after high school and in college will be accounted for on the application. Most students apply to their desired health professional school during the summer after the junior in college. You will complete the application in the summer, submit and hope for interviews and offers of acceptance during the fall or winter months. This will allow time to complete financial aid applications, complete your senior year of college and enter the following fall after graduation.

The application is a document that includes your competitive GPA, test scores, your personal history, an essay that shows off your writing skills, and an accountability of courses completed to meet the requirements for entering your specific profession of study.

### 4. Credentials (Letters of Evaluation or Letters of Reference)

1. Apply to several institutions (we send out the same batch of letters to all the places you want to apply).
2. Provide confidentiality to your letters
3. Assure prompt mailing of letters

### 5. Interview Skills

First impressions do count! The interview is the opportunity to express your accomplishments, your desire to pursue a health profession with dedication and vigor as well as showing a true commitment to continued learning. The interview also shows your personality and how you express yourself with “future patients”. You can prepare for the interview by participating in a Mock Interview provided by The Career Center or by your advisor.

### 6. Leadership Abilities

Leadership is part of the puzzle that you have probably been doing since your entered school. You lead in discussions in your classes, you lead in your organizations, and you lead within your family or with your group of friends. Leading is based upon listening and then taking action-“To lead is to listen”. You can choose to perfect this ability while you're a student at SIUE; this is considered an essential career skill for the success of any student.

As a practitioner, you will lead your clinical/hospital floor of professionals, you will lead in your surgical unit, and you will lead within your community. In times of crisis or concern, your patients will look to you for comfort and leadership to calm their fears. It is with your leadership you will “listen and take action”.

## 7. Commitment to Life Long Learning

Committing oneself to a life of service as well as life long learning is noble. Learning does not end when you complete your professional training as a physician, dentist or other health professional but it is only the beginning. Not only will you need to enroll in professional continuing education courses and seminars to keep your license current, you must also stay abreast of new procedures as well as issues that face your profession. You must realize that this is a profession will be constantly changing with new technologies and procedures and faces continuous change in health care policies. You must be prepared for Life Long Learning! Take a look at this [Yahoo Directory of Medical Professional Associations](#), these are associations dedicated to informing medical professionals, their publications and events give you an excellent view inside the profession.

## 8. Exposure to the Health Field

Gaining practical experience in the health care field is essential in helping you decide if this is truly your calling. Too many times one can get caught up on the “glitz” of TV programs but not really appreciate what it takes to get to the end result—education and practice. Television doesn't show the degree of study needed, the smell of death and dying or the true jubilation one feels on a family's joy of a cure or remission.

Getting exposure to the field can originate from several avenues and at different times during your undergraduate career:

- Take a look at this [Yahoo Directory of Medical Professional Associations](#), these are associations dedicated to informing medical professionals, their publications and events give you an excellent view inside the profession.
- You can volunteer at variety locations: hospitals, clinics or nursing homes, retirement villages, rehabilitation centers, shelters, crisis nurseries, special camps for children or adults, community outreach programs or public health centers for a few hours each week.
- Work as a Personal Assistant (PA) to a disabled member of the local or campus community.
- Internships are another form of experience; take a look at our collection of [Health Professions Internships](#). Be sure to contact the volunteer coordinator of these facilities early in the process of acquiring a position (it can take some time to find you a position).
- You can also choose to become certified as a CNA, EMT, or PharmTech. Remember, all your patients will not be your age but rather a cross section of the life cycle with people of various ages, ethnic backgrounds and personalities. Learn early in the process to encounter and welcome this diversity.
- Shadowing: You can gain this experience by pursuing an externship or "shadowing" experience. What better time in your life do you have to truly understand what you are getting yourself into. If you have the opportunity, approach your desired health care professional and ask if they allow "shadowing" for a day, week or month. They may even allow you to

continue on into a longer term externship or internship. If you don't ask you won't know - give it a try.

- Look through Campus and Local Organizations for possible opportunities.
- Anywhere you can have first hand experience will be an asset to you as well as exhibiting to an admission officer that you are truly interested and committed to your chosen health care field.

## 9. Transferable Skills

What are transferable skills? How will you use them in your medical career?

Transferable skills are skills you have previously learned and now must practice and perfect each day to be a strong health care professional. These skills particularly relate to: Speaking, Listening, Organizational/Time Management and Writing. Building Career Skills for Success will make students more promising candidates to any program, job, or graduate school.

Speaking Skills:

Public speaking is not easy, and takes practice and encouragement. Your speaking ability will be challenged in during your interview, visiting with admission officers and later in your practice.

How can you develop this skill?

- Take a speech class
- Give campus tours
- Introduce the speaker at your club events
- Take a leadership role in your living unit
- Practice a mock interview for your medical visit

How will you transfer this skill in your professional work? (speaking)

You will be a non-traditional teacher as a health professional i.e. Giving advice and explaining treatment, consoling patients, and sharing in spirituality if needed

- You will direct a team of professionals, consulting in care issues;
- You will be actively consoling not only your patient but the family members
- You will be out in your community as a spokesperson for issues that affect public health
- As you know health care is revenue driven and you will be asked to present seminars, outreach programs addressing prenatal issues, obesity, stress, or hypertension. Many are revenue driven by hospitals and clinics.

Listening Skills:

Every day of your life as a health professional your first priority is to listen to the patient, whether you like it or not. You must listen to their concerns, their most intimate needs and ailments; make a diagnosis and a prognosis. You must listen with a humanitarian heart.

How can you further develop your listening skills?

- You learn to listen in your many leadership roles.
- You listen in your volunteer activities—on what needs to be accomplished
- You listen in class and group assignments and make contributions
- You listen in your work experiences and follow directives

How will you transfer this skill in your professional work?

- To listen is to understand the patients situation, listening to their concerns, struggles with life, their challenges, their fears
- To listen is to show your humanity and concern not only for patients but fellow colleagues and staff you supervise
- To listen allows you to analyze a situation thoughtfully and reasonably, to solve problems moment to moment.

#### Organizational /Time Management Skills

Many have to learn this skill especially during a busy professional life- through prioritizing. Each student has a busy schedule which includes classes, study, volunteering, leadership roles, working and conducting research, and yes, having a social life. You have truly begun to develop strong organizational skills.

How will you transfer this skill in your professional work?

- By becoming a team player working with your health care staff, be it nurses, specialists, clerical support
- By juggling your work schedule, family and community commitments.
- By organizing your time to take care of yourself- diet, exercise and stress relief, and possibly personal meditation.

#### Writing Skills

Your writing skills, the ability to express yourself in a written format, will be required both in your entrance exam (MCAT, DAT, and PCAT) and when you submit your applications which will include a personal essay, or professional comments. You must make yourself clear, writing professionally and concisely. You must be able to explain “how do you know health/medicine/dentistry is your passion?” and prove to the reader this is the right career path. No one else can explain this but you and your inner thoughts. When you are writing, YOU are making your transcript, experiences and life events “talk”.

This is just the beginning of your writing skills, if you are pursuing a MD/PhD. As a MD/PhD candidate you must propose your research, making it clear and concise. As many know-- writing your dissertation is truly your greatest skill in writing.

How will you transfer this skill in your professional work?

- As a health professional you will write patient directives by writing orders, assigning rehabilitation, and drug therapy for others to initiate
- You will write petitions to insurance companies and support of procedures which must be precise and descriptive as well as supportive.

Writing doesn't end upon your degree, it is just the beginning.

#### 10. Stamina

As a health care provider you will encounter many forms of stamina needed to complete a typical work day. Your educational stamina does not end once you have completed your professional training program