

# PRE-HEALTH PROFESSIONS STUDENT HANDBOOK

A Guide to the Health Professions at SIUC

2022-2023



**SIU**  
CARBONDALE

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**PRE-HEALTH  
PROFESSION PROGRAMS**



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# Welcome to the Health Professions at SIU!

At SIU, you'll find that a lot of people have your back. Our faculty work tirelessly to offer you the most comprehensive education and cutting-edge technology in the health field. Our advisors and staff are invested in your development and success. At SIU, you'll enjoy the camaraderie of your fellow pre-health professional students along with a multitude of opportunities to enhance your education. And, the **Health Professions Office** (HPO) is here to help you navigate every step of the way.

We hope this booklet answers many of your questions about preparing for a professional health career at SIU. We encourage you to visit our website to access additional resources, links, tools, and tips. When you get to campus, we hope you'll connect with your fellow pre-health professional students through the **Prehealth Professions Association** for informative presentations, volunteer opportunities, and fun social events.

The Health Professions Office offers individual counseling, advice, and mentoring for students intending to pursue admission to the following post-graduate programs:

Allopathic medicine (MD)	Physician-scientist (MD-PhD, DO-PhD)
Chiropractic (DC)	Physical Therapy (DPT)
Dental (DDS, DMD)	Physician Assistant (PA-C)
Occupational Therapy (OT)	Podiatry (DPM)
Optometry (OD)	Speech Language Pathology (CCC-SLP)
Osteopathic medicine (DO)	Veterinary Medicine (DVM)
Pharmacy (PharmD)	

If you are interested in a health professions masters degree, we can help with that, too! There are lots of great health care careers that don't require a PhD! Come see us to learn more.

We wish you the greatest success and we look forward to working with you!

The Health Professions Office

## How to Become a Part of the Pre-Health Community at SIU

**Declare a pre-health secondary specialization** beginning with your very first meeting with your Undergraduate Academic Advisor. Even during New Student Orientation!

Consider living in one of our **Living Learning Communities**: The College of Science and University Housing partner in the Science Living Learning Communities to offer students enhanced opportunities in the sciences and pre-health. Get to know professors and classmates! Enjoy access to academic resources and specialized programs in the residence hall. Contact University Housing at (618) 453-3318 or email [housing@siu.edu](mailto:housing@siu.edu) for more information.

**Join the Pre-Health Professions Association (PPA)**, a registered student organization (RSO). Get together with like-minded students to advance your respective dreams! Learn more about your chosen profession. There also are other health-focused RSOs that may interest you ([getinvolved.siu.edu/student-organizations/](http://getinvolved.siu.edu/student-organizations/)). Please use your SIU email when you sign up!

**Volunteer** at a local hospital or clinic, or shadow a health professional. See your Health Professions Advisor for ideas and opportunities!



# Is a Professional Health Career Right for You?

## Health Care Careers top lists of the fastest growing occupations!

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, six of the top 10 fastest growing occupations are in health care. With this kind of growth, jobs should be plentiful and opportunities abound. Technology and medical advancements are creating new opportunities daily. The health professions offer a great opportunity for a challenging and fulfilling career.

## We're more than just doctors and dentists!

Lots of students want to get into "medicine" to help people, but few know the full range of careers available in the health field. A Health Professions Advisor can help you explore careers in healthcare that you may not know exist. In addition, we encourage you to shadow a health professional to learn more about a career before you commit to an academic program.

## Do you love to learn?

A professional health career is one that demands additional schooling beyond the bachelors degree, most often a terminal or doctoral degree. But your education does not stop after you have earned your degrees. Health professionals must keep up with emerging technology and developments in their field. If you love to learn, the health professions are a good fit.

## Do you like working with people and as part of a team?

Patients can be pleasant, but they can also be combative. Would you enjoy working with people who may be afraid of you? Many front-line health careers require exceptional people skills and the ability to maintain positive mental attitude in a challenging job. Does this describe you? Are you willing to work to develop these skills? Health career professionals often work as part of a team to develop strategies and treatment plans for their patients. If you like working alone, there are jobs in health care that can accommodate your working style, but the vast majority will demand collaboration.

## Are you comfortable in all aspects of the job?

Not all patients get better. Are you comfortable working with terminally ill patients, or patients who will be permanently disfigured or in chronic pain?

## Is this career compatible with your life goals?

Some health careers force students to make hard lifestyle decisions. Are you willing to spend up to a decade of post-graduate schooling/residency? Are you prepared to move far from family and friends to pursue your career? Are you willing to delay starting a family? Is the career compatible with your expectations for work-life balance? You should know if your desires for your life are compatible with the demands of the profession before you commit.

## Is this career compatible with your values?

Some jobs in health fields present ethical considerations that could be incompatible with your values or beliefs. Are you prepared to confront those issues in the course of your career, possibly deferring your values to respect those of your patients?

## Can you manage the financial demands?

How much will your education cost? How will you pay for it? If you finance your education, will you earn enough to pay off those loans? How long will it take? What is the long-term economic outlook for your career choice? What does that mean for your future?

## Can you accept that you might not get accepted into a professional school of your choice? Or you might not be accepted into professional school at all?

Some health careers are incredibly competitive. Can you accept that even if you are qualified and credentialed, you might not get into your school of choice? Are you comfortable with the risk of training for a career that might not happen? If you have to settle for something less than your ultimate goal, could you still be happy? Do you have a backup plan?



# Undergraduate Advisement at SIU

At the start of your academic journey, the road can look long and scary. But you aren't alone.

SIU is invested in your success! Many advisors will help you along your path to graduation. Every semester, you will meet with an **Academic Advisor** (in a centralized Advisement Office that serves a College, a School, or a Program). Your Academic Advisor is there to assure you are on track and meeting the academic requirements of your undergraduate degree. They will help you plan your semester-to-semester schedule, assist with registration, clear you for graduation, and assist with issues surrounding Degree Works—an online program tracking student progress toward their degree.

In addition, you also have an **Undergraduate Departmental Advisor** (a faculty member) who will help you design a curriculum to fulfill your major requirements.

You should meet with your Academic Advisor and your Undergraduate Departmental Advisor each semester.

The **Health Professions Office** serves students who are pursuing an undergraduate degree at SIU in anticipation of continuing on to a health professional (graduate) program after earning their bachelor degree. The Health Professions Advisor will assure that you are meeting the pre-requisite requirements for entry into your preferred post-graduate school and educate you about the post-graduate application process. You should meet with the Health Professions Advisor every semester starting in your sophomore year.

Other populations of students, such as honors students and student athletes, have specialty advisors with whom they may be required to meet regularly.



## See Your Advisors Early Each Semester

**Make your advising appointment early** and register as soon as is reasonable. Advising for the following semester begins three weeks after the beginning of the current semester. Appointments become increasingly scarce just before registration opens.

**Prepare for your advising sessions.** Come with questions. Be prepared to discuss your concerns. If there are specific classes you are interested in taking, let us know! If you are struggling academically, it is important that all your advisors know this. We can offer you suggestions and refer you to appropriate services!

We also advise students to see their advisors in a specific order. Failure to follow this sequence will most likely result in a less than successful advising session, and the possibility that you will need to meet with an advisor multiple times.

***If your major falls within the College of Agriculture, Life, and Physical Sciences,*** we advise that you first meet with your Departmental/Program Advisor, if you have one Your Department Advisor will assist with selection of coursework specific to your degree track. If you don't know who your Departmental Advisor is, you should contact your program's administrative office for that information.

Next, you should meet with your **Academic Advisor**. He or she will help you design your semester schedule and find your way through your degree requirements. They know about substitutions that are allowed, prerequisites that must be taken before other courses, whether a particular course is taught every semester, rules about adding and dropping courses, and a long list of general information helpful to you.

Finally, you should meet with the **Health Professions Office** to review your course selections and review progress on those expected extracurricular requirements for professional school.

*If your major falls outside the College of Agriculture, Life, and Physical Sciences*, we advise that you first meet with your Departmental/Program Advisor and your Academic Advisor in your College/School before meeting with the Health Professions Advisor. You should bring your semester schedule to your meeting with the Health Professions Advisor.

## **How has the Coronavirus Pandemic altered Academic and Pre-Health Advising?**

Due to the dynamic nature of the University's safety response to Covid-19, the availability of in-person advisement appointments cannot be guaranteed. Not to worry! Phone and virtual appointments are nothing new for our staff. We've been advising students over the phone for years and can walk you through every part of health advisement. You also have the option of requesting a virtual meeting (online using ZOOM or Teams).

We are still offering the same great advising service to our students, we are simply doing it in a way that keeps everyone safe!

# The Health Professions Advisement Office

Pre-health students are unique among those preparing for post-graduate work. In recognition, Southern Illinois University has established The Health Professions Office to serve students across campus as they pursue professional health, research, laboratory, and therapy careers.

Appointments with the Health Professions Office should be limited to the requirements and preparation for application to post-graduate professional schools and related questions.



**Elizabeth Saunders**

**Health Professions Advisor**

Life Science II, Suite 351C

618-453-3080 (for scheduling appointments and general questions)

618-453-4128 (for call-in appointments)

LSAUNDER@SIU.EDU

## What Does a Health Professions Advisor do?

- Informs you about the breadth of health careers available today
- Helps you understand the requirements, preparation, and training necessary for your chosen health profession
- Helps you make informed choices of major and career
- Evaluates your strengths and identifies gaps in your preparation
- Offers guidance on requirements of and application procedures to professional schools
- Offers guidance in the professional school application process
- Helps you connect with community resources, health care professionals, and institutions
- Chairs the Health Professional Committee and manages the HPC Interview program
- The Health Professions Advisor generally does not do semester-to-semester advisement. For those services, you should see your Academic Advisor in your College, School, or Program. One exception to this rule is for 2nd year (or later) transfer pre-health students.

## Frequency of Contact

Meet with the Health Professions Advisor once a semester at a minimum beginning in your sophomore year. You need to develop a professional relationship with our staff so we can write you letters of recommendation to support your professional school application.

## Scheduling Appointments with Health Professions Advisement

The Health Professions Advisement Office is located in Life Science II, Suite 351. Our telephone number is (618) 453-3080.

- We see students by appointment only.
- **Appointments are scheduled 48 hours in advance.** Please extend the courtesy of cancelling 24 hours in advance.
- **Appointments are never accepted by email.**
- Always use your **SIU email account** in electronic communications with the Health Professions Office.
- Include your **DAWG TAG number prominently** in every email.

This is a busy office. Our first commitment is to students with appointments. We accept phone calls and emails, but please be realistic about the time required to respond.

# What are Health Professional Schools Looking For?

**Only 36% of medical school applicants are accepted each year.**

**Only 50% of dental school applicants are accepted each year.**

**Only 20% of PA applicants are accepted each year.\***

**Approximately 25% of veterinary school applicants are accepted each year.**

How can you increase the likelihood that you're part of the acceptance statistic? Many students Google "admissions requirements" and are relieved to learn that the GPA and entrance exam scores are often not that stringent. Professional schools invite applications from students with a broad range of academic performance, but if we look at the credentials of students actually accepted into these programs, the requirements become much more focused.

\* Recent data is difficult to obtain but it is generally acknowledged that admission to professional schools across all fields is becoming increasingly more competitive.

## Academic Achievement

The two strongest predictors of success in professional college are the undergraduate GPA and the entrance exam score.

### AVERAGE GPA for matriculated students (those actually admitted)

Medical School	3.74
Dental School	3.60
Occupational Therapy (OT) School	3.60
Optometry School	3.45
Pharmacy School	3.50
PA School	3.49
PT Programs	3.36
Veterinary School	3.59

## Strong Scores on Entrance Exams

### AVERAGE ENTRANCE EXAM SCORE for matriculated students to

Medical School	511.9 MCAT (2019-2020) (Source AAMC)
Dental School	20.6 DAT (2019-2020) (Source ADA)
OT School	GRE Quantitative percentile of 66%; verbal 77% (Source: UNC Chapel Hill)
Pharmacy School	79-87% PCAT percentile ranking (Source Next Step Test Prep)
PA School	GRE Top 50% of each section; Verbal + Quant 300+ (Source: CASPA)
PT Programs	GRE 152 Verbal; 151 Quant; 4.0 Analytical Writing (2019-2020) (Source PTCAS)
Veterinary School	GRE Composite percentile of 63% (Source: U of I)

## Clinical (Direct Patient) Experience

Medical School	200 hours min. (Source Medical School HQ) <b>2000 hours is average for matriculating students</b>
Dental School	No set hours required, but clinical experience preferred
OT School	No set hours required, but clinical experience preferred
PA School	Averages more than 3000 hours of direct patient care experience
Veterinary School	Experience working for several veterinarians

## Reasonable surety that the profession is a good fit for the student

Most professional schools expect that students will have shadowed one or more practitioners in their field. We recommend that students create a log to record hours, memorable experiences, and interactions of their shadowing and volunteer experiences so that they can draw on those experiences for a personal essay associated with the professional school application. We have attached examples of such a log in the back of this handbook. Recommendations for shadowing hours follow.

Medical School	50-200 hours
Dental School	50-100 hours preferred (Source UCSF)
OT School	40+ hours in multiple (4-6) therapy sites is the norm
PA School	Not required, but shadowing experience preferred
PT School	20-100 hours
Veterinary School	No set hours, but should include work in large and small animal practices, research, and wildlife/conservation work

## Strong Letters of Recommendation

Professional schools make acceptance decisions for applicants they may have met for only a few hours. They depend heavily on the recommendations of professionals who know the applicants well. **Academic letters of recommendation differ significantly from letters used in job searches.** You should expect that your professors will provide a lengthy and brutally honest evaluation of your academic performance, your work ethic, your intellectual capabilities, and your character. **It is imperative that you develop strong, positive professional relationships** with instructors, PIs, and supervisors who can speak enthusiastically about you. Usually three letters of recommendation/academic evaluations are required for entry into professional school.

## Research and Independent Investigation

While research experience is not always required, it is becoming more common for medical school applicants in particular to demonstrate research experience. Such experience is valued for its ability to foster independent and critical thinking.

Most tenured science professors at SIU manage a research laboratory. Ask a professor whose class you enjoy whether they have openings in their research lab! You can also visit your program's website. Each program lists faculty with descriptions of the type of research they are conducting in their labs, as well as lists of papers they have published. We recommend you read two or three papers from the professors whose research interests you. It will give you something to talk about when you approach the professor to ask to join their lab.

## Diverse Interests

Do you like shooting hoops? Playing chess? Volunteering at a local animal shelter? Graduate programs know that students with diverse interests and who maintain balanced lifestyles make the best students. So don't neglect your outside interests. They are important for maintaining physical and mental health.

## Individuality and Passion

With the time and effort required to prepare for a health career, many students focus exclusively on academics. But health professions schools recognize that activities that foster leadership, creativity, and civic engagement produce better professionals. Medical schools and PA programs in particular are interested in students who demonstrate a connection to their wider community. So get out there and volunteer!

# Pre-Health Curriculum Planning

## Choosing a Major

Did you know that pre-health is not a major? Or that you do not have to major in the sciences to get into health professional school? Likewise, double-majoring, minors, and honors designations have little bearing on your ability to get into professional school.

*Admission committees are far more interested in your academic performance in key prerequisite courses and your entrance exam score. Regardless of major, you must complete these prerequisites.*

Because those key professional school prerequisites are also required for a science major, a major in the sciences is often the quickest and most efficient path to health professional school. **If you elect a non-science major, it may require more than four years to complete your degree requirements and the professional school prerequisites.** It is important that you let your Academic Advisor know of your health career ambitions as early as possible, especially if you are a non-science major. We also recommend that you and your Academic Advisor develop a long-range academic plan so that you fully understand the impact your choice of major will have on the time and expense necessary to prepare for professional school.

## Prerequisite Requirements

Schools vary in their prerequisite course requirements. We recommend the following courses which include the most common entrance requirements for a majority of US schools. This list is not intended to be comprehensive, and you should always check that you have the prerequisites before applying to any professional school.

## Medical, Chiropractic, Dental, Optometry, and Podiatry Prerequisites

<b>A&amp;P</b>	2 courses in human anatomy and physiology with labs (cadaver labs preferred)
<b>Biology</b>	2 courses in majors biology with labs; 1 course in microbiology with lab 1 course in each of the following: cell biology, genetics, molecular biology
<b>Chemistry</b>	2 courses in general (inorganic) chemistry with labs; 2 courses in organic chemistry with labs (one lab required for dental school)
<b>Biochemistry</b>	1 course in biochemistry (lab recommended but optional; lab required for dental school)
<b>Math</b>	2 courses in mathematics at the level of College Algebra and above (Calculus required for some programs); 1 course in statistics
<b>Physics</b>	2 courses in general physics with labs (no physics on the DAT but may be required by dental schools)
<b>English</b>	2 courses in English and/or writing-intensive coursework
<b>Social Sciences</b>	2-3 courses in social and behavior sciences

Additional biological sciences, microbiology, physiology, pharmacology, embryology or developmental biology, advanced writing, computer science, and medical terminology are recommended.

## Occupational Therapy Prerequisites

<b>Biology</b>	1 course in cellular & molecular biology
<b>Chemistry</b>	2 courses in general (inorganic) chemistry with labs
<b>English</b>	2 courses in English composition
<b>Mathematics</b>	2 courses in mathematics to include algebra and trigonometry 1 course in statistics
<b>Physics</b>	2 courses in college physics with labs
<b>Anatomy &amp; Physiology</b>	2 courses in human anatomy and physiology with labs
<b>Social Sciences</b>	5 courses in psychology & sociology recommended. Check with individual programs for required courses.
<b>Human Development</b>	1 course in human development

Additional courses in medical terminology, physiology, first aid and CPR are recommended.

## Pharmacy Prerequisites

A bachelor's degree is not required to enter a Pharm D program. Pre-pharmacy students may apply to pharmacy schools after the required courses have been completed. (UIC requires 60 hours.) However, the degree may make you more competitive. Experience working in both retail and clinical settings is required.

**In addition to basic pre-medical requirements,** we recommend the following coursework.

<b>Economics</b>	1 course in macro or micro economics
<b>Mathematics</b>	1 course in calculus
<b>Anatomy</b>	1 course in human anatomy
<b>Social Sciences</b>	2 courses in social sciences

## Physical Therapy Prerequisites

<b>A&amp;P</b>	2 courses in human anatomy and physiology with labs
<b>Biology</b>	2 courses in biology with labs
<b>Chemistry</b>	2 courses in general (inorganic) chemistry with labs
<b>English</b>	2 courses in English composition; 1 course in oral communications
<b>Physics</b>	2 courses in general physics with labs
<b>Mathematics</b>	2 courses in mathematics at College Algebra and above (Calculus required for some programs); 1 course in statistics
<b>Social Sciences</b>	2-3 courses to include psychology, abnormal psychology, and sociology

Courses in kinesiology, biomechanics, upper-division psychology and sociology, advanced anatomy, and medical terminology are highly recommended.

## Physician Assistant Prerequisites

Coursework should have been completed within the past 5 years.

<b>A&amp;P</b>	2 courses in human anatomy and physiology with labs
<b>Biology</b>	1 courses in biology with lab; 1 course in medical terminology
<b>CPR</b>	1 course in cardiac life support or CPR for providers
<b>Chemistry</b>	2 courses in general (inorganic) chemistry with labs
<b>English</b>	2 courses in English composition
<b>Mathematics</b>	1 course in Calculus
<b>Social Sciences</b>	2 courses in social sciences to include psychology and sociology

## Pre-Veterinary Prerequisites

We recommend students to determine pre-requisite coursework by contacting the admissions offices of schools to which they intend to apply. Pre-veterinary students may apply to veterinary schools after the required courses have been completed. While it is possible to get into veterinary college taking only the course prerequisites, 98% of first-year veterinary students have a bachelor degree or higher. Given the extraordinarily high competition for seats, and the low acceptance rate, we strongly recommend that pre-veterinary students exceed many, if not all, the pre-requisites and extracurriculars to gain a competitive edge. Depth and breadth of experience working with animals under the direction of a veterinarian are highly valued. The University of Illinois requires a letter of recommendation from a veterinarian.

**In addition to the basic pre-medical requirements**, pre-veterinary students should take courses in Animal Science and Nutrition and courses specific to the Zoology major.

# The Traditional Four-Year Plan

## Freshman Year

If you are entering the university knowing you want to pursue a health career, congratulations! We want to support you from the minute you enter our doors.

### The Summer Before: Registration & Volunteer

Plan on attending Orientation ! Registering for an orientation date will trigger your advisor reaching out to you to set up an appointment to register for your classes. It is much preferred to do this prior to your orientation date. We want you to enjoy your orientation day, not spend it in an office registering for classes!) ***When you talk to your academic advisor, self-identify yourself as a pre-health major. If necessary, ask to have your advisor file paperwork that reflects your pre-health aspirations.***

You might consider volunteering or taking classes at your local community college to gain Certified Nursing Assistant, phlebotomy, or EMT credentials. If you already have these, consider working in a medical setting over the summer. If you are a SIU scholarship recipient, please check with the scholarship office BEFORE taking any summer classes.

### Fall Kickoff: Academics

Once classes begin, **focus on coursework**. We recommend that you limit your non-academic activities to ONE during your freshman year. Keep a close eye on your academic performance. You should be working with your instructors. If you feel yourself begin to slip, seek out your instructors first, then advisement and tutoring. Many of your pre-health foundational courses have free tutoring and academic coaching available through the **Center for Learning Support Services** (<https://cls.siu.edu/tutoring/>) located in Morris Library on the 7th floor.

***If you are a College of Agriculture, Life, and Physical Sciences major:*** Mid-semester, schedule a meeting with an **Academic Advisor** to plan your spring semester and to establish a four-year academic plan leading to your application to professional school. Make sure you register at the appropriate time for best course selection.

***If your major is outside the College of Agriculture, Life, and Physical Sciences:*** Mid-semester schedule an appointment with the **Health Professions Advisor** in addition to your Academic Advisor to register for your classes. Your advisors may need to coordinate your curriculum plan to meet your major requirements and your pre-health requirements.

### Mid-Year Groove: Get Involved

**Have you joined the Pre-Health Professions Association (PPA)**, a registered student organization (RSO)? Get together with like-minded people to advance your respective dreams! Learn more about your chosen profession. There are other health-focused RSOs that may interest you (<https://getinvolved.siu.edu/student-organizations/>)

### It's Not Summer Break Until You're Registered!

Early in the spring semester, schedule a meeting with a Academic Advisor in your College to **register for fall classes**. Begin in early spring to **find summer job shadowing, work and/or volunteer opportunities** in the health field. Let your advisor know of ANY situations or concerns that may affect your academic performance. We're here to help!

## Sophomore Year

### Keep Your Eye on the Prize!

Academics! **Your focus remains on coursework** and strengthening your GPA. Stay ahead of deadlines. There should be no surprises when it comes to your grades. You should be developing relationships with your professors. Make sure your professors have a positive impression of you, both academically and personally. You will be asking them for letters of reference soon.

Interview skills are extremely important for the pre-health student. One day you hope to have an interview with an Admissions Committee. We recommend you begin honing your interview skills by making an appointment with the **Career Development Center** to conduct a mock interview.



### You Don't Just Fall Into Post-Graduate School

Meet with the Health Professions Advisor to discuss your academic performance and career ambitions, and discuss upcoming milestones. You should be **learning all you can about your chosen profession**, the requirements necessary to gain entrance into your post-graduate school, and beginning job shadowing/volunteering if you haven't already. Many post-graduate professional schools require high GPAs, an entrance exam (MCAT, DAT, PCAT, GRE), evidence of job shadowing, and work/volunteer hours in the field. Some require clinical, or hands-on hours working directly with patients. You should be learning all you can about the entrance exam to ensure you are taking the foundational and major courses that will prepare you for it. We recommend reading a book about applying to professional school. If you have additional questions, make sure you bring them to your Health Professions Advisement appointment.

### Using Your Summer Break Wisely

You and your Health Professions Advisor should also discuss your plans for your summer break. Most students use the time between their Sophomore and Junior years to gain important clinical experience. If you haven't already, you should consider completing a CNA, phlebotomy or EMT program and getting a job in patient care, or shadowing a health practitioner in your hometown.

Some students begin preparing for their entrance exams in the summer between sophomore and junior year. You can **discuss your timeline** for applying to professional school and taking your entrance exam with your Health Professions Advisor and start studying!

## Junior Year

The third year will be your busiest yet!

### Prepping Your Health School Application

Most professional schools have complex and detailed application requirements and procedures. Application season for most professional schools begins in June (9-16 months prior to attendance). You will need to have completed your entrance exam, all required pre-requisites, and submitted letters of recommendation before you can apply to any program. You should know that **application deadlines are absolute**. If you miss it, even because of mail delivery days, you are out. Proper planning prevents last-minute catastrophes and disappointment.

We recommend that most pre-professional health students take **SCI 201**, a 1-hr course intended to guide you through professional school applications and interviews in the fall of their junior year.

Pre-medical, pre-dental and pre-optometry students enrolled in SCI 201 are required to **take a full-length practice MCAT/DAT/OAT** exam and submit their scores prior to requesting a committee interview. There are a number of reputable preparation programs, and we can help you connect with one right for you. We recommend taking a practice exam early to identify your weaknesses, and then immediately before you submit your request for a Committee Interview after you've had an opportunity to address them.

### Clinical & Shadowing Experience

If you did not get both clinical and shadowing hours completed over the summer, you should be looking at opportunities to build up your credentials in these areas during your junior year. Many students who received their CNA, phlebotomy or EMT credentials in the summer will continue working through the year to build up their clinical hours. There are also opportunities to volunteer in local hospitals that offer direct patient contact.

### Prepping for the Entrance Exam

Whether you are planning on taking the MCAT (for medical college), the DAT (for dental college), the OAT (for optometry school), or the GRE (for most other pre-health professional graduate programs), you should be following a study program throughout your Junior Year in anticipation of taking your entrance exam sometimes during the Spring semester or very early summer.

### Committee Interviews and Letters of Recommendation

You should begin to accumulate your file of academic evaluations and letters of recommendations. In addition, you may choose to seek a "Committee Letter". SIU's Health Professional Committee is a group of faculty and administrators who interview and offer letters of recommendation for qualified candidates to medical, dental, and optometry school. Requests for Committee Interviews are competitive, and you should plan for the time you'll need to gather your application materials. You should meet with the Health Professions Advisor early in the year to determine whether you will request a Committee Interview. Not all students will be invited to interview.

## **Summer Break is Your Busiest Yet!**

Students not taking a gap year will be spending the summer submitting their professional school applications. You should continue working, volunteering, and shadowing to build your credentials in anticipation of the Graduate School Interview.

## **Senior Year**

### **You've Nearly Made It!**

Having completed the application process, many students will refocus on Academics in their senior year. Schedule a "grad check" with one of your College's undergraduate advisors early. You don't want any surprises. You should begin prepping for professional school interviews. Make sure you have a business-caliber outfit for your interview. Visit the Career Development Center for business outfit assistance. The Career Clothing Closet is free to students.

## **The Gap Year**

At SIU, we encourage students to apply to professional school when they are the strongest candidate they can possibly be. This may or may not coincide with the traditional schedule outlined in the previous pages. No two students are alike and no one follows exactly the same trajectory. Some students may decide for various reasons to delay their application to professional school for one or more years. If this is you, you should plan on using that time to make yourself a stronger candidate for professional school. Get a job in the field, dedicate yourself to studying for your entrance exam, job shadow, and continue to gain clinical experience. Your Health Professions Advisor can help you plan your gap year.

## **Post Baccalaureate Programs**

Students whose academic credentials are in some way lacking for direct entry to professional school may consider enrolling in a post-bacc or bridge program. These programs are usually accelerated masters programs or dedicated post-baccalaureate programs that address deficiencies in a student's undergraduate record. The Health Professions Office can help you identify appropriate programs.

# Four-Year Checklist

## Pre-College

- Take as many college-prep science and math courses as you can at your High School
- HS Senior Year/Summer, consider working or volunteering in a health care environment (Use the attached sheets to document your hours and experiences)
- Consider getting your CNA license (appropriate for Pre-Med and PA careers)
- Register with your Academic Advisor PRIOR to New Student Orientation
- Meet with an Undergraduate Advisor in Your College/School and Register for Fall Classes

## 1<sup>st</sup> Semester Freshman Year

- Focus on Academics
- Interact with your professors! Go to their office hours!
- Join the Pre-Health Professions Association (PPA) Registered Student Organization
- Meet with an Undergraduate Advisor in Your College/School (EARLY) to develop a 4-year academic plan and register for Spring Classes

## 2nd Semester Freshman Year

- Focus on Academics
- Develop working relationship with your professors and instructors
- Get involved! Come out to PPA meetings
- Meet with an Undergraduate Advisor in Your College/School and register for Summer/Fall Classes

## Summer Following Freshman Year

- Volunteer or work in a medical environment
- Consider getting your CNA license or working full-time in a clinical environment
- Summer is a great time to job shadow someone whose job you'd like to have!

## 1st Semester Sophomore Year

- Focus remains on Academics!
- Continue to develop positive working relationships with your professors
- Consider volunteering in a research lab – see your Department's Undergraduate Advisor for ideas/assistance
- Meet with an Undergraduate Advisor in Your College/School to register for Spring Classes
- Meet with the Health Professions Advisor to discuss your professional plans
- Make an appointment with Career Services to develop interview skills

## 2nd Semester Sophomore Year

- Keep focusing on Academics
- Research the Entrance Exams required for your preferred professional school
- Read a book about applying to professional school. Need tips? Contact the Health Professions Advisor!
- Meet with a Health Professions Advisor to discuss your summer plans and to create a timeline for taking your entrance exam
- Meet with an Academic Advisor to register for Summer/Fall classes
- Sign Up for SCI 201 in the Fall

## Summer Following Sophomore Year

- Consider getting your CNA license (for pre-PA and pre-med)
- Job Shadowing/Volunteer/Work in clinical environment
- Purchase prep materials for entrance exams and begin studying

## 1<sup>st</sup> Semester of Junior Year

- Academics, Academics, Academics!
- Meet with the Health Professions Advisor (VERY EARLY) to determine whether you'll request a Committee Interview
- Prepare a study schedule leading up to your entrance exam
- Sign up online for the MCAT, DAT, GRE, or OAT
- Research schools to which you are interested in applying
- Take a full-length practice entrance exam
- Submit Committee Interview Packet

## 2nd Semester of Junior Year

- More Academics!
- Meet with Health Professions Advisor to finalize your Committee packet/Letter of recommendation packet
- Decide where to apply
- Take the DAT, MCAT, GRE, or OAT
- Apply to Health Professional School (May of Junior Year)

## Summer Following Junior Year

- Volunteer or work in a clinical environment
- Retake entrance exam if necessary
- Interviews & Acceptance

## Senior Year

- If accepted congratulated yourself!
- If not accepted, meet with Health Professions Advisor and discuss alternative paths to professional school

# One-Time Job Shadowing, Community Outreach, Volunteering and Clinical Experience Worksheet

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time In \_\_\_\_\_ Time Out \_\_\_\_\_

Institution/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

Reflections \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time In \_\_\_\_\_ Time Out \_\_\_\_\_

Institution/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

Reflections \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time In \_\_\_\_\_ Time Out \_\_\_\_\_

Institution/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

Reflections \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time In \_\_\_\_\_ Time Out \_\_\_\_\_

Institution/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

Reflections \_\_\_\_\_

# Recurring Volunteer Shadowing, Outreach, Volunteer and/or Clinical Experience Worksheet

Institution/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time In \_\_\_\_\_ Time Out \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time In \_\_\_\_\_ Time Out \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time In \_\_\_\_\_ Time Out \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time In \_\_\_\_\_ Time Out \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Duties: \_\_\_\_\_

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Reflections \_\_\_\_\_

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SOUTHERN ILLINOIS  
**SALUKIS**



For links to pre-professional information, schools ,  
& application services, visit our website:  
[science.siu.edu/academics/prehealth.html](https://science.siu.edu/academics/prehealth.html)

