The University of Dallas has a long and successful history of providing academically superior pre-health programs. Our success rate with students obtaining acceptance into medical and health-related professional schools is well-documented, and places our institution at or near the top for all of the universities in the state. An excellent student/professor ratio allows for personalized advising, and ensures a meaningful recommendation letter when the time comes. Our balanced liberal arts and science education is in tune with the modern emphasis on the well-rounded and versatile student.

An Overview of the Health Professions

Modern health care is incredibly diverse—a walk through a hospital or clinic can demonstrate just how many different kinds of professionals are involved in promoting, maintaining and restoring the health of the individual. There are many ways to make a career in the health professions depending on the area of specialization, amount of training required, and the amount of patient interaction that occurs. All of these fields may require several years beyond the initial degree to train for a particular specialization or subfield.

**MEDICINE**

A physician may include a doctor of medicine (MD) or doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) who is dedicated to the study, diagnosis and treatment of disease or injury. Among the fields available to physicians is primary care and general practice, or further training to become a medical specialist working in fields such as internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry, or surgery. Both the MD and DO degrees require at least four years of medical school, followed by a three to five year residency.

**DENTISTRY**

The medical practice of dentistry deals directly with the conditions of the oral cavity and how they affect human health. A dentist may work within general practice, or obtain further training in dental specialties such as endodontics (treatment of the roots of teeth), orthodontics (teeth straightening), periodontics (treating areas surrounding the teeth, such as the gums) or pediatric dentistry. Becoming a dentist requires four years of dental school working toward the DDS (doctor of dental surgery) or DMD.

**NURSING**

In a healthcare setting nurses assist in the treatment and recovery of patients, and work closely with physicians, patients and their families in order to help them manage injury and illness and improve their overall health. Some programs grant a Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing (BSN), and students who already have a bachelor’s degree can enroll in an accelerated 12 to 18 month program after graduation. Other programs grant a master’s degree (MSN) that requires two years after undergraduate science coursework, and may require a nursing license (RN) prior to enrollment.

**PHYSICAL THERAPY**

The physical therapist helps maintain and restore function to the body and the musculoskeletal system. Many physical therapists are involved in helping patients adjust their activity and movement to prevent injury, treating existing injuries, or rehabilitating patients back to their original healthy state. The terminal degree in physical therapy is the DPT, which requires 2 1/2 years in a PT program, with possible additional education for a specialization in orthopedics, pediatrics, or geriatric physical therapy.

**VETERINARY**

In veterinary medicine the interest is in applying medical, diagnostic and surgical principles to animals. The doctor of veterinary medicine (DVM) requires at least four years in a veterinary medical program, and involves learning specialized techniques and a diverse group of patients—from dogs and cats to livestock, exotic pets or wildlife. The veterinary field can be highly competitive but rewarding, and include specialized techniques also used to study and enhance human health.

**PHYSICIAN’S ASSISTANT**

Under the supervision of a licensed physician, a physician assistant provides health care services such as physical exams, diagnosis, surgical care and testing. The PA requires three to four years of education, but unlike the physician the PA is not required to complete a residency. Physician assistants are a valuable part of the healthcare team, filling a vital role in areas under-served by physicians.

**CHIROPRACTIC**

The doctor of chiropractic (DC) specializes in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disorders of the musculoskeletal system, and requires approximately four years of chiropractic education. Chiropractic may include manipulation of the spine, joints, and soft tissues, as well as patient exercises. A doctor of chiropractic places strong emphasis on wellness and enhancing the body’s natural ability to heal itself.

**PODIATRY**

In medicine, podiatry focuses on the disorders of the foot, ankle and lower leg, and involves the study, diagnosis and treatment of problems with the lower extremity. A podiatrist is required to undertake a four year program toward the doctor of pediatric medicine (DPM). Many podiatrists work in primary care, and others may go on in specialties such as surgery, sports medicine or orthopedics.

**PHARMACY**

The pharmacist connects health science and chemistry through pharmaceutical drugs and other treatments, and is an expert on the use of medications to enhance human health. Pharmacy requires four years of basic study for the PharmD, and students can go on into the familiar area of dispensing medications, or even nuclear pharmacy, to prepare radioactive materials for tests and treating diseases.

**OPTOMETRY**

Optometrists emphasize vision care and the study of the eyes and related structures. An optometrist may work in conjunction with ophthalmologists (MDs with advanced training in eye problems) and opticians (who design and fit corrective lenses). In general, training in optometry requires a four-year program toward the doctor of optometry (OD).

**ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS**

Nearly 60 percent of the health workforce works within the allied health professions. The field of allied health requires two to three years of training to learn patient care through diagnosis, therapeutic care, and support. There are numerous disciplines within the allied health professions, from first responders such as paramedics to technicians, occupational/speech therapy, nutrition, or healthcare administration.

**COMBINED ADVANCED DEGREES**

For students with multiple interests there are many programs offering combined degrees with a degree in the health professions. Dual degrees may include a PhD. (for someone interested in health research), a JD (for the study of healthcare law) or MBA (for healthcare administration and management). While these programs require more time, they can be excellent options for students with interests across multiple fields.
Academic Requirements for the Health Professions

The basic academic requirements include the completion of certain prerequisite courses and an above average GPA, and these should be much of your focus while preparing for a health professions program.

**PREREQUISITES AND MAJOR**

To gain admission into a health professions program you are not required to be a science major, although a major in the sciences does allow overlap between your prerequisites and your major requirements. Each year we have successful applicants from business and the humanities who have met the basic prerequisites. A listing of the minimum number of credit hours required for the various health professions is shown below. Because some programs are highly variable, it is up to you to plan your course schedules in order to meet the particular requirements at your schools of interest.

### Minimum Number of Required Credit Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Biology</th>
<th>Anatomy</th>
<th>Physiology</th>
<th>Microbiology</th>
<th>Genetics</th>
<th>Nutrition</th>
<th>Physics</th>
<th>Chemistry</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Calculus</th>
<th>College Algebra or above</th>
<th>Psychology &amp; Sociology</th>
<th>Speech Communication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical (MD, DO)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>3*</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dental (DDS)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Nursing (BSN, MSN)</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Chiropractic (DC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Podiatry (DPM)</td>
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<td>Pharmacy (PharmD)†</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optometry (OD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allied Health Professions</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
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</table>

* Biochemistry is required at UT-San Antonio and UT Houston medical schools, and at Baylor College of Dentistry

† Nursing programs in Texas require the RN prior to entering the master’s program, and entail enrollment in a BSN program after graduation and sitting for the RN boards (except for UT Austin’s alternate entry MS nursing program)

‡ Admissions requirements vary significantly between schools. Students should contact specific schools of interest to determine their complete requirements.

### GPA

Admission to health professions programs is universally competitive, and the reality is that your GPA may make or break you in the early stages of the selection process. Although students have been admitted with a lower GPA, to be competitive for admission we recommend maintaining a GPA of 3.5 or better.

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Other Requirements for the Health Professions

Experience is an important part of your development as a pre-health student. Without some direct experience in the health professions you cannot talk about your goals and interests in an informed way, and understand whether you are certain that this path is right for you.

### VOLUNTEERING AND INTERNSHIPS

If you truly desire to be in the health professions and you want to demonstrate your interest, the best way to do that is by getting clinical experience. You can find many different kinds of opportunities in a doctor’s office, hospital or clinic. Shadowing is a good start, and entails being able to spend time in a clinic observing the kinds of experiences they have day to day. For hands-on experience you can volunteer in a clinic and interact with patients, and in some circumstances you can be hired into a paid position during the semester or over the summer.

If you make the arrangements for this experience early you may be able to apply your experiences toward receiving academic credit in an internship. The pre-health advisors have a resource list of hospitals, clinics and physicians that are available to have you shadow or volunteer. You can also apply for an internship with the Student Health Center at the University of Dallas.

### RESEARCH

Whether research experience is helpful depends on the specific orientation of the program. The activities of health professionals are very different from those of the researcher, and so if you have little or no clinical experience, research will not be a substitute. However, if you plan a career in academic medicine or if you want to apply to a combined program (such as the MD/Ph.D.), research is a must.

### EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

What you do in your extracurricular activities says a lot about who you are, and can include hobbies, club memberships, sports, and work with your church or faith community. It is important to demonstrate that you are deeply interested in other aspects of your character beyond just studying and making good grades, and to enrich your life and the lives of those with whom you interact.

Rather than trying to impress with a long list of activities, it is much better to spend meaningful time in a few activities that are important to you, and consider particularly those that involve leadership and responsibility. Be able to talk about your experiences in an informed way in your personal statement and/or interview.

You are strongly encouraged to become active in the Pre-Health Professions Society, a student organization dedicated to providing opportunities for students interested in healthcare to meet and discuss the field, and learn more about the options available in health care. The Pre-Health Society annually hosts speakers, clinic tours and visits, including the chance to meet the key decision makers from medical, physical therapy, and nursing schools to learn what they are looking for in an applicant.
The Application Process

The most important thing about the application process is that it does not begin in your junior or senior year as the application is put in the mail to a health professions school. Instead, the process requires that you hit the ground running as a freshman, and begin to acquire experiences, relationships, and the tools you will need to be a competitive applicant. Once you begin to become serious about applying, there are several things to consider.

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

Schools that receive state funding are required to limit all but a few positions to residents of the state, and only outstanding out-of-state residents have a chance. To qualify as a Texas resident you must reside in Texas for one year and establish a domicile in Texas prior to enrollment. Requirements for other states vary. You should inquire about residency status before you apply if there is even the slightest question about your status. Private colleges and universities generally have no state residency requirements, although there may be geographical quotas or agreements with specific colleges or universities.

STANDARDIZED TESTS

Although your GPA indicates performance in an academic setting, you will be required to take some form of standardized test to be considered for admission to most health professions programs. Among the best known is the MCAT, the standardized test that measures achievement in the biological and physical sciences and verbal reasoning for applicants to medical and podiatry schools (a competitive MCAT score is a 30 or above). The GRE is accepted for veterinary, physical therapy, and physician assistant programs (a competitive GRE score is above a 700 quantitative, 500 verbal). Pharmacy schools require the PCAT (75th percentile or above are competitive), dental schools require the DAT (18 or higher is competitive) and optometry schools may require the OAT (350 or above is competitive). There are many test prep programs and review courses that offer to prepare students for the standardized tests. These review courses can be costly, and score improvement is more likely for those who take the courses seriously, and use them primarily to improve test-taking strategy rather than learning the material the first time.

APPLICATION

Prior to initiating your application you should declare your intent to apply for a health professions program by submitting a Self-Assessment Form to the Pre-Health Advisors. This self-assessment allows you to describe yourself to your pre-health advisor and provide important information they may need in writing a letter of recommendation. This self-assessment process also asks you to describe why you have decided on a career in the health professions, and allows you to inventory your previous experience, academic development, extracurricular activities and honors.

In today’s application process most applications are now done online and should not be completed on paper and mailed to the school. Completed online applications are typically sent through a routing system and distributed to the schools you wish to consider. It is highly recommended that you get your application in during the early part of the summer after your junior year, as many schools begin to offer interviews to applicants during July and August for students who plan to enroll in a health professions program immediately after graduation.

ESSAYS

Applications require an essay or personal statement describing why you chose the health professions. In your essay, write clearly and concisely and provide details that help the admissions committee get to know you more personally. In your application essay it is more effective to use a real experience and concrete examples that demonstrate how much you want to go into the field and why you are a qualified applicant. It is a good idea to start writing the essay early and have a few outside readers look at your essay to provide a critical outside view of your writing and offer constructive revisions.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

The strength of your application rests not only on your academic record, but also on your letters of recommendation. You should request letters from individuals knowledgeable about you and the program to which you are applying. Cultivating good recommendations starts early in your academic career, by getting to know faculty and having them get to know you and your academic and personal strengths. Application to some health professions programs will require a committee letter comprised of recommendations from several different people. Typically this letter is constructed by the Pre-Health Advisor based on individual letters of recommendation sent by your recommenders. You must notify the Pre-Health Advisor of your intent to receive a committee letter so that he may compile the individual letters of recommendation for you.

INTERVIEWS

If your application clears the first part of evaluation by your preferred pre-health program you will be invited for an interview. At some schools all applicants are considered to be on a level playing field once they are invited to interview, so the final decision to admit or reject is based solely on the results of the interview. When you are invited to interview, it is a good idea to research beforehand in order to ask pertinent questions about the school and its programs. Additionally it is highly recommend that you practice with mock interviews to hone your interview skills and know what might be expected.

REAPPLICATION

In the event you are not accepted on your first try, you may still reapply for the next year. Although it can seem discouraging, reapplication provides you the opportunity to improve aspects of your overall application package to increase your future chances. You may wish to re-take certain courses or the standardized test, or perhaps add to your health care background and experience. Be sure to talk to your pre-health advisor if you plan to reapply in order to develop a strategy for eventual success.

FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE YEAR

- Study well.
- Get involved in extracurricular and volunteer work.
- Think seriously about whether the health professions are right for you.
- Meet at least once a semester with a pre-health advisor.

JUNIOR YEAR

- Complete course requirements and take standardized tests.
- Turn in Self-Assessment Form and review it with your Pre-Health Advisor.
- Receive test scores.
- Complete applications.
- Submit applications and notify advisor when applications have been submitted so that your letters of recommendation can be sent.

SENIOR YEAR

- Await interview invitations and prepare for interviews.
- Research the schools where you will be interviewing.
- Await acceptance decisions.
- Develop a plan for reapplication if necessary.
Pre-Health Resources

For the most up-to-date information and links to specific health professions schools, visit the pre-health page at www.udallas.edu/prehealth.

The National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP) has a very useful fact sheet about the various health professions and the requirements of different institutions. The fact sheet is available online at www.naahp.org/factsheet.htm.

The University of Dallas is a participating institution in the Joint Admissions Medical Program (JAMP). JAMP is designed to support and encourage highly qualified, economically disadvantaged students pursuing a medical school education. Successful applicants receive support through scholarships and stipends, mentoring and internships, and guaranteed admission to a Texas medical school if all requirements are met. For more information, visit www.utsystem.edu/jamp.

UD awards the Sister Clodovia Lockett Scholarship Endowed Scholarship in Pre-Medical Studies in honor of Sister Clodovia, who helped build the reputation of UD’s Pre-Health program. The scholarship provides full tuition support as well as a $500 stipend for expenses incurred during the medical school application process. One scholarship is offered per year to a junior student, and the annual application deadline is February 2. Applications are available in the Biology Department.

At the University of Dallas our associations with health care providers are extensive, and allow for the type of exposure a student needs to discover and explore his or her interest in medicine and the allied health professions. Clinical and hospital internships, and our easily accessible on-campus experiences are available to provide a hands-on experience in the health care field. Our Pre-health Professions Society sponsors visits from deans of medical and health related professional schools allowing students to interact personally with these key decisionmakers. Our advisors have a fresh, up-to-date knowledge of the various admissions processes and provide students valuable insight on how they can become a successful applicant for the health professions.

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