

A Handbook for Pre-Medical Students



Biology/Allied Health Department
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<http://southern.edu/biology>





Pre-Medical Program

Southern Adventist University

General Information:

Admission requirements are published annually by the Association of American Medical Colleges (<http://www.aamc.org>) and this is an excellent source for all types of pertinent information.

Entrance into medical school has five essential requirements. These are:

1. **A four-year bachelor's degree.** Medical schools do not require any specific major. The student is free to major in any area of study ranging from the sciences to the humanities. Traditionally, the great majority of students throughout the country who apply to medical schools come from biology or chemistry majors because these majors best prepare the student for the rigorous basic sciences that must be mastered during the first two years of medical school. A student who is weak in the sciences and takes a major outside of the sciences to boost their GPA is defeating their goals. A student must be strong in the sciences to handle the rigors of medical school. If another major is chosen, it is best to take additional courses in the sciences that will strengthen the student in this area.
2. **Excellent academic GPA.** Medical schools characteristically compute two GPAs for the students who apply to their schools, the overall GPA and the science GPA. The science GPA carries much more weight as an indicator of the student's ability to meet the academic challenges of medical school. A high GPA in non-science subjects and a mediocre GPA in science will not cut it. The average GPA for acceptance into many medical schools is about 3.7 and the lowest GPA is about 3.5. GPAs are calculated on all classes taken. If you get a "C" in a class, retake it and get an "A", it is calculated as two "B's". You want to make sure to do well the first time you take a class.

3. **Four full-year college basic science classes:** General Biology, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, and General Physics. These are the absolute minimum number of science classes required. Additional classes are highly recommended. It is expected that the student do well in these classes with most grades in the A range. The science GPA that most medical schools use to evaluate a student will include these classes and any other science courses that have been taken in college. It is not advisable for a student to shop around to find "easy A" basic science summer classes at other colleges. Medical school admission committees are suspicious of students who take their basic science classes at schools other than their primary college or university.
4. **The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT).** This test is administered by the Association of American Medical Colleges several times a year, mostly in the summer. The contents of this MCAT (<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm>) examination are described on the Association's website. This examination is taken after the four basic science courses are completed. The MCAT scores must be available to medical schools to evaluate the year **before** the student is expecting to begin medical school. Taking an MCAT review such as that offered by Kaplan (<http://kaplan.com>) or Princeton Review Centers (<http://www.princetonreview.com>) is recommended, but not required, in preparing to take this important exam.



5. **Good written recommendations** from the Pre-professional Recommendations Committee of the applicant's undergraduate university or college. Medical schools are most interested in applicants who show good "non-cognitive" traits of integrity, leadership, compassion, and community involvement as well as being well rounded with interests in areas such as music, sports, etc. It is very important that a pre-medical student get to know the science professors at the college in which they are taking premedical studies. They form the core recommendations committee and their impressions of the student are the basis of this important component of the student's application. It is not advisable for students to go "off campus" to take the required basic science courses for this and other reasons.

Regardless of the degree pursued, it is critical that pre-medical students frequently consult the University's pre-medical advisors in either the Biology or Chemistry departments for advice on the selection of courses and preparation for admission requirements.

TIMETABLE OF IMPORTANT DATES FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATIONS:

Freshman Year

1. GPA is calculated from your first semester as an undergraduate. Keep your academic record competitive! GPA is the first critical factor in determining your applications success. Begin now to get involved in some extracurricular activities, especially those which reach OUT to others.
2. Get to know your advisor. If you have a major other than in the sciences, "adopt" one of the premedical advisors in Biology or Chemistry to work with you throughout your time at Southern.



3. By the second semester, think about working either paid or as a volunteer in a medical setting such as hospital, nursing home, medical office, etc. Experience in this type of setting will let the medical school admissions committee know that you are serious about a career in the health sciences. Getting to know a physician in this context will also add a positive element to your recommendations when you apply.

Join Southern's Pre-Medical Club and be an active part of it. Get information on the pre-medical preceptorship program sponsored by the club to shadow a resident physician in one of the local hospitals.

Sophomore Year

1. Begin or continue to work either paid or as a volunteer in a medical office hospital or other location where you can gain some clinical exposure.
2. Being involved as a volunteer in either a church-sponsored mission project, or as a student missionary, would also help your application.
3. By this time you should have at least one of the basic science courses completed, perhaps two. If you have only completed one, think seriously about taking two more this year. This will give you more time to study for your MCAT during your junior year.
4. Remember to be active in the Pre-Medical Club and its activities. Now is a good time to think of participating in the club as an officer.
5. A number of medical schools consider research an important part of undergraduate preparation for a medical career. This is a good time to check with the department's research coordinator or your academic advisor on opportunities for research during the summer or school year.

Junior Year – Fall Semester

1. Begin review for MCAT (Nov, Dec).
2. Continue to work or volunteer in a medical setting.
3. Think about who your writers of supplementary recommendation letters are going to be. In addition to a recommendation from the pre-professional recommendations committee you will need three others for the supplementary application to medical school.



Typically, the following are suggested:

- a) Physician you have shadowed.
- b) Work supervisor (diligent, on-time, etc.) or professor for whom you have worked.
- c) Pastor, friend (character reference).

Try to think in terms of who will write an effective letter on your behalf. People who know you and your desire and commitment to becoming a physician are best.

4. Set up an appointment with your pre-med advisor to discuss your application, and it is advisable to get some research experience to strengthen it as well.

Junior Year – Winter Semester

1. If you have decided to take the MCAT this summer, you should pick up an application now and pay attention to the deadline dates. Apply early! Some test sites fill up.
2. Continue to review for MCAT. A Kaplan or Princeton review course may be helpful to you.



February

1. Make sure MCAT application is received and your seat is reserved.
2. Begin to consider schools that you desire to attend, and consult your pre-med advisor. Typically, you choose a few “wished for” schools, a few “in-state” schools, and a few “last hope” schools.

May

1. Begin work on your personal essay for the AMCAS application.

Senior Year

July

1. Complete your application for AMCAS with your final AMCAS personal essay. This takes awhile so start early!
2. Obtain a personal information sheet from the Associate Vice President’s office to fill out for the pre-professional recommendations committee so they can write a more complete and supportive letter for you.
3. Make sure you have requested personal letters of recommendation from those who will support you in your application.

Mid August

Turn in your completed personal information sheet to the Associate Vice President’s secretary with a list of the medical schools to which you are applying. Also, tell this office which medical schools need the committee letter. Otherwise, only Loma Linda University School of Medicine will receive it.

October

1. Make an appointment with the Testing & Counseling Center to interview with the representative from Loma Linda University School of Medicine.
2. Begin to think of alternatives (just in case).
3. Be patient, interviews will come.
4. Update your application to the schools as you accomplish more in your senior year.
5. Thank you letters to interviewers and recommendation writers.

December Try to schedule interviews during winter break for convenience.

January Send updated transcripts if requested by schools.

February If you have no responses by mid-February, speak with your pre-medical advisor. He/she may be able to call on your behalf.

March If wait-listed, send letter expressing continued interest.

April-August A few acceptance letters are still sent out, so stay calm. Make sure medical schools can reach you or a family member by telephone at all times.

YOU ARE ACCEPTED!



Be sure to let your major department and advisor know. A thank-you letter for all that was done on your behalf is very appropriate and appreciated.