



A HANDBOOK FOR PRE-DENTAL STUDENTS



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PRE-DENTAL PROGRAM

SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

GENERAL INFORMATION

Admission requirements are published annually by the Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (*portal.aadsasweb.org*), and this is an excellent source for all types of pertinent information.

Entrance into dental school has six essential requirements. These are:

I. A FOUR-YEAR BACHELOR'S DEGREE

Dental schools do not require a specific major. Traditionally, the majority of students throughout the country who apply to dental schools have earned biology or chemistry degrees, because these best prepare you for the rigorous basic sciences that must be mastered during the first two years of dental school. It is counter productive for a student who is weak in the sciences to take a major outside of the sciences to boost their GPA. You will need to be strong in the sciences to handle the rigors of dental school. If you choose a different major, it is best to take additional courses in the sciences to get stronger in this area. Very rarely are students accepted prior to finishing a bachelor's degree.

II. GOOD ACADEMIC GPA

Dental schools characteristically compute two GPAs for the students who apply to their schools—the overall GPA and the science GPA. The science GPA carries more weight as to the student's ability to meet the academic challenges of dental school. A high GPA in non-science subjects and a mediocre GPA

- II.** in science will not cut it. The average GPA for acceptance into dental schools is about 3.4 and the lowest GPA is about 3.1. **Cont.** GPAs are calculated on all classes taken. If you get a C in a class and then retake it and get an A, it is calculated as two B's. It is important to do well the first time you take a class.

**III. REQUIRED COLLEGE CLASSES:
BASIC SCIENCES + BIOCHEMISTRY**

General Biology, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, General Physics (with labs), and one semester of Biochemistry without a lab, are the absolute minimum number of classes required. It is expected that you do well in these classes, with grades in the A-B range. The science GPA that most dental schools use to evaluate you will include these classes and any other science courses that you have taken in college. It is not advisable for you to shop around to find an "easy A" basic science summer class at another college. Dental school admission committees are suspicious of students who take their basic science classes at schools other than their primary college or university. Loma Linda University School of Dentistry (LLUSD) recommends at least three additional upper division biology classes. Courses in accounting, introduction to management, and ceramics or sculpture are also helpful.

IV. THE DENTAL ADMISSION TEST (DAT)

This test is administered online by the Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS). The content of the DAT examination is described on the AADSAS website (portal.aadasweb.org). You can take the DAT after finishing General Biology, General Chemistry, and Organic Chemistry. However, you must additionally finish one year of General Physics and one semester of Biochemistry before entering dental school. This examination is taken anytime throughout the year online through an accepted testing center. You will get your score immediately after finishing the test. The DAT scores must be available to dental schools for

evaluation the year before you are expecting to begin dental school. Taking a DAT review such as that offered by Kaplan (*kaplan.com*) or Princeton (*princetonreview.com*) is sometimes recommended in preparing to take this important exam. Additionally, eight-ten weeks of eight-ten hours a day of individual prep, either taking a course or studying by yourself, is recommended.

V. GOOD WRITTEN RECOMMENDATIONS

You should have good written recommendations from the Pre-Professional Recommendations Committee of your undergraduate university or college. Dental schools are most interested in applicants who show good noncognitive 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 you get to know the science professors at the college in which you are taking pre-dental studies. They form the core recommendations committee, and their impressions of you are the basis of this important component of the application. For this and other reasons, it is not advisable for students to go off campus to take the required basic science courses. Regardless of the degree pursued, it is critical that pre-dental students frequently consult the university's pre-dental adviser in the biology department for advice on the selection of courses and preparation for admission requirements.

VI. SHADOWING

Knowing what dentistry is will help you determine if this career is right for you. Thus, LLUSD now requires 50 hours of shadowing, with at least 20 of the hours observing a general dentist.

TIMETABLE OF IMPORTANT DATES FOR DENTAL SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

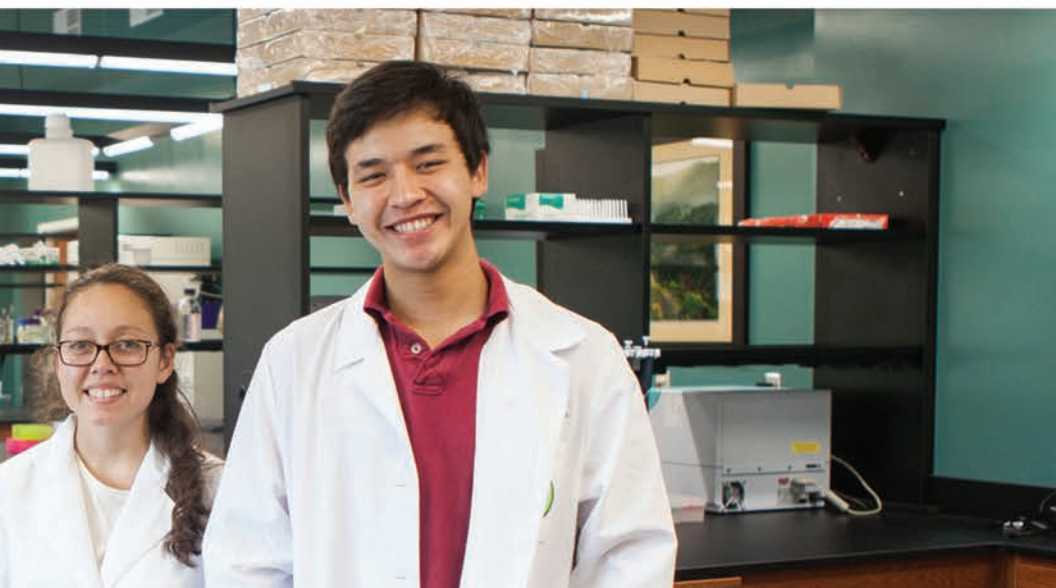
FRESHMAN YEAR

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 application's success. Begin now to get involved in some extracurricular activities, especially those that reach *OUT* to others.
2. Get to know your adviser. If you have a major other than in the sciences, "adopt" the pre-dental adviser in biology to work with you throughout your time at Southern. Also, begin considering a few other related career paths.
3. By the second semester, think about working in a dental setting, either paid or as a volunteer. Experience in this type of setting will let the dental school admissions committee know that you are serious about a career in the health sciences. Getting to know a dentist in this context will also add a positive element to your recommendations when you apply.
4. Join Southern's Pre-Dental Club and be an active part of it. The club has a list of local dentists who you can shadow.



SOPHOMORE YEAR

1. Begin or continue to work in a dental office where you can gain clinical exposure, either paid or as a volunteer. Make sure you have requested a personal letter of recommendation from those who will support you in your application.
2. By this time, you should have at least one of the basic science courses completed, perhaps two.
3. Remember to be engaged in the Pre-Dental Club and its' activities. Now is a good time to think of participating in the club as an officer.
4. A number of dental schools consider research to be an important part of undergraduate preparation for a dental career. This is a good time to check with the department's research coordinator, or your academic adviser, for research opportunities during the school year or summer.



JUNIOR YEAR

FALL SEMESTER

1. Begin reviewing for the DAT (November or December).
2. Continue to work or volunteer in a dental setting.
3. Think about who you will ask to write your supplementary recommendation letters. In addition to a recommendation from the Pre-Professional Recommendations Committee, you will need three others for the supplementary application to dental school. Typically, the following are suggested:
 - a. A dentist you have shadowed.
 - b. A supervisor or professor for whom you have worked.
 - c. A pastor or friend for a 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 dentist are best.
4. Make an appointment with the pre-dental adviser to discuss your application.
5. It is advisable to get some research experience to strengthen it as well.

WINTER SEMESTER

1. If you have decided to take the DAT this summer, you should start your application *NOW* and pay attention to the deadline dates. Apply as soon as it opens. Some test sites fill up.
2. Consider which schools you are going to apply to. Typically, you choose a few “wished for” schools, a few “in-state” schools, and a few “last hope” schools.
3. Begin work on your personal essay for the AADSAS application.
4. Obtain, complete, and turn in a personal information sheet to the Associate Vice President’s office so the Pre-Professional Recommendations Committee can write a more complete and supportive letter for you. Also, turn in a list of the dental schools to which you are applying, and tell this office which of these need the committee letter. Otherwise, *ONLY* LLUSD will receive it.

SENIOR YEAR

JUNE

Complete your application for AADSAS with your final personal essay. This process takes a while, so start early!

JUNE - JULY - AUGUST

Study hard. Be prepared. You only want to take the DAT once. Successfully conquer it.

OCTOBER

1. Be patient, interviews will come.
2. Update your application to the schools as you accomplish more in your senior year.
3. Send a thank you note to recommendation writers.

DECEMBER - FEBRUARY

1. Try to schedule interviews during winter break for convenience.
2. Send updated transcripts if requested by schools.
3. If you have no responses by mid-February, speak with the pre-dental adviser.

MARCH

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

APRIL - AUGUST

A few acceptance letters are still sent out as late as August, so stay calm. Make sure dental schools can reach you or a family member by phone at all times.

YOU ARE ACCEPTED!

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

PRE-DENTAL SPONSOR



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Keith Snyder, PhD, graduated from Andrews University in 1979 with a BS in biology and finished an MS in animal behavior in 1982. He completed his doctorate at Washington State University with a degree in zoology focusing on neurophysiology.

In 1986, he accepted a teaching position at West Indonesian Union College (UNAI) in Indonesia and moved there with his wife, Beth. He chaired the Biology Department and helped develop a research program for both teachers and students. The time spent there laid the groundwork for the tropical biology class he now teaches through Southern Adventist University.

The Snyder family returned to the United States in 1995 to begin teaching at Southern. He has taught a wide variety of classes and occasionally teaches at Rosario Beach, Washington (a Southern Adventist University affiliated marine biology station).

Snyder, says, "It is one of my greatest joys to be able to share the wonders of this marvelously complex world with my students." He feels that being able to discover the mysteries of the biological world is extremely satisfying.

He enjoys most outdoor sports as well as volleyball and racquetball. He also enjoys scuba diving and insect collecting.



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