

HANDBOOK FOR PREPROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

HEALTH PROFESSIONS INFORMATION OFFICE

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY AT CARBONDALE

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HEALTH PROFESSIONS INFORMATION

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There are several hours each week when you may see the Health Professions Advisor without an appointment. This schedule is available at the Advisement Center's reception desk.

Health Professions On-line Listserv:

Purpose: To receive information about events and application information, and exchange information with other Pre-Health students. (Open only to SIUC Pre-Health Students).

To subscribe, send an e-mail to: listserv@siu.edu. The subject line can be ignored. The text of the note should contain the following listserv command: **SUB PREHEALTH-L firstname lastname**. To send an e-mail to the list: **PREHEALTH-L@siu.edu**

INTRODUCTION

If you are planning to apply to one of the following:

Dental School
Medical School
Optometry School
Pharmacy School
Physician Assistant School
Podiatry School
Veterinary School

read this booklet, keep it, and use this information. This will answer a lot of your questions about admission requirements, when to do what, and where to find additional information.

Also visit the Health Professions Information Office (HPIO) in the College of Science Advisement if you need to ask other questions.

One of the requirements of any medical school will be a letter of evaluation from the Health Preprofessional Committee. How the Committee makes that evaluation is outlined in this Handbook. **Evaluations** will need to be collected from professors, professional mentors, and employers on a timely basis. It is recommended that students start this process in advance, as students typically interview during the spring of their junior year with this committee.

WHO WILL BE ACCEPTED?

The following is a summary of national average test scores and GPA's for students accepted to a professional program in 2005 (unless otherwise stated):

	Pharmacy	(M.D.) Allopathic Medicine	(D.O.) Osteopathic Medicine 2004	Podiatric Medicine
GPA				
science	3.37	3.56	3.36	3.00
non-science	3.61	3.70	3.54	N/A
overall	3.47	3.63	3.45	3.20
MCAT				
verbal		9.57	8.24	7.30
physical science		10.1	7.89	6.80
writing sample		P	M	N/A
biological science		10.24	8.53	7.10
PCAT				
	68 th percentile			

	P.A.	Dental 2004	Optometry	Veterinary
GPA				
science	3.29	3.35	N/A	N/A
non-science		N/A	N/A	N/A
overall	3.29	3.44		3.55
DAT				
academic		18.7		
perceptual ability		17.3		
OAT			322.30	
GRE				63 rd percentile

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

How do you know you want to be a dentist, physician, optometrist, podiatrist, veterinarian, etc.? Before you make a career decision, ask yourself the following questions:

1. **How much do you know about this profession?**

- Have you discussed the profession with someone who is currently practicing it? How have you learned what a day in the life of a practitioner is like? Have you read anything concerning this profession - in news media, professional journals, books, or articles?
- Are you willing to assume a large financial commitment (in most cases)?
- What kind of personal life is possible if you are dedicated to this work?
- How does this profession fit into our society? What are its responsibilities, problems, and conflicts?
- What are the ethical issues you may have to deal with?

2. **How much do you know about the educational demands of this profession?**

- How long will you be in school? Is there a necessary period of internship or residency after that?
- What will you be studying? How difficult is it?
- Are there physical abilities to be considered? How expensive is it?

- Do students ever drop out or fail after being accepted?
- What kinds of problems would cause that?
- What kinds of problems would be caused by dropping out?
- Does this profession require continuing education all through practice?

3. **If you have answered all those questions, it is time for these:**

What do you believe is most valuable to you in your life?

Will this profession help you to live by your values?

What are your proven skills? Do you have the ability to learn and practice this profession and to balance it with your personal life?

What kind of person are you? Are you well organized, energetic, interested in a wide variety of activities and issues, oriented toward good relationships with and service toward people? Are you emotionally stable, compassionate and able to handle pressure?

Along with continued thinking about all those questions, let's look at the curriculum.

PLANNING YOUR CURRICULUM

Premedical and Pre-Physician Assistant students must plan a baccalaureate (four-year) degree before entering medical school. Most students entering dental, optometry, podiatry, and veterinary schools also have baccalaureate degrees but it is possible to be accepted earlier. **All** must take the admissions tests and apply a year before they wish to enter a professional school.

Choose any major.

- Until you choose a major, you may be listed as pre-dental, pre-medical, pre-optometry, etc.; when you do choose, the preprofessional major should be listed as your second major.
- Preprofessional students will need to meet with their departmental advisor as well as the preprofessional advisor and academic advisor.
- Choose a major by your sophomore year if possible. If you are temporarily listed with only a preprofessional major, you will need to fill out a “Change of Major” form to specify a degree program in addition to your preprofessional program.
- Professional schools do not have a preferred major although there is a basic list of required courses, and you must do well in them. If you major in science, some of the required major courses will coincide with some of the professional school requirements. However, there are many non-science majors that can be completed and will still allow time to add the preprofessional courses within four years. Medical schools are increasingly recognizing the value of a liberal arts education so majoring in English or Philosophy might give you an edge. If you do decide on a science major, take as many “extra” literature or humanities courses as you can. They can also help you do better on the MCAT.

Choose the major in which you are most interested. For various reasons you may not go to professional school. What would be your next choice? It is always important to have a back-up plan.

While you are choosing, get acquainted with the SIUC Undergraduate Catalog. In it you will find listed all of the SIUC majors and minors and their requirements. Take a look at the individual college and university requirements, graduation requirements, general rules and regulations. **It is the responsibility of each student to be aware of these rules and requirements and to satisfy them.**

See your advisor early each semester. Appointments to be advised for the spring semester are given out about two weeks after the beginning of the fall semester. Both summer and fall appointments are given out two weeks after the spring semester begins. Be there! The advisor will help you find your way through your four sets of requirements – university, college, major, and preprofessional. Advisors know about substitutions that are allowed for some requirements and prerequisites that must be taken before certain 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.

What advisors cannot do is create space for you in filled courses. Make an appointment as early as possible and keep it.

YOUR FOUR-YEAR PLAN

First year: Begin preprofessional and university requirements and/or major courses if known. Join and become an active member of the PPA (Pre-Health Professions Association).

Second year: Continue preprofessional and general education requirements and begin major requirements. Begin to accumulate your file of preprofessional evaluations. Obtain a copy of the **MCAT Student Manual** if you are a premedical student; the Student Center Bookstore has copies and it also can be found online at www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm.

Third year: Complete preprofessional course requirements and continue others as time is available. **BE READY TO TAKE THE ADMISSIONS TEST AT THE END OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR.** See the Health Professions Advisor with questions you may have about test and application procedures.

Depending on the type of professional school applied to, you will apply to schools either this summer or fall.

Fourth year: Continue application activity and complete graduation requirements.

*The Health Professions Advisor has a detailed timetable for pre-medical students.

CHOOSING EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Choosing extra-curricular activities is a matter of personal preference, free time after giving priority to studies, and whether or not you are employed or have other responsibilities. There is no magical activity that gives you preference in professional school admissions. You will need exposure to the career field you are seeking. Beyond that, schools want to know whether you use your time to your advantage, whether you relate well to other people, handle responsibility, and are a well-rounded person. Being an active member of the Pre-Health Professions Association is an important extra-curricular activity.

Information about how you use your non-academic time and the benefits you derive from extra-curricular activities is important to admissions committees when they consider your suitability for their program. The following are suggestions:

1. Paid employment
2. Volunteer/community service
3. Investigating health care occupations /“shadowing”
4. Campus activities
5. Enhancing your personal talents through recreation and leisure activities
6. Family obligations and involvement

Southern Illinois University School of Medicine hand-screens all applications. If your AMCAS form does not list a full complement of extra-curricular activities, SIU will not select you, no matter how high your grades and MCAT scores.

The Pre-Health Professions Association provides speakers from various health fields, trips to professional schools and conferences, application information, social events, study sessions, workshops, and volunteer opportunities.

Web Site: <http://www.ppa.siu.edu>

REQUIREMENTS: DENTISTRY, MEDICINE AND PODIATRY

- English, 1 year (ENGL 101, 102; or 120)
- Algebra-trigonometry (MATH 108, 109; or 111)
- Chemistry, inorganic, 1 year with laboratory (CHEM 200,201, and 210, 211)
- Chemistry, organic, 1 year with laboratory, (CHEM 340, 341 and 342, 343). If time permits, a semester of biological chemistry (CHEM 350, 351) is also recommended.
- Physics, 1 year with laboratory (PHYS 203A, B and 253A, B; or 205A, B and 255A, B)
- Biological Sciences, 2 years including minimum of 1 year with laboratory (BIOL 200A, 200B; plus 2 selections from recommended biological science courses)

The University of Illinois College of Medicine requires three semesters of Social Sciences courses with an emphasis on behavioral sciences. Two of these must be within the same discipline. Consult your advisor about the additional advanced sciences courses required by UI.

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED

- Biochemistry, (CHEM 350, 351). Biological chemistry is required for some majors, and may be substituted for second-semester organic.
- Genetics (BIOL 305), Molecular Biology, (MICR 302)

- Logic (PHIL 105)
- Physiology (PHSL 201 and 208, or PHSL 310)
- Statistics (PLB 360, or MATH 282 or 283, or EPSY 402)
- Calculus (MATH 141 or 150 preferred)
- Microbiology (MICR 301)
- Career Preparation Seminar for Health Professions (SCI 201)

RECOMMENDED

Choose those best suited to your time schedule and other requirements.

- Cell biology (BIOL 306); Developmental biology (BIOL 309) or embryology (ZOOLOGY 300); anatomy (PHSL 301 or ZOOLOGY 418); organismic functional biology (BIOL 308); histology (ZOOLOGY 409)
- Additional writing courses (ENGL 290 or 391)
- Psychology (PSYC 102, 302, 305, other)
- Computer science or computer-use courses (CS 200 or 201)
- Additional social sciences or humanities courses. U of I Medical School requires 3 social science courses, 2 of which must come from one department.

Premedical students should be prepared to take the Medical College Admission Test in April of their junior year (14-16 months prior to entry date applied for). Since the DAT is now a computer- only exam, students may take the exam when they wish, but must keep in mind the application timeframe.

Information concerning specific professional schools is available in the HP Information Office.

OPTOMETRY REQUIREMENTS

- English, 1 year (ENGL 101, 102)
- Mathematics, algebra-trigonometry (MATH 108, 109, or 111); calculus with analytical geometry (MATH 150)
- Chemistry, inorganic, 1 year (CHEM 200, 201, and 210, 211)
- Chemistry, organic, 1 semester (CHEM 340, 341); 2nd semester organic (CHEM 342, 343) or biochemistry (CHEM 350) strongly recommended.
- Biological sciences, 2 semesters of biology or zoology including 3-4 hours per week of laboratory (plant biology not accepted) (BIOL 200A, 200B)
- Anatomy (PHSL 301 or ZOOL 418)
- Physiology (PHSL 310 or 201 and 208)
- Microbiology, 1 semester (MICR 301)

- Physics, 1 year with laboratory (PHYS 203a, b, and 253a,b, or PHYS 205a, b, and 255a, b)
- Psychology, 2 semesters (PSYC 102 and 301 or other)
- Statistics, 1 semester (PLB 360 or MATH 282 or 283)
-

RECOMMENDED

- Additional biological sciences, genetics (BIOL 305); embryology (ZOOL 300) or developmental biology (BIOL 309); cell biology (BIOL 306).
- Social Sciences (two semesters), humanities (two semesters), foreign language (two semesters), computer science, and business management.

PHARMACY REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the basic pre-medical requirements, pre-pharmacy students should take:

- Intro to Sociology (SOC 108)
- Intro to Psychology (PSYC 102)
- Intro to Micro or Macro Economics (ECON 240 or 241)
- Short Course in Calculus (MATH 140 or 141)
- Calculus I (MATH 150) - St. Louis only
- 300-level biology (BIOL 306, 308 or 309)
- Survey of Human Anatomy (PHSL 301)

Pre-pharmacy students may apply to pharmacy schools after the required courses have been completed. (UIC requires 60 hours.) A bachelor's degree is not needed to enter a PharmD program.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT REQUIREMENTS

Only grades of C or better are accepted, and the prerequisite course GPA must be at least a 3.0. SIUC gives preference to students with health care experience, exceptional academic performance, and those from rural areas. **Prior medical experience is important**, as many as 1000 to 2000 hours of direct patient experience, including paid employment and volunteer work. Many applicants are nurses, EMT's, medical technologists, respiratory therapists, etc. Besides a Biological Sciences or Physiology major, consider obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree (B.S.N.) and working as an R.N. before applying. The GRE or MAT is required.

- English and Speech (ENGL 101 and SPCM 101)
- Biological Sciences (ZOOL 118 or BIOL 200a)
(200a for Sicinece majors)
- Physiology (PHSL 310 or higher)
- Cadaver Anatomy (PHSL 301)
- Microbiology (MICR 201 or 301)
- Chemistry (CHEM 140a, 140b OR CHEM 200, 201 and
either 210, 211 or 339/340, 341)
- Mathematics (EPSY 402, MATH 282, or PLB 360)
- Psychology-general (PSYC 102)
or developmental (PSYC 301, 303, or 304)

SAMPLE CURRICULUM

This is a sample curriculum which includes courses required (and some of those recommended) for Preprofessional students, plus courses to fulfill University requirements, and leaves hours open for you to choose courses to meet your college and departmental requirements. **Use this with modifications based on your particular requirements and on the advice of your academic advisor.**

First Year		Fall	Spring
BIOL 200A	Cell and Molecular Biology	3	
BIOL 200B	Organismal and Ecological Biology		3
CHEM 200, 201	Introduction to Chemical Principles and General Chemistry Laboratory I ..		4
CHEM 210, 211	General and Inorganic Chemistry plus General Chemistry Laboratory II ... (4-summer)		
ENGL 101, 102	English Composition I and English Composition II	3	3
MATH 108, 109	College Algebra plus Trigonometry and Analytic Geometry	3	3
PHIL 105	Elementary Logic		3
PSYC 102	Introuction to Psychology.....	3	
select	Humanities	3	
		15	16

Second Year		Fall	Spring
PHSL 310	Principles of Physiology	5	
PHYS 203A, 253A	College Physics I and College Physics Laboratory I	4	
PHYS 203B, 253B	College Physics II and College Physics Laboratory II		4
PHSL 301	Survey of Human Anatomy		4
BIOL 305	Genetics - Classical and Molecular		3
MATH 282	Introduction to Statistics	3	
SPCM 101	Introduction to Oral Communications: Speech, Self and Society	3	
SCI 201	Career Preparation Seminar for Health Professions		1
HCP 105	Medical Terminology		2
		15	14

Third Year		Fall	Spring
CHEM 340, 341 and CHEM 350	Organic Chemistry I, Organic Chemistry Laboratory I	5	
ENGL 290 or 391	Introduction to Biological Chemistry		4
MICR 301	Intermediate Expository Writing or Precision in Reading and Writing	3	
MICR 302	Principles of Microbiology	4	
SOC 108	Molecular Biology		3
major courses	Introduction to Sociology		3
	courses to complete the student's major requirements	3	5
		15	15

Fourth Year		Fall	Spring
select	Fine Arts	3	
select	Multicultural: Diversity in the United States } Psyc or Soc for U of I	3	
select	Interdisciplinary		3
major courses	courses to complete the student's major requirements	9	12
		15	15

About mathematics courses - Students may begin at higher or lower level mathematics courses. The academic advisor will guide you, based on your records. Statistics is required for pre-optometry and pre-physician assistant students, and strongly recommended for others.

About chemistry courses - Students without high school chemistry must begin with CHEM 140A before taking 200, 201. Chemistry majors and students planning to apply to dental, optometry, or podiatry schools with only three years of college must begin chemistry in the first year. Some medical schools require a full year of organic chemistry, but most schools in Illinois will allow you to substitute Organic II with Biochemistry.

Microbiology is required for pre-optometry and pre-physician assistant students.

- Sociology (SOC 108)

- Medical Terminology (HCP 105)
- Cardiac Life Support (HED 334 (with a grade of A or B))

VETERINARY REQUIREMENTS

In addition to basic pre-medical requirements, pre-veterinary students should take:

- Biochemistry (CHEM 350)
- Animal Science and/or Nutrition (ANS 121, 122, and/or 215)

Admission is competitive and is usually granted to the best-prepared students. Most first-year veterinary students have four or more years of pre-veterinary education. Experience with animals, preferably working for a veterinarian, is essential. The University of Illinois requires a letter of recommendation from a veterinarian.

Plan to take the appropriate admissions test in the spring of your junior year (or a year and a summer before you hope to enter the professional school). This gives you the advantage of becoming an early applicant, or, if necessary, of having a second chance to take the test.

The **Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT)** is required by schools of:

allopathic medicine (M.D.)
osteopathic medicine (D.O.)
podiatric medicine (D.P.M.)

and is given several times throughout the year at a Prometric Center.

The MCAT is a computer-based examination to measure skills needed for medical school and medical practice. It contains four sections:

1. The Physical Sciences section tests inorganic chemistry and physics along with related mathematics.
 2. The Verbal Reasoning section, based on reading selections, will assess your ability to understand, to reason, and to think critically. Do not underestimate the difficulty of this section!
 3. The Writing Sample will require two half-hour essays in response to statements presented. Recognizing that this is a first draft, you will be graded on developing a central idea, synthesizing concepts and ideas, logical presentation, and clear writing, observing grammar and punctuation rules.
 4. The Biological Sciences section tests organic chemistry, biology, and relevant mathematics.
- * To solve some of the science problems you will need to use basic mathematical concepts, such as arithmetic, algebra, trigonometry, metric units, and simple statistics.

Essays are scored alphabetically from J (low) to T (high). The other sections are scored from 1 (low) to 15 (high). You will be given information on the percentile rankings of the numerical scores so that you can see where you rank among other students.

The **Dental Admission Test (DAT)** is given at a Prometric testing center on computer. Students must first apply through the Dental Admissions Testing Program. There are separately scored sections on quantitative skills (arithmetic and algebra), reading comprehension, biology, natural sciences, inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry; and one combined score on items in the Perceptual Ability Test: form development, apertures, angles, cubes, and orthographic projections. There is no physics on the DAT. DAT scores are scaled from 1 to 30. A standard score of 16 indicates average performance; a score of 18 (and higher) is more competitive.

The **Optometry Admission Prometric Test (OAT)** is also computer-based. Like the DAT, it is given at a Prometric testing center. The test includes subtests in reading comprehension, quantitative ability, biology, chemistry (inorganic and organic), and physics. Scores range from 200 to 400, with 300 set as the mean score (46-55 percentile) of all participants.

The **Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT)** is given in January, April and October at Testing Services on campus. This test includes verbal, quantitative math, biology, general chemistry, elementary organic chemistry, and reading comprehension.

The **Graduate Record Examination (GRE)** is computer-based and can be taken at the Prometric Testing Center in Carterville, IL. It is required for Veterinary and Physician Assistant School. The General Test measures critical thinking, analytical writing, verbal reasoning, and quantitative reasoning skills that have been acquired over a long period of time.

HOW DO I PREPARE?

Registration for admission tests is by mail or online.

You may take the test in any of the cities where it is offered. The computer GRE is taken at SIU at your convenience. Although the MCAT will be offered 22 times via computer testing, it is only offered on certain dates, and seating is limited. Check the MCAT web page several months in advance of your test for registration information.

You may repeat the test if necessary. That is one reason for making your first attempt in late spring or early summer.

The PPA sponsors a workshop on the MCAT in late Fall or early Spring semester. All students can benefit from attending this workshop. PPA-organized study groups can be very helpful in preparing for all standardized tests.

Review for your test at least four months in advance. Do not underestimate the importance or the difficulty of doing well. Your best preparation is your own college course work - keep papers, books, and outlines from the relevant courses, and ideally, study for the MCAT/DAT as you go through your classes.

In addition, use the material available from the test administrators. These sample examinations may be purchased at an earlier time if desired. **Medical** applicants should look at the Association of American Medical College's (AAMC) web site www.aamc.org/students/mcat/practicetests.htm. Take several timed practice tests, available for \$35.00 per test through AAMC, and good for one year. (There is also one free test available on this site.)

For other materials, check out the commercial books related to your particular test at the bookstore. Several publishing companies print these. **CAUTION:** Since all three of these tests have made some changes, or are about to make changes, the commercial publications may not be current with the latest test.

Do not use practice questions as your only review. Such questions are for use after you have conducted your own organized review. They will spot-check some areas for you but may not cover all the topics you are expected to know.

The commercial courses **are optional**. They are costly and although some are well organized, they cannot do anything for you that you cannot plan and do for yourself. The **MCAT Student Manual** notes: “The results of a study comparing the MCAT performance of students who had enrolled in commercial review courses with the performance of those who had not, involving over 20,000 students during a five-year period, indicate that gains derived from commercial review courses are small. The gains do not support the contention that review courses provide increased knowledge and facility in test taking. You should realize that the small differences in the scores of individuals receiving coaching may simply be due to the time devoted to reviewing relevant material.” Therefore - structuring your study time is important if you do not take a course.

Absolutely do make conscious efforts to develop your reading, writing, and problem-solving skills. Can you apply the information you are given? Try those “Exercises” at the end of textbook chapters. Make use of the graphs and charts in textbooks - can you interpret them? Put down what you are reading at intervals and ask yourself what the author said. Can you summarize it or argue for or against the conclusions?

Find some crossword puzzles or “brain teasers” meant for fun and make them practice for thinking and solving.

APPLICATIONS TO PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

Applications are expensive. Application fees, plus travel expenses for an interview if you are seriously considered, can easily add up to several hundred dollars. Spend your time (answering supplemental applications while carrying your senior course load can get to be a chore) and your money on schools where you are competitive, eligible, and truly interested.

Information about professional schools is available in the HPIO. Schools will send you brief information. Talking to students who are enrolled there is a good source. Visit the school if possible, but don't expect them to have time to show you around if you go during their applicant-interview season or without an appointment. The best time for visits is late spring or summer. Call first!

First of all, know specific requirements and residency restrictions. This information is available annually in the Medical School Admissions Requirements, Admissions Requirements of U.S. and Canadian Dental Schools, and Information for Applicants to Schools and Colleges of Optometry booklets. These are available by mail, the first two are for sale and the optometry booklet is free. They can also be seen in the HPIO where we get updated editions each year.

Osteopathic and podiatric applicants will find similar information in booklets that come in the application packets.

There are two standard guides for medical and dental schools available online:

Medical School Admissions Requirements, Association of American Medical Colleges

<http://www.aamc.org/students> - \$25.00

Official Guide to Dental Schools, American Dental Education Association

<http://www.adea.org/student-applicant/default.htm> - \$35.00

These books are also available in the HPIO Office. **For other professional schools/ resources, check links on the HPIO Webpage:**

<http://www.science.siu.edu/advisement/health-advise.html>

The centralized application services are:

- American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) www.aamc.org
- American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS) www.aacom.org
- American Association of Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS) www.adea.org
- American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine Application Service (AACPMAS) www.aacpm.org
- Veterinary Medical Colleges Application Service (VMCAS) www.aavmc.org
- Pharmacy College Application Service (PHARMCAS) www.pharmacas.org
- Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) caspaonline.org
(Not currently in place for SIU's program.)

Most of the professional schools belong to their application service. Information is readily available as to those who do or do not. Except for Optometry, the on-line application is the preferred, and in some cases only, method. Optometry School professional applications are made directly to each school.

You must apply to University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine through VMCAS (VMCAS will also allow you to apply to 24 of 27 schools in the U.S.).

When the central application service receives your completed application and your official transcript(s) from **each college** that you have attended, the service validates your application, and sends it to as many schools as you have chosen. The fee depends on the number of schools to which you are applying. Individual schools will

acknowledge receiving your information. Some will screen your original application before asking for more material. Others will immediately send a supplemental application to be completed and will request an additional fee and letters of recommendation.

If you are applying to optometry schools or to schools not listed with the application service, you must write to each school and request applications. Addresses are available in the HPIO.

Transcripts must be furnished by the records office of each college or university you have attended—even if it was a one-hour course you took in summer while in high school. Transcripts are only official if they are mailed directly from the college to the application office and are embossed with the school seal. Most colleges will not release your transcript without a signed request from you. Many application services have transcript “matching” forms.

APPLY EARLY! Do not wait for deadlines. An early application is a stronger application. Even though some schools will not consider your application until they have scores from your Admissions Test, it is very important that you apply early. The central application service will take several weeks to process your application before sending it out to the professional schools. Take the test in the spring and take it seriously. Application season begins in June for dental and medical schools.

If you need to re-take the test, it is recommended that you apply early with your first set of scores, indicating on the application that you will take the test. Waiting to apply until you get your second set of scores may put you behind by as much as five months (medical or dental school), weakening your application in the applicant pool.

PREPROFESSIONAL EVALUATIONS/ HEALTH PREPROFESSIONAL COMMITTEE

If you are applying to medical (including osteopathic medical) schools, you will need an evaluation from the Health Preprofessional Committee. Most dental, optometry, and podiatry schools prefer a committee letter. The College of Science has a Special Committee that will evaluate you in 3 areas: academics, personal attributes, and time/organizational management. You are then able to receive an in-depth, thorough letter of evaluation.

Committee letters are composite letters based on individual evaluations, autobiographical material, your academic record, and a brief interview.

Evaluation forms are in the Advisement office or online. Request evaluations from: (1) a biological sciences faculty member; (2) a chemistry, math, or physics faculty member; and (3) a non-science college faculty member. Additional evaluations may be from faculty, teaching assistants, employers, volunteer service supervisors, or physicians you have shadowed. **To emphasize:** there must be three from college teachers of faculty rank (two must be from SIUC in case you have transferred from another college) and they must have taught you in a class where you could be compared with other students.

The better the person knows you, the more helpful your evaluation will be. You may need to make an appointment for a few minutes to talk with the teacher about yourself or your plans. Most teachers have some routine of their own to handle the writing of evaluations. Ask whether they are willing to do this for you and be guided by their response.

Evaluations from your family doctor, your congressman, or your banker are not appropriate. Evaluations from persons who are in a position to comment on your abilities to learn, to perform responsibly, to handle pressure, to be well organized and productive are the most helpful.

Note: Having five to six evaluations in your file is better than having the minimum of three. There is no maximum. Provide your evaluators with plenty of time to complete evaluations, and also give them a deadline.

STUDENTS' RIGHTS CONCERNING PREPROFESSIONAL EVALUATIONS

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, gives you the right to review and challenge the accuracy of any records that concern you as an individual and which are kept on file by an educational institution where you are enrolled. Letters of recommendation kept on file on our campus come under this law.

The amended law also permits you to waive your rights of access to these files. The Health Preprofessional Committee will perform the same service on your behalf whether you do or do not waive your rights. The reason for giving you the option of waiving your rights is that professional schools want to see frank and honest evaluations, and they may put more trust in confidential evaluations (those they know you have not seen).

All evaluation forms from this office have an attached cover page on which you must (1) identify the person you are asking, and request her or him to complete the evaluation form; and (2) choose to waive or not waive your rights to see it after the evaluator has submitted it. The evaluator knows while writing it whether it will be kept confidential, and we know when it reaches the HPIO whether it can be read by you.

A similar request must be made to the Committee before we mail out your evaluation. The professional schools receiving it will be informed that you did or did not waive your rights to examine the file before the evaluations were written.

THAT BUSY THIRD YEAR

If you are completing your curriculum on a typical four-year schedule, the timetable for your junior year is as follows:

- December – Optometry students pick up in the HPIO and mail registration form for OAT.
- January – Pharmacy students should take the PCAT.
- February – Pick up in the HPIO and mail registration form for DAT. Take OAT if you are an optometry applicant. Register for the MCAT on-line.
- Complete your preprofessional file in the HPIO and schedule your committee interview. The Health Preprofessional Committee interviews students in February, March, April, May and June. Letters of evaluation need to be in by February 1st.
- March – For **any** professional school applications, you should have begun investigating specific schools by now. Have choices in mind before taking the admissions test so that you will know where you want scores sent. Information is available in the HPIO and you may have collected additional information yourself.
- April – Take DAT or MCAT. Scores will be available immediately for the DAT, 8 weeks for the MCAT. Re-take PCAT if needed.
- May – Before you leave for the summer, talk to our advisor about which schools to apply. Attend the AMCAS workshop, or for other schools, find out more about the application process through your advisor or on-line.

If you are leaving campus for the summer, pick up a copy of your transcript or request one sent to yourself after spring grades are posted. (1) You will need to complete information from your transcript in order to fill out application blanks; and (2) if there is any error on your transcript, you will know it and have the opportunity to have it corrected before it is sent to schools.

That kind of error happens very rarely but, when it does, it can cause a great deal of difficulty. AMCAS has a transcript matching form, which will need to be dropped off or mailed to the Transcripts office.

After school is out (not while you are struggling with finals), **read and follow directions carefully** concerning your application. Proofread your application thoroughly. Errors cause delay in processing your application. Any suspicion that you have deliberately given inaccurate information, or omitted information that you are required to give, will stop the process and, if a decision of fraud is reached, that fact will be circulated to all professional schools. So, **read and follow directions carefully**.

- June – submit applications any time after June 1. Early applicants do have an advantage (provided you took the spring admissions test and made competitive scores). **Keep records** of everything you have mailed and when you mailed it. AMCAS allows you to check the status of your application on the world wide web.
- August – **Re-take** MCAT if needed. It is not recommended that you take the MCAT in August for the 1st time.

Pre-Veterinary Students: The GRE must be taken between October 1 and September 30th in the time period you are applying. All GRE scores must be sent directly to each institution to which you apply.

**SENDING YOUR COMMITTEE LETTER,
INTERVIEWS, ETC.**

Keep a record of information submitted. Read each piece of correspondence as it arrives and follow up as directed.

**** When a school asks for evaluations or a committee letter:**

For each school that you would like an evaluation sent, bring the Health Professions Advisor postage (63 cents) plus one stamped, self-addressed postcard, which the school will return upon receipt. (A large 8-1/2" x 11" envelope is provided.)

Interviews are the next step if the school is seriously considering you, except for a few dental schools. These are arranged at the school's request, not the applicant's. The HPIO has information to prepare you for an interview.

Caution: On your application you will have indicated courses to be completed in the year between applying and entering professional school. If you change your plans, notify the schools (individually). If admitted, your admission is conditional on your completing the curriculum indicated and maintaining your grade point average at the level at which you applied.

Letters of admission may come any time from October until beginning of the next school year. Most students will know their results by April.

IF NOT ACCEPTED, THEN WHAT?

Perhaps you will apply again. If you know where the weak points of your application were, and you are able to strengthen them, this may be appropriate.

Try to be realistic about your chances of being accepted later and be very realistic about your own motivation. Are you just in the habit of thinking about one career without having considered others?

Reapplication means going all through the application process again. We recommend updating your preprofessional file with at least one new evaluation. Whether you want a new interview is up to you. If nothing is added to the file, we will forward the same committee letter again. Whether you retake the admissions test depends on whether that was a weak point you can improve. Tests can be used a second year if you are content with your scores (except when the test changes between application years).

Other options include graduate school or employment related to your major - another option may be some other health field. Investigate and talk to people in the field or fields you are considering. Make use of the information available from the HPIO, other advisors, the library, University Career Services, and the Internet.

