PRE-MED/PRE-DENT FACT SHEET

Prepared by the Pre–Health Sciences Advisory Committee, Creighton University, Omaha, NE 68178 Revised: October 2009

This is a summary of up–to–date information and general advice for Creighton students who plan to apply to medical or dental school. More detailed information can be obtained by consulting http://www2.creighton.edu/health/prehealth/

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Competitive applicants for admission to medical school have Bachelor's degrees. Competitive applicants for admission to dental schools have at least 90 semester hours (3 years) of college work in an accredited institution, and most have Bachelor's degrees. By the end of the junior year both medical and dental school applicants should have completed the following virtually universal minimum course requirements:

- English (6 hrs min., including ENG 150)
- General Biology (BIO 211 and 212)
- General Chemistry (CHM 203-206)
- Organic Chemistry (CHM 321-324)
- General Physics (PHY 211 and 212)

Most all pre-medical and pre-dental students will take some biology beyond General Biology (BIO 211 and 212), for example physiology, genetics, and biochemistry. Some medical schools have additional requirements and/or "strong recommendations." The University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) requires biochemistry and genetics.

Calculus is not required by most medical and dental schools, and is on neither the MCAT nor the DAT; however, most pre-medical and pre-dental students nationwide take at least one semester of calculus. Creighton pre-medical and pre-dental students must have Calculus I (MTH 245) credit, or demonstrate equivalent competency on our calculus waiver exam, in order to enroll in General Physics (PHY 211/212). Some medical schools, including UNMC, require college credit for mathematics, either calculus or statistics. A statistics course is recommended even if not required; often such a course is available within a student’s major.

Introductory Psychology (PSY 111 or 112) is recommended for all students interested in the health professions.

Some medical schools, including UNMC, may not consider credit hours earned through certain examinations (such as CLEP or AP) as substitutes for taking particular required courses in college, though they may allow higher-level courses taken in college as substitutes.

Data about specific schools and their requirements, as well as other valuable information about applying to medical and dental schools (admissions statistics, financial aid, etc.), may be found in the following annual publications:

- Medical School Admissions Requirements, United States and Canada, available from the Association of American Medical Colleges - Web site: http://www.aamc.org - Phone: (202)-828-0416
- Osteopathic Medical College Information, available from the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine - Web site: http://www.aacom.org - Phone: (301)-968-4100
- Admission Requirements of U.S. and Canadian Dental Schools, available from the American Dental Education Association (formerly the American Association of Dental Schools) - Web site: http://www.adea.org - Phone: (202)-667-9433

These books are sold at the Creighton Bookstore and are available in the Reinert Alumni Library (in the reference section and on closed reserve) and in the Career Center. There and other printed resource materials are also available in the College of Arts and Sciences Advising Resource Center (ARC) in Hixson Lied Room G6.

SCHEDULING COURSES: Since freshmen often require a period of adjustment to college–level courses, pre-medical and pre-dental freshmen are normally advised to take only two of the required science or math courses each semester. General Chemistry I (CHM 203/204) and General Chemistry II (CHM 205/206), prerequisites for organic chemistry, are frequent freshman-year choices. If mathematics need not be taken during the second (spring) semester because sufficient calculus has already been completed, then another science course such as BIO 212 might be taken then along with CHM 205/206 (note: BIO 212 can be taken before BIO 211). If no physics was taken in high school, Introduction to Physics (PHY 187) is a good choice for pre-medical and pre-dental freshmen (currently offered only in the fall semester).
GRADES: The detailed academic record is the prime indicator of talent, performance, and judgment. In general, medical and dental schools look for A to B grades in both science and other courses. GPAs calculated on medical and dental school applications normally include coursework done at all colleges attended, including courses not transferred to Creighton. If a course is repeated, both grades will be included in the grade point averages calculated by the medical and dental school application services.

AVOIDING GRADE BLUNDEES: C is an honorable grade. However, an F can be fatal, and a D injurious. Faced with the prospect of a C, some students will want to withdraw (W) and try for a higher grade later. More than two W's indicates a lack of judgment and an inability to handle the situation.

CHOOSING A MAJOR: Students are accepted into medical and dental schools with a wide variety of academic backgrounds. No particular major is given preference. In choosing a major, the rule is to follow your own interests. Ideally, the major should be one that will support an alternate career. Your choice may range from a concentrated science major to a major in social studies or the humanities. Since so much of medicine and dentistry is derived from a scientific basis, most students who major in a nonscientific field should still take more than the minimum number of science courses. However, the point to realize is that demonstrated ability in the sciences is of greater importance to admissions committees than the quantity of science coursework.

NATIONAL ADMISSION TESTS: All applicants must take the appropriate national, standardized computer-based test. The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) and Dental Admission Test (DAT) are normally taken in the spring of the junior year. The DAT is administered year-round. The MCAT is only offered on about 20 different days during the year, so seats will fill quickly for each date and registration must still be submitted early in order to test on the date you desire. To do well on these standardized tests it is necessary that the required science courses listed above be essentially completed, and intensive study specifically designed to prepare for the test also be completed. Registration websites are http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/ for the MCAT and http://www.ada.org/prof/ed/testing/dat/ for the DAT. Release your scores to your pre-health advisor.

OTHER FACTORS: 1) Letters of Recommendation from three of the applicant’s professors, of whom at least two taught the applicant in natural science or math courses and at least one in non-science courses emphasizing the human condition (social sciences or humanities), are usually a required part of the application process. Some medical schools require that one of the letters be from a professor in the applicant’s major department. Supervisors of relevant paid or volunteer work, research, etc. may also provide helpful evaluations, so the total number of letters may be more than three. The College of Arts and Sciences Advising Resource Center in Hixson-Lied Room G06 offers a service that facilitates the solicitation and distribution of these letters. Contact the Advising Resource Center at 280-3594 for more information. 2) Extracurricular activities are very important. Clinical experiences (whether paid employment, volunteer service, or observational shadowing) in hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, etc. are essential. Some volunteer service (even if not in a health care setting) is also essential. Leadership experience (such as positions of responsibility in student groups), and research experience (especially in a health sciences laboratory) are also very helpful. 3) Most dental and medical schools will interview promising applicants. (The Career Center offers assistance preparing for an interview, including holding mock interview sessions). 4) Creighton gives special consideration to applicants who have attended Creighton for at least two years. Some special consideration is given by most schools to applicants from socioeconomic groups underrepresented in the profession. A state (public) school is chiefly interested in applicants from that state. All pre-medical students should participate in Creighton’s PMED program (freshman spring, plus all of sophomore and junior years).

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Meet with a pre-health advisor at least once each semester. Subscribe to the prehealth_news listserv1. Access the College of Arts and Sciences pre-health advising web pages2, as well as the web pages of Creighton’s medical and dental schools3 and the web page of the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions4. Participate in Creighton’s pre-medical (http://groups.creighton.edu/premedsociety) or pre-dental student groups. Visit the web pages of national medical (AMSA5) or dental (ASDA6) student organizations. Make an appointment with medical or dental admissions office personnel in spring of the junior year to personalize the application process and open lines of communication as you complete the application.

1 Prehealth_news is a listserv of interest to all Creighton pre-health students. To subscribe to Creighton e-mail lists, see http://www2.creighton.edu/doit/lists/
2 The Pre-Health Advising page is at http://www2.creighton.edu/health/prehealth/
3 Creighton professional school web pages can all be accessed from the “academics” link at Creighton's home page, http://www.creighton.edu/
4 http://www.naahp.org
5 http://www.amsa.org
6 http://www.asdanet.org/