

## Pre-Health Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What should I major in if I am contemplating attending medical, dental, veterinary, podiatry, optometry, or chiropractic school?

Professional Associations, including the Association of American Medical Colleges, do not recommend any particular major for professional school preparation. In addition, there are no specific majors schools tend to prefer. Pre-health students may major in anything from engineering to history to vocal performance. When contemplating majors, the important thing to do is to choose something you enjoy. Chances are, if you enjoy the subjects you are studying, you will do better than if you choose something just because you think it will get you into a professional school. So, while majors are not important, your grades and overall performance in your chosen major are. Each pre-professional path and each school will have different prerequisites for their program. Make sure that all prerequisites are taken with the appropriate grades. You should also seriously consider a back-up plan. Because acceptance to professional schools is extremely competitive, you may need a back-up plan to use - temporarily or for a longer period of time. You should consider this and plan accordingly. If you never need a back-up plan, that will be excellent! If you do, however, you will be glad you have one in place.

Should I double major or choose a minor? Will that help my chances of acceptance?

Similar to the answer above, professional schools are concerned with your overall performance. They also desire applicants who take courses in a variety of fields - both science and non-science. So, if deciding to double major or declaring a minor sounds like something you would be interested in doing, it is not a bad idea. It may help you explore other subject fields outside your major and help you to become a well-rounded student. Of course, you may also take a variety of courses without declaring a double major or minor. **In the end, just like major selection, double majors and minors will have very little impact on your acceptance.**

What courses should I take to help prepare me for professional school?

You will need a strong background in the sciences. That will include courses in biology, exercise science, mathematics, chemistry, and/or physics. Professional schools also encourage students to take a variety of courses, outside of the sciences, to strengthen reading comprehension and writing skills. See the list of prerequisites on the FHU website for more information about what each field/school requires. Remember, these prerequisites change - often without communication to undergraduate institutions, and visiting the prospective professional school's website is advisable.

What does a professional school focus on for admission purposes?

**They will focus on your undergraduate grade point average (GPA) as well as your science GPA - composed of biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics (BCPM) GPA.** Some programs may include other courses in the content-related GPA. The next important factor to be considered for admission is your Admissions Test (MCAT, DAT, OAT, or GRE) score. This is an extremely important part of your application. Professional schools look very favorably on, and usually require, health care experience in your field. If you are interested in medicine, optometry, or dentistry, you should try to obtain healthcare experience in a variety of settings and with a diverse group of practitioners. If you are interested in veterinary medicine, you should seek experience in both small and large animal care. If you are considering physicians assistant programs, you are required to have patient contact hours. This means you will need to work in a role, such as a CNA, and be directly responsible for a patient's care. Other factors include part-time work, extra curricular activities, diversity issues, maturity, well-rounded education, letters of recommendation, personal statements, and, hopefully, an interview. Because professional schools look at all of these factors when considering admission, it is important to make them all as strong as possible. Grades and test scores are most important because professional schools want to make sure that you are ready for the work that lies ahead and will view your performance in those areas first. You will want all of the other aspects of your application to stand out from other applicants. There is no magical path to a professional school acceptance besides hard work and dedication. No major and no particular undergraduate school will gain you admission to medical school. You will responsible for that.

How important are extracurricular activities for medical school admissions?

Although extracurricular activities are not viewed as an alternative to your GPA or admissions test score, professional schools do look for well-rounded applicants, and one way to demonstrate this is to get involved in campus and community activities. Choose organizations that interest you because those are the ones that will make your collegiate experience more meaningful. However, you need to keep in mind that your GPA is more important than campus involvement. Never sacrifice your grades by becoming over-committed with extracurricular activities. If you are not enjoying a particular activity, choose another. The type of activity you choose is not as important as simply being involved.

How should I go about obtaining letters of recommendation?

You should plan to obtain at least three letters of recommendation. One of these letters should be from science professors. FHU crafts a committee letter of recommendation that will contain the thoughts of three to five faculty members. More details will be provided about the letter in the spring prior to your application process. The second letter needs to come from a professional in the field of interest. The third may come from the applicant's choice. Options may include: a non-science professor, a research mentor, an intercollegiate athletics coach, a boss at a job, etc. The author should know you well and be able to speak to your character, intellect, ability to work well with others, etc. You should ask them, "Would you be comfortable writing me a strong letter of recommendation?" Hopefully, they will answer honestly, and if they do not feel comfortable, do not be offended - simply ask someone else. The actual content of the letter is much more important than the status of the letter-writer to the professional school admissions committee. Be sure to give your letter writer a copy of your transcript, a resume, and information about the program you plan to apply to.

How about more information on preparing for the MCAT, DAT, OAT, GRE, PCAT?

Private review companies provide exam preparation. Those companies include Kaplan and Princeton Review. There has been no statistical evidence showing that students who take review courses do better than students who do not. These courses may be expensive (\$1000+). Many students do well by simply studying their course materials from courses included on their exam and then taking practice exams. If you choose this option, make sure to spend the time necessary. Do not let time get away from you! However, if it would make you feel better to know that you took a review course, and you have available funds, by all means, take one. Guides exist for all exams. It is important to know information such as: Is the exam paper or computer? How many times can you take the exam? Are you given scratch paper? How long is the exam? How much does it cost to register for the exam? Those questions may be answered by Mrs. Gean, or you may do an Internet search for a guide for the appropriate exam.

The important thing is that you feel as prepared and confident as possible when exam day arrives. A good resource is to order old exams with answers. You may do this off the MCAT, DAT, and GRE websites. A general rule of thumb is that you should begin studying for these exams about six months prior to the examination.

When should I take the MCAT, OAT, DAT, GRE, etc.?

Since professional schools have a rolling admission acceptance policy, it is to your benefit to submit your application as soon as the school starts accepting them. Therefore, taking the exam during the spring of your junior year is preferred. Taking the exam by this time allows your test scores time to arrive at the application services soon after June 1<sup>st</sup> and also allows an opportunity to

retake the exam. You could take the August exam if necessary - either because you were unable to take the spring exam or because you did not do as well as you had hoped on the spring exam. Some exams are only offered at certain times. The MCAT has specific dates from January to September. The DAT, OAT, and GRE are offered year-round on the computer; however, they require you to register within a certain time frame prior to the exam. The PCAT is offered between July and February. Many pharmacy schools have recently removed the requirement of the PCAT.

How can I find out which schools I am likely to be accepted to?

There are many publications you may want to check out. You may purchase them at campus bookstores or online. They are *Medical School Admission Requirements*, *American Dental Education Association Official Guide to Dental Schools*, *Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements*, and *Osteopathic Medical College Information Book*. In these resources, you will find class profiles, acceptance rates, and tons of other information. There is also a host of online resources to provide you with the profiles of the schools in which you have a significant interest. Mrs. Gean has free access to many of these publications. Do not purchase anything without speaking to her first. It is also in your best interest to consider the sourcing. Satire and social media style (i.e. Student Doctor Network) are poor resources for significant information such as you will need.

How do I learn more about individual professional schools?

One source to find links to home pages from professional schools is through the American Association of Medical, Dental, Optometry, etc., websites. You may learn more about each school and often request admission material online.

Where should I go if I have additional questions about professional schools?

If you have additional concerns or questions regarding medical, dental, etc. school after you have read the information provided on this website, you may schedule an appointment with the pre-health advisor by emailing Mrs. Gean at [wgean@fhu.edu](mailto:wgean@fhu.edu). Be sure to read all the information on this web page before seeing the pre-health advisor in order to maximize the use of your time at the appointment.

What percentage of FHU students are accepted to medical, dental, osteopathic, and optometry school?

The answer to this question is pretty meaningless. FHU does not restrict any student from applying to professional school. In other words, even less-than-competitive students can apply to professional school. Clearly, the more of these type students there are, the larger the denominator becomes, and the lower our percentage rate becomes. Conversely, some schools only consider those applicants who have a 3.5 GPA or above as their applicants and base their

acceptance rates on that number. Because there is no consistency about how undergraduate institutions arrive at their percentage accepted, it is difficult to compare schools on the same criteria. Therefore, FHU does not publish this data as a way to attract students. In the end, it is not the school that obtains a medical school acceptance, rather, it is the student. Following the advice of our pre-health professional advisor, our students are very successful at gaining acceptance to medical school.

What do I do if I am not accepted to professional school this year?

Most professional schools have a competitive process for acceptance. This means that very good students may not get admitted on their first attempt at applying to a professional school. What should you do in this case? You should take a critical look at your application and try to figure out what part is the weakest. For instance, if your grades were weak in several of the pre-health prerequisites, then taking additional coursework might be necessary. Similarly, if your standardized exam score was below average for those accepted, you might want to consider retaking the exam. However, it is important to know that not all students need to take additional coursework - only those who had weak grades to begin with will find additional coursework helpful in strengthening their application. Other factors may improve your application such as research, patient care experiences, shadowing, work experience, and other extracurricular activities. Another consideration in the process is timing. Because there are so few spots for students each year, the earlier you apply, the better chance you have at securing one of these spots. That means if you applied late in the application cycle, you may have been denied admission for that reason alone! In the end, you should speak with a pre-health advisor about how to strengthen your application and reapply. One more word about this: You should never reapply, year after year, without any changes if you are unsuccessful. Take some time to strengthen your application before reapplying. Nothing is worse than resubmitting a substandard application. Admissions committees may become desensitized to your application and reject it year after year without review. If you have questions about your application do not be afraid to ask the admissions representative for the school that you have applied to. Make sure that your application is as strong as possible before submitting it to prevent excess cost and wasted time.

What happens if I am earning a C in a course? Should I repeat the course? Should I drop it?

You should consider your options carefully before withdrawing from a course. Most professional schools will consider all attempts at a course, even withdraws and incompletes. Many schools consider Ws as a failing grade. They figure that, if you had to drop one of your pre-health pre-requisites, you were probably failing the course. At the very least, they recognize that you are attempting to "clean up" your transcript. This is the reason that Ws are not always the solution. Yes, Cs do affect your grade point average, and Ws do not. However, one C in a course will never keep you out of medical school provided that the rest of your grades in pre-

health courses are better than Cs. **If you develop a pattern of Cs or Ws, you are becoming increasingly un-competitive.** If you are earning a C in a course, you might choose to keep the course and commit yourself to working harder and more diligently with the remainder of your courses. That way, your transcript will not reflect a W, and you will not need to repeat the course. If you do decide to keep the course and earn a C in it, recognize that you will need to work hard on this section of the standardized preparation, if it is represented on the exam. Because you will be tested on this information later, if you earn a C, you will likely have missed half of the information in the course. You will just need to work harder at bringing yourself up to speed in this section. In the end, it will be your choice. Neither decision will make you feel good. This is the proverbial "caught between a rock and hard place," and you will need to decide if a W or C is better for you at this point in your career.

## School Selection

You should begin selecting schools to which you would like to apply at least six months beforehand. It is recommended that you consult one of the following publications to help choose the schools to which you will apply. Make sure you get the most recent edition. Remember that, even in the most recent editions, some information may be inaccurate. Most of these publications contain information on admission requirements for individual schools in addition to statistical information on accepted students. Some of them also include information about the respective professions. Most schools are also located on the worldwide web, which is an excellent source of information. **Is important to verify information such as admission requirements and application procedures with each individual school.**

Note: **Having a GPA and test score higher than a school's average does not mean you will be accepted, or even be invited for an interview.** Many other factors will be considered including health care experience, motivation, letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, personal statement, etc.

When considering a school, find out whether they consider out-of-state residents (if it is in a state of which you are not a resident), the average GPA and test scores of recently accepted applicants, tuition, location (do you want to live there for four years?), and special programs/initiatives. You should choose at least a couple of "dream schools" - those you may not have much of a chance of getting in to but which you would love to attend. Then choose several schools you would like to attend and for which you feel you are competitive. Finally, choose a few schools for which you feel you are very competitive as backup schools.

### **\* *Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR)***

Association of American Medical Colleges  
Membership and Publication Orders  
2450 N Street, NW  
Washington DC 20037

Tel: (202) 828-0416

Fax: (202) 828-1123

<http://www.aamc.org/findinfo/aamcpubs/reqpubs/ordforms/oform.htm>

(Note: Mrs. Gean has access to the most recent edition of MSAR.)

### ***Admissions Requirements of United States and Canadian Dental Schools***

American Association of Dental Schools  
1625 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington DC 20036-2212

Tel: (202) 667-9433

Fax: (202) 667-0642

[Publications@aads.jhu.edu](mailto:Publications@aads.jhu.edu)

***Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements in the United States and Canada***

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges

Williams & Wilkins

Tel: (800) 638-0672

Fax: (800) 447-8438

***Osteopathic Medical College Information***

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine

Booklet comes with the AACOMAS application



## Standardized Tests

### Medical School:

The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is required and is given in April and August of each year. For the entering class, **it is highly recommended you take it in April**. If you need to retake it, you may do so in August. However, **do not use the April test as practice!** If you are truly unprepared for the April test, wait until August and study hard over the summer. If you take it for the first time in August, you will not have a second chance to take it for this application cycle. Also, your scores will not be received by the medical schools until late October.

### Dental School:

The Dental Admission Test (DAT) is required. It is given in paper format in April and October of each year. For the entering class, **it is highly recommended you take it in April**. Contact individual schools to determine whether or not they will accept October scores. The DAT may also be taken by computer throughout the year.

### Veterinary School:

Most veterinary schools require the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Some also require the MCAT. Find out now what test(s) is (are) required by the schools to which you plan to apply. The GRE is offered in April, November, and December. For the entering class, **it is highly recommended you take it in April**. The GRE is also offered year-round on computer. You should take these tests one year or more before planning to enter veterinary school.

## Letters of Recommendation

- \* Most schools require 3-5 letters.
- \* Many schools ask for 2-3 letters from science professors and 1-2 letters from non-science professors, though this varies from school to school. They do not necessarily have to be from professors, though you should have a couple from professors. If you are concerned about what letters to get, contact the individual schools to which you plan to apply.
- \* Get to know your professors.
- \* Give each recommender a profile of yourself - indicating your experiences, hobbies, and interests.
- \* You have the legal right to see your letters of recommendation. You will be asked whether or not you wish to waive this right. You are definitely allowed not to waive this right. However, if you waive your right of access to the letters, the admissions committees will assume the letter writers were most honest in their evaluations.
- \* Freed-Hardeman University does a committee letter that is handled through Mrs. Gean. Faculty assemble and discuss students who have requested a letter and decide who will write the letter and who will contribute. Letters are requested from FHU faculty designated by the student and are held until the student receives secondary applications from specific medical schools. At that point it is the student's responsibility to contact Mrs. Gean and ensure the electronic request has been sent.
- \* Think of people other than professors who might write you a good evaluation. Have you worked closely with a professor doing research, or shadowed a doctor quite a bit? Maybe someone who supervised you closely with a special project on which you worked would be willing to evaluate you.
- \* Letter of recommendation should be:
  - from someone who knows you well
  - from someone who can speak well of your intelligence, personality, and motivation toward your chosen career
  - recent
  - from someone you have worked with in an academic/professional capacity (except for peer/character recommendations)

## Filling Out the Application

**It is strongly recommended that all applicants heed the following suggestions:**

- \* Follow all instructions carefully!!! This may seem obvious now, but the applications are quite detailed, and making the smallest of mistakes could delay the processing of your application, or cause incorrect information to be sent to the schools to which you are applying. It is much better to take the time, on the front end of the process, to make sure you fill out the application correctly than to wait to correct a mistake later!
- \* If using the paper application (as opposed to the electronic version - which is becoming increasingly common and is now used exclusively by some services), **type it!!!** While most application services will allow legibly, hand-written applications, this is more likely to cause errors. Also, a typed application appears nicer, and it will be seen by the schools! You must use correct spelling!
- \* After submitting your preliminary application, you should receive a copy of your profile from the application service. Carefully review this information immediately and follow the instructions for changing any incorrect information. Depending on the information that is incorrect, you may also want to contact the individual schools since it may be a while before they receive the updated information.
- \* Request a copy of your transcripts from **all** schools you have attended **now**, so that you can refer to them because applications must match the information on your transcripts.
- \* Apply as early as possible after you have received scores from your standardized tests!
- \* Be aware of all schools' deadlines!!!
- \* Do not send your application before the earliest date listed, or it will be returned.
- \* Make sure you have an application for the appropriate entering class!
- \* Proofread the application carefully before sending it. Make sure all required information, including appropriate fee, is included.
- \* Answer all questions honestly, including any questions about academic performance, conduct violations, or criminal charges. If you have questions about how to note criminal charges, contact Student Legal Services. Questions regarding suspension or conduct violations should be directed to Student Services. Most applications provide a place to explain such incidents. Explain them honestly and openly, without making excuses. If you have any questions about how to explain these incidents, consult with your advisor.
- \* Permanent address – list an address that you do not expect to change over the next year (such as your parents' address).

- \* Preferred mailing address – Correspondence will be sent here. If you move, contact the centralized application service and all schools to which you have applied immediately. **Do not miss that letter offering you an interview!!!**
- \* Photocopy or print all pages of your application before sending it. If it gets lost, you will want that information to fill out a new one!
- \* Remember to include an address and postage on any acknowledgement receipt cards that require them.
- \* Many schools only accept in-state residents - or strongly prefer them. You may only be a resident of one state. If you are not sure of which state you are a resident, contact the schools to which you plan to apply.

## Centralized Application Services

Most medical, dental, veterinary, and podiatry schools utilize a centralized application service. The applicant sends one application to a central processing location which verifies transcripts and calculates GPAs, forwarding the information to the schools designated. **Not all schools utilize such services**, so it is important to make sure you check with each school to which you apply to make sure you know how to initiate an application! Most schools, after receiving the preliminary application from the centralized application service, will require additional information and an additional application fee. See Mrs. Gean for further information and application forms.

### **Allopathic Medical School**

American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS)

2501 M Street, NW

Libby-26

Washington DC 20037-1300

(202) 828-0600

E-mail: [amcas@aamc.org](mailto:amcas@aamc.org)

<http://www.aamc.org/stuapps/admiss/amcas/start.htm>

Electronic version may be ordered from AMCAS or downloaded from the world-wide-web.

### **Osteopathic Medical School**

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS)

5550 Friendship Boulevard Suite 310

Chevy Chase MD 20815

(301) 968-4190 and press "1" at the prompt

<http://www.aacom.org>

Electronic version is available and may be ordered from AACOMAS or downloaded from the worldwide web.

### **Veterinary School**

Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS)

P. O. Box 24700

Oakland CA 94623-1700

E-mail: [Ljohnson@aavmc.org](mailto:Ljohnson@aavmc.org)

<http://www.aavmc.org/vmcas.htm>

### **Dental School**

American Association of Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS)

American Association of Dental Schools

1625 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 600

Washington DC 20036-2212

(202) 667-1887 or (800) 353-AADS (2237)

E-mail: [aadsas.appl@aads.jhu.edu](mailto:aadsas.appl@aads.jhu.edu)

## Important Information for Each Application Service

### AMCAS

- \* AMCAS will begin receiving applications June 1.
- \* Do not send letters of recommendation or other supplementary materials to AMCAS.
- \* If applying for a fee waiver, request it now. You must have a fee waiver approved before submitting your AMCAS application
- \* If you plan to take the August MCAT, make sure you indicate this in the appropriate section.
- \* If you answer “yes” to the question regarding academic performance or conduct violations, explain fully in the Personal Comments Section.
- \* Check “yes” to the Advisor Information Service Release – please! You are not required to release your information to your Pre-Health Professions Advisor. However, this information is helpful to your advisor in advising future students. Also, we like to hear how many of our students have been accepted! All information on individual applicant will remain confidential.

Extracurricular information: When listing clubs and organizations, note any offices held or special programs worked on. List all volunteer work and employment - not just health-related activities. When listing volunteer work, briefly describe what you did. Telling an admissions committee that you volunteered at a hospital does not tell them anything about what kind of experience you received. However, do not ‘squeeze’ information into Page 1 of the application. Remember, your application should be easy to read! Page 1 is intended to be a brief listing. You may explain in greater detail in the Personal Comments Section. If you run out of room (because you have been very busy), continue in the Personal Comments Section.

Transcripts: Transcripts must be sent to AMCAS directly from the Registrar’s Office. Do not send them yourself. Request transcripts from all U. S. or Canadian post-secondary schools attended - even if transfer work appears on your FHU transcript. AMCAS will begin accepting official transcripts on June 1, so request transcripts as soon as possible from other schools. Have transcripts sent as soon as this semester is over (if applying before the summer semester is over). If you are enrolled in school during the summer or fall semester while/after you apply, send updated transcripts to all schools for which you are still in consideration immediately following the semester. Do not send additional transcripts to AMCAS after your initial application.

Academic Record: Fill out the Academic Record carefully, following all instructions precisely. All courses must be marked biology (B), chemistry (C), physics (P), math (M) or all other (A). If unsure which category a course is in, ask your professor. Your GPA

will be calculated by AMCAS and will be broken down into science (BCPM), non-science (A), and total. Each GPA will also be broken down into freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, post-bacc, cumulative undergraduate, and graduate.

### AACOMAS

- \* AACOMAS will begin receiving applications June 1.
- \* If applying for a fee waiver, apply now. The fee waiver must be approved before you may submit your AACOMAS application.
- \* Make sure you release your MCAT scores to AACOMAS!!!
- \* Do not send letters of recommendation or other supplementary materials to AACOMAS.
- \* Check yes to the Advisor Information Service Release – please! You are not required to release your information to your Pre-Health Professions Advisor. However, this information is helpful to your advisor in advising future students. Also, we like to hear how many of our students have been accepted! All information on individual applicant will remain confidential
- \* If you plan to take the August MCAT, indicate this in the appropriate section!

Transcripts: Transcripts must be sent directly from the Registrar's Office. Do not send them yourself. Submit transcripts from all U. S. institutions, even if transferred coursework is on your FHU transcript. You may have foreign coursework evaluated. For Canadian and other foreign schools, consult the AACOMAS directions. If you are enrolled in school during the summer or fall semester while/after you apply, send updated transcripts to all schools for which you are initial application.

Extracurricular information: For Prior Career/Experience, most of you will put "Student." There is little space for the "volunteer, internships, honors, awards" section. Continue in the Personal Comments section if necessary.

Academic Record: The AACOMAS grading system does not include grades for .5 values. If you received any + grades, write in the numeric value. D+ = 1.3, C+ = 2.3, B+ = 3.3. Your (-) grades are D- = .7, C- = 1.7, and B- = 2.7. Your Science GPA consists of Biology/Zoology (B), Inorganic Chem (I), Organic Chem (O), Biochemistry (T), Other Science (S), and Physics (P). Your Non-science GPA consists of Math (M), English (E), Behavioral Science (H), and Other Non-Science (N). AACOMAS will calculate your science, non-science, and overall GPA, and break it down by academic year. For repeated courses, only the last grade will be used.

Academic Status – Milligan uses the following scale:

0-26 hours Freshman

26-57 hours Sophomore

58-91 hours Junior

92-128 hours Senior

### AADSAS

- \* AADSAS will begin receiving applications June 1.
- \* AADSAS does not have a fee waiver program.
- \* Some schools require supplementary materials be sent the school at the same time AADSAS application is sent, while some want you to wait until you hear from them. Make sure you check the Supplemental Materials Table in the AADSAS instruction booklet for each school to which you are applying!!! Follow these instructions exactly!!! Do not send supplemental materials to AADSAS.

Extracurricular activities – There is no room for writing in what you did. You are given a list of activities and are to mark off which ones you participated in or were a leader. If you have significant experiences you would like to address, use the Applicant Essay.

Transcripts: AADSAS will accept transcripts sent by the applicant if they are in a sealed envelope with the Registrar's signature over the seal. You may also have the Registrar send the transcripts directly. Submit transcripts from each and every college or university you have attended, even if the transfer work appears on your current transcript. All foreign transcripts must be translated into English before submitting them to AADSAS. Immediately following the fall semester, send the Academic Update Form to AADSAS to update your application with grades you have earned since you applied. Do not send updated transcripts to AADSAS.

Course Work section: This section can get confusing. Follow directions exactly! AADSAS computes a separate GPA for biology, chemistry, and physics, non-science coursework, and total coursework. These GPAs are also broken down into undergraduate, graduate, and combined GPAs. Repeated coursework is computed into the GPA.

### VMCAS

- \* VMCAS will begin receiving applications in August.
- \* Three evaluation forms go directly to VMCAS, not to the individual schools. You must give each of your evaluators a special envelope (which comes with the VMCAS application) and have him/her place the letter in the envelope, sign the seal, and return the envelope to you. Submit your evaluation forms with your VMCAS application.
- \* You must check the appropriate application procedure for each school to which you apply. Some schools participate in VMCAS but will not accept VMCAS applications from certain applicants (e.g., in-state applicants). Follow these instructions carefully!!!
- \* The VMCAS deadline is October 1 (for the 01 entering class). VMCAS will send



your application to schools if it is received by February, even if after the deadline, but will note postmark and receipt date, and the school may not consider your application if it is late.

- \* The VMCAS “Applicant Data Phase” is August through February. From March 1 on, information may only be updated through the individual schools.
- \* Standardized test scores (GRE, MCAT, TOEFL) must be released directly to VMCAS. If you did not release your scores to VMCAS the day of the test, contact the testing agency as soon as possible to have your scores released.

Extracurricular information: The question labeled “Veterinary Experience” refers to work you did with professionals. The “Animal Experience” section refers to contact you had directly with animals. “Employment History” refers to any other paid work you have done. Do not list any experience more than once. If something you have done fits into both “Veterinary” and “Animal” experience, choose the more appropriate category. For the sections marked “Honors and Awards” and “Extracurricular and Community Activities,” list awards/activities most relevant first if you do not have enough room. If you still need more space, use the Explanation Sheet.

Transcripts: You must submit transcripts from each and every college and university attended, even if transfer credit appears on your current transcript. Transcripts are to be submitted with your application in a sealed envelope or directly from the Registrar for all U. A. and Canadian schools. Ask for the Registrar’s signature or stamp over the seal. VMCAS will accept transcripts directly from the Registrar, but they caution that this may delay processing. For schools outside the U. S. and Canada, you must have your transcripts evaluated by one of the organizations listed in the VMCAS instruction booklet. Have your fall transcripts sent to VMCAS immediately after the fall semester ends (within 10 working days). VMCAS will begin receiving transcripts June 1. Do not send them earlier. If you are attending summer school, send your transcripts from that school immediately after the semester.

Core Curriculum Section: Follow the directions precisely. Core curriculum includes only courses required by the schools to which you are applying, not all courses that fit into the specified categories. GPAs will be calculated for your core curriculum, your last 45 hours, and for your overall coursework. Grades are entered exactly as they appear on the transcript; VMCAS does not have a grade conversion chart.

### Personal Statement

Each application service has room for a personal statement, and each has its own instructions. The following are excerpts from the application instructions for each application service (for the 2001 entering class):

AMCAS – “This is your opportunity to provide personal information that is otherwise not included on your application. Consider and construct your comments carefully; many admissions committees place significant weight on this section.”

AACOMAS – “We encourage you to provide your motivation for applying to the field of osteopathic medicine in this section.”

AADSAS – “Your Applicant Essay provides an opportunity to explain why you desire to pursue a dental education.”

VMCAS – “Your personal statement should help the admission committee(s) learn something about you as a person, about the development of your interest in veterinary medicine, and about your career goals.”

This is your opportunity to expound upon experiences that you have had that did not go anywhere else on the application, or which you did not get a chance to describe in enough detail. You volunteered a lot of hours, but what kind of experiences did you gain from it? How did your experiences motivate you even further to pursue this career? What unique qualities/experiences do you/have you had that you would like the committee to know about? The following suggestions will be helpful:

- \* Proofread your essay before typing it onto the application!
- \* Quality, not quantity!!!
- \* Make sure the essay is legible. Do not squeeze the lines together to make a long essay fit! Shorten the essay!
- \* Have others read your essay. Ask them to comment not only on grammatical errors, but also on what kind of person the essay makes you sound like. Do you sound sincere?
- \* If explaining anything negative on your application (such as a bad semester, conduct probation, etc.) be open and honest. Mention the facts and move on. Explain your side of the story, but do not make excuses.
- \* Creativity and quality are important, but you are not expected to write a masterpiece. It should be apparent that you can express yourself well, but do not try to “woo” the admissions committee with big words and elaborate descriptions. You should sound like a real person!!!
- \* If you are reapplying, write a new personal statement! Show that you are willing to put some effort into your new application.

### Secondary Applications

After the schools receive your preliminary applications from the centralized application services, you will (hopefully) receive secondary applications. Some schools do not request secondary applications but base their decisions on the information contained in your preliminary application and letters of recommendation. Some schools send

secondaries to all applicants, some to all in-state applicants. Some schools conduct a review of the preliminary applications to determine whether or not to send each applicant a secondary. You should hear from the school either way. If you do not hear from the school within 3-4 weeks after you receive your applicant profile, you should contact the school to find out the status of your application.

The secondary application usually asks additional questions and may require more essays. You will probably wind up repeating some of the information contained in your personal statement. This is OK (it means you chose to write about information they were interested in!). However, do not repeat your personal statement. The schools already have this and are looking for new essays. It may also request other supplementary materials such as letters of recommendation or resumes. Do not send any supplementary materials, including letters of recommendation, to the schools until you are instructed to do so (exception – some schools instruct you to send supplemental materials before you hear from them, such as with some dental schools). Follow all instructions carefully. Send all materials in as soon as possible, and be aware of any deadlines for the secondaries. Make sure your letters of recommendation are received before the deadline. Some people take much longer than they claim to write the letters. It is not their responsibility to make sure the letters are in on time, it is yours! Most schools will inform you when your application is complete. If you do not hear from the school within two weeks after you feel all materials should have arrived, contact the school to make sure your file is complete.

After all information is received by the school, your application will be reviewed to determine whether or not you will be granted an interview. This decision may take quite a while to make. Be patient. You should review the handout on interviewing tips (see Mrs. Gean for this) or read the interviewing section of the Health Professions Handbook at: <http://www.advising.ufl.edu/ohlpat/tocHealthProfessions.html>. See also the web page section that gives sample interview questions asked of some Tennessee students.

Procedures for processing and reviewing applications and notifying applicants of interviews and acceptances vary from school to school. The secondary application should explain some of this. If not, contact the schools and familiarize yourself with each school's procedure so you will know what to expect. However, do not bombard the schools with too many questions, they need time to review your application!

### Some Final Notes

The application process is long, frustrating, and expensive. It can be extremely stressful. Approach it with confidence (not cockiness). Be aware of your strengths and your weaknesses. Know that you may not be accepted (even if you have excellent grades and test scores), and prepare yourself mentally for this possibility, especially if your GPA and test scores are below the national averages. Come up with a backup plan. What will you do if you are not accepted by next summer? Will you reapply? Will you go to graduate school? Will you consider another health profession? You should begin answering these questions now as a precautionary measure. You do not want to think about this reality, but if you do find yourself in this situation, you will be glad you will have put some

thought into it. Also, do not get discouraged as you hear of your friends getting interviews and even acceptances before you. Many people are accepted late in the process. Congratulate your friends and share in their happiness.

You should be available at all times during the application process. You may not be given much notice for an interview. Make sure the schools have your correct address and phone number and that you have a way to get to the schools quickly if you are offered an interview.

In January, complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and release the information to all schools at which you are still in consideration. Check with each school to find out about its financial aid. Some will use different applications, and many will require additional information if you are admitted.

Make sure you send your fall transcripts to the schools (and/or to the application services, per their instructions) as soon as the semester is over, and make sure you continue your strong academic performance. Schools will take into consideration courses you complete during the application process, not just the ones you completed before you applied. Also, if you have any significant experiences (published a paper, participated in a new activity, etc.), send a letter to the schools at which you are still in consideration to let them know what you are up to. Your application might not be seen as competitive as someone else's until the committee learns that you have just become coordinator of the new homeless project in town. However, do not send a weekly letter letting them know of every little thing you are doing. You do not want to annoy the committees. They have a great deal to read!

Finally, relax. This whole process will be much easier if you take it seriously, yet do not let yourself get too stressed out over it. If you begin to freak out, talk to your friends who are applying – you might find they are just as nervous as you. Also, enjoy yourself! This will hopefully be your last year before entering a rigorous curriculum (and you thought all those organic and physics courses were rough!).

And last, but not least....

**Good Luck!!**