

Premed Timeline: Plan Your Success!

The Road MMEP

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It is important for you to understand that there is no single "right" way to prepare for medical school. Your goal should be to discover the way that is best for you—the one that allows you to demonstrate your full potential. The best advice we can give you is to begin working with a premedical advisor as soon as you can. Together, you can craft and customize a premedical career that is appropriate for you.

To be a successful premedical student, you must be aware of what medical schools are looking for in a successful applicant. They want to see evidence of:

1. High scholastic achievement in college coursework and on the MCAT.
2. A clear understanding of what is involved in being a doctor.
3. An ability to work as a member of a team, to be a leader, to manage time effectively, and to prioritize.
4. Genuine concern for the welfare of others.
5. High moral character, integrity, honesty and humility.

As you organize your premedical career, keep these things in mind and try to structure your activities accordingly. Also be sure to consider your own background, skills, outside interests and commitments when you plan your curriculum. Using this timeline, you complete all of the requirements for medical school admission, graduate, and then begin your medical school training immediately after earning your degree. However, this may not be the timeline that is best for you. Another option is to take a full four years, or even more, to complete all of the pre-medical requirements and to apply later, after earning the degree. You can then spend a valuable year or more after college engaged in a number of rewarding work, study or volunteer activities. This extra time may make you an even stronger candidate.

FRESHMAN YEAR

Fall

Consult with your premedical advisor prior to selecting courses. In most cases, you should enroll in at least one of the basic science courses required for medical school admission—typically biology and/or general chemistry. Although you must take science coursework to be eligible to apply to medical school, keep in mind that you do not need to be a science major.

Join clubs such as a premed science club and others that relate to medicine and science. Participate in both minority and non -minority clubs; this allows for both support systems and greater exposure to the diversity of a college campus.



Develop good study habits. If you need help, see your professors, academic advisors, or members of the counseling center. They are there to help you succeed.

Start to think about what you want to do for the summer. Investigate opportunities to do research, work in a health care setting, or participate in special summer programs.

Spring

This will be a continuation of what you began during the fall semester. Continue your relevant coursework and your involvement in extracurricular activities, and continue to consult your advisor.



Start to finalize your plans for summer. Check out the deadlines, complete applications, and make arrangements for necessary letters of recommendation. Do not procrastinate, or opportunities will pass you by.

If you are not doing as well as you would like, discuss some options with your advisor, such as summer school or meeting regularly with a tutor. The transition from high school to college can be tough! Under no circumstances does this mean you cannot become a physician!

The first summer is often a good time to regroup after your first year of college. Most students will be involved in some type of employment situation, which is good. Employment helps the financial situation, but as importantly, it promotes the development of other attributes such as team-work, time management, responsibility, and reliability.

Consider doing some volunteer work during your free time. Do something to give yourself exposure to the health profession, or something to benefit your community. This may be a good opportunity to spend some time with a medical practitioner. This “Shadowing” experience will give you a good idea of at least one type of medical practice.



SOPHOMORE YEAR

Fall



Check in with your premedical and academic advisors as soon as you return. Make sure that the curriculum you have selected is appropriate. It should be challenging, but also interesting and enjoyable. Continue your basic science coursework with such courses as organic chemistry and/or physics. Remain involved in extracurricular activities. Consider leadership roles within these organizations. Again, give some thought to the coming summer. This may be a good time to consider a research position, particularly if you are interested in MD/PhD degree programs.

There are many different programs that are designed to meet specific student needs. You must decide which one is right for you. Do you need an enrichment program (for advanced students) or a remedial program (to help reinforce the basic science courses)? There are also programs that are strictly research-based or provide MCAT preparation.

Spring

Continue with the course requirements for your degree program and continue to complete the basic premedical courses. Submit all applications for summer programs or employment positions. Meet those deadlines!

Summer

Whether you participate in a special program, conduct research, or work at a job for money, continue to explore the entire field of medicine. Read as much as you can. Talk with people and shadow physicians. Volunteer your time, and discover the benefits of helping others. In between all that, get some rest! You are about to enter the most challenging year of your undergraduate career.



JUNIOR YEAR

Fall

As before, check in with your advisors and assure yourself that you are on the right track with your education. Make sure that you understand how the medical school application process works at your school.

Continue with the completion of the premedical course requirements. By the end of this year, you should have taken full-year courses in biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics.

You will take the MCAT this year, so begin preparing for it. Ask your advisor if your school offers an MCAT preparation course. If not, commercial courses are available. A "prep" course may help develop your test-taking skills and will help you become familiar with the exam. Some programs offer scholarships or discounts.

Continue your participation in extracurricular activities. Hopefully you are honing your leadership skills through these activities.

Contact and get information from schools to which you are interested in applying. Schedule meetings with medical school admissions personnel that visit your school, and consider attending special programs offered by local or regional medical schools for minority students.

Start making decisions about the type of medical school you want to attend:

- What region of the country
- Size of school
- Minority makeup
- Faculty/student ratio
- Curriculum-traditional or problem-based learning style

As before, consider all of the options for summer work and begin making preparations.

Spring

If you have completed the required coursework and are prepared, take the MCAT examination as soon as possible. Have your scores sent to the institutions to which you are applying. If

you are not ready, either because you haven't completed the courses or because you haven't studied enough, you have until September to take the exam. Meet with your advisor to begin preparing your application. The process differs from school to school, but at the very least, you will be required to submit an application, transcripts, MCAT scores, and letters of recommendation.

Visit schools, if possible, and talk with minority affairs officers, minority students, and admissions deans if you can.

Summer

While working or participating in summer programs, you will also be working on your medical school application. Most schools will not accept applications until June 1. There is some advantage to filing early, so do not procrastinate. Have transcripts sent to AMCAS (make sure you know the deadlines), or if required, directly to the school.

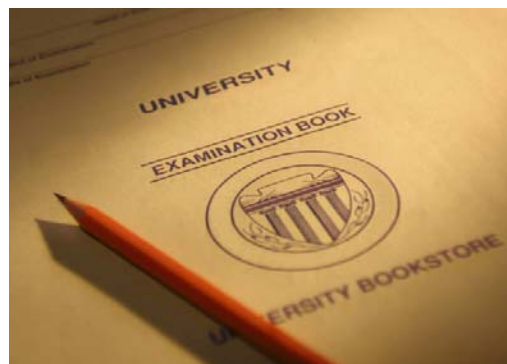
Pay attention to fee waivers. If you are eligible for a fee waiver from the AMCAS, you are probably eligible for a fee waiver from those institutions to which you are applying for the secondary application. If you are unsure, ask.

Study over the summer if you are retaking the MCAT.

SENIOR YEAR

Fall

With the guidance of your advisor, carefully plan the final year of your undergraduate career. Consider taking biochemistry or other advanced science courses that will be valuable to you as a medical student.



Prepare to go on interviews. Find out if your school offers practice interviews (dress rehearsals), and use them to improve your interviewing skills.

Make sure you have a suit that is appropriate for an interview. Casual attire is not recommended.

This is your final year in college. You know the ropes, and you are in position to be a positive role model for younger students. Be a leader. Be a mentor. Share what you have learned with others.

Spring

Complete your final course requirements and prepare for graduation. Do not skip commencement exercises. This is a time to be proud of your accomplishments and to reflect on all of your experiences.

Summer

Consider employment on campus as a tutor as an option to regular employment. Obtaining employment the summer before entering medical school may be factored into your financial aid package. Also, this is a good way to reinforce your academic skills and knowledge base.

**Enjoy yourself! Travel, if possible. Relax! Do something you always wanted to try.
Have fun!**