

PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM-MEDICAL SCIENCES

Department: Biology
Building 58, Room 064
(850) 474-2748
pre-professional@uwf.edu
College: Arts and Sciences
Program Contact: V. Sharma

The number of students applying for professional training in fields such as medicine, osteopathic medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, optometry, podiatry, pharmacy, and physical therapy always exceeds the number of positions available. Competition for these positions is keen. Students from Florida primarily apply to in-state professional schools. They must have outstanding credentials to receive serious consideration at public institutions out-of-state. Private out-of-state institutions are somewhat more receptive. Foreign professional schools should be considered with extreme caution.

Preprofessional Academic Program

Professional schools are interested in a student's academic training and accomplishments as measured by the student's transcripts. The most successful applicants are full-time students (minimum of 12 sh) with a minimum cumulative GPA above 3.5 during the three or four semesters immediately preceding application.

It makes little difference as to the student's major, although most preprofessional students at UWF select a specialization in biology or chemistry. Criteria to be considered in selecting a major are: first, a field within which the student can meet the prerequisites for admission to professional school and for graduation from UWF at a very high performance level; second, a major which provides viable career alternatives; third, a major which is enjoyable to the student. Professional schools require at the minimum: biology w/laboratory (1 year); mathematics (calculus required or recommended); physics w/laboratory (1 year); and chemistry w/laboratory through organic (physical therapy requires only one year of chemistry). Most schools have additional requirements.

Courses in anatomy, analytical chemistry, biochemistry, cell biology, computer techniques, developmental biology, genetics, microbiology, physical chemistry, physiology, psychology, and statistics are useful and often required. However, a student could major in history, for example, and use electives as a means to complete the entrance requirements. The exact program for each student will depend upon background and interests.

A speech course and two courses in animal science are required for admission to veterinary medicine. UWF students generally meet these requirements by registering at the University of Florida as transient students during a summer semester.

Pharmacy and physical therapy schools require at least two years of college which include the above required courses. The other professional schools prefer a bachelor's degree.

Admission Requirements to the Upper-Division Preprofessional Program for Transfer Students

Professional training is essentially advanced training in biology. The emphasis on mathematics, physics, and chemistry, as much as biology, facilitates understanding of advanced work. Transfer students should have backgrounds in these four science areas. They also should have 12 sh in the humanities, including English composition, and 12 sh in social sciences, such as psychology and history. College algebra with trigonometry, general chemistry, elementary biology, and zoology or botany are prerequisites for the upper-division science courses.

Application Process to Professional Schools

The formal process of applying for admission to professional schools generally begins in the spring of the calendar year prior to the anticipated enrollment. As appropriate, a student takes the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT); the Dental Aptitude Test (DAT); the Optometry Aptitude Test (OCAT); the Graduate Record Examination (GRE); or other preprofessional examination. It is necessary to have completed almost all prerequisites by that time. The examinations may be taken at other times, but the decision should be discussed with an advisor.

Applications are completed and submitted to the schools or to application services such as the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) or the Association of American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS) during the summer and early fall. Evaluations are submitted by the faculty at that time and students seek interviews from the professional schools which require them. Decisions generally are announced during the January-to-March period.

Preprofessional Advisory Committee

Students enrolled at UWF who intend to apply for admission to professional schools such as medical, dental, optometry, pediatric medicine or schools of veterinary medicine generally utilize the services of the Preprofessional Advisory Committee (PPAC).

The committee provides on-going advice (regardless of the student's major), direct contact with the professional schools, brochures, applications, and other materials of interest to such students. PPAC arranges visits of admissions officers from various schools and provides a means of introducing students to local practitioners.

During the application process, candidates for admission to professional schools usually are asked to provide a letter of recommendation from a faculty committee. PPAC serves this function. On request, the Committee will schedule an interview with the candidate. This interview serves several purposes. PPAC gathers information for the preparation of its letter. The student's performance at the interview is critiqued and the candidate is given some pointers on presentation.