

## Your Educational Map as a Health Pre-Professional Student

### **What is a pre-professional program?**

The term pre-professional is often used to describe the educational pathway necessary to enter professional programs. Many of these are programs in health care fields. Examples of health care professional programs include medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and physician's assistant.

### **What are the characteristics that are important to be successful in a health profession?**

- You must be empathetic to patients. They will often be at their worst. Your patients will be scared and in pain.
- You must be able to handle stressful situations. You need to be able to think on your feet.
- You must be confident in your abilities. This confidence comes from successful completion of the coursework and clinical experiences necessary for your chosen program. It also comes from application of information to new situations. Instructors often refer to this process as critical thinking. You must be able to expand on information you know, synthesize information from several sources, and draw conclusions based on your background and the evidence that you see in your patients.
- You must consider yourself a life-long learner. The information you learn during school will be modified and expanded in response to new research. Medical research is ongoing and new information is generated at a phenomenal rate. You will find that your patients are very well informed. They have access to the Internet and they have a great incentive to understand their disease. The Internet is powerful but often contains misinformation. You will help patients understand the information and distinguish good information from bad information.

### **What are the educational requirements for entering health professions?**

- Health information is built on scientific information. As you plan out your college career, you want to begin early with math and science courses. These courses often build on each other. If you delay taking one course, you are delaying taking several courses. If you are "afraid" of biology, chemistry, or math, you may want to talk with instructors about this fear. If you are avoiding science courses, a health profession may not be appropriate for you.
- In addition to a strong science background, you also need a strong overall GPA. All health professional programs are highly competitive. Many students who apply don't get accepted. You will be competing against many other exceptionally strong candidates. Therefore, you must take your classes seriously and realize that there is little room for a bad semester. You can try to minimize the impact of "C's", "D's", and "F's" but you can never completely undo them.
- It is better to take fewer classes per semester that allow you to maintain other aspects of your life while succeeding in classes. **If you overload yourself, drop classes and struggle with the remaining classes, you will have grades that are less than optimal.**

- As you plan your courses at CLC, you want to determine early which math course you should take. Science courses require a certain level of math. Therefore, you can't take the science courses prior to finishing the appropriate level of math.
- As you plan your courses at CLC, you want to determine early which science courses are necessary for your chosen health profession. It is best to contact the pre-professional advisor for that program as early as possible.
  - Pre-veterinary advisor ----Kelly Cartwright, 847-543-2792
  - Pre-physical therapy advisor ---- Kristi Dameron, 847-543-2335
  - Pre-medical and pre-physician's assistant advisor ---- Lakshmi Gollapudi, 847-543-2324
  - Pre-occupational therapy advisor ----- Elisabeth Martin, 847-543-2884
  - Pre-pharmacy advisors ---- Tara Simmons, 847-543-2309 and Jeanne Simonsen, 847-543-2877
  - Pre-dentistry advisor ---- Mary Urban, 847-543-2876
- In addition to science courses, each professional program also has other general education requirements. These requirements may differ from one college to another. If you can, choose one or just a few potential transfer institutions. Choose your classes at CLC to meet the pre-requisites for these programs.
- Although this is listed last, it is probably one of the most important things for you to consider. Many students work toward a health profession but ultimately don't succeed in entering a program. Remember these programs are **VERY** competitive. You want to work toward a Bachelor's degree in a field that interests you. If you do not get into a health program, you will use this degree to get a job or to pursue a different form of higher education.

### **What are other activities that can help you decide on a program?**

- You can volunteer in your chosen field.
- You can work in your chosen field. Your job will be entry level. You are not above gaining any experience.
- You can job shadow with someone in your chosen field. This requires that you contact individuals and arrange to observe them. You may arrange an observation for a day or you may arrange a longer shadowing experience.
- You can talk with anyone and everyone in your circle (family, friends, colleagues) with experience in the career you have chosen.
  - What is it like to actually work in that field?
  - How hard is it to get into a program?
  - What can you do to make your application stronger?
- You will need references when you apply to health programs. These references can be educational or work related. As you gain volunteer, work or job shadowing experiences, you want to always be professional and respectful to the people with whom you are working. They may be willing to act as a reference for you if they are impressed with your attitude and skills, and if they believe they know you well enough to make a judgment of your suitability for your chosen career.