

PRE-MEDICAL (PRE-HEALTH PROFESSIONS) PREPARATION  
AT VASSAR COLLEGE

It is typical over the last decade or so for 100-150 students of the entering freshman class to express at least a potential interest in one or more of the health professions as a career goal. Although allopathic medicine is by far the most popular choice, students should realize that the health professions include a wide range of additional possibilities--osteopathic medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry, nursing, public health, pharmacy, optometry, physical and occupational therapy, various kinds of laboratory technologies and closely allied fields such as medical administration, health education, some kinds of social work, and medical or bioethics.

Preparation for many of the health professions may or may not demand a natural science major. Most often, the best advice we can offer is that students select the major field of study which most interests them. Not only will they be happier because of that choice but the probability of better academic performance is increased. Although the latter is not something we would prefer to stress in making educational choices, there is no escaping the reality that admission to professional schools continues to be difficult and highly competitive. There are some health professions whose requirements make a natural science major the most logical choice. It is the responsibility of the student to research the requirements of the health profession/s he or she is considering.

REQUIREMENTS for Medical Schools  
and other Health Professional Schools and your Undergraduate Program

The basic requirements and in many cases the only requirements are a year of English and four years of basic sciences courses which include laboratories (Vassar course number in parentheses): two years of Chemistry, general and organic (108, 109 or 125(with consultation); 244, 245): one year of Physics (113, 114): one year of Biology (At Vassar, the sequence of courses may include Biology 105, 106 and a 200 level course). A year of mathematics, usually calculus, is strongly recommended and sometimes required. For some medical schools additional coursework in biology and/or chemistry may be required. One should look at catalogues early in the college career and the Medical School Admission Requirements book, which is available in the Pre-Med Office.

If your potential major is in chemistry, physics or biology, consult the Freshman Handbook and note a number of different sequences are possible for completing the basic requirements. At Vassar, it will also be simpler if you elect at least one semester of English as a freshman.

For those not planning a natural science major, it is still helpful to complete the basic science requirements as early as possible in your college career. Completion of these is necessary before you take the special aptitude test (medical, dental, veterinary, etc.) that is another requirement for admission to these professional schools.

No matter what your potential major may be, if you do not feel confident about your science preparation, do not overload with science courses early in your college career. For those who are confident, there is nothing wrong with beginning more than one science course simultaneously.

At Vassar we make an effort to de-emphasize competition for grades. Grading is not done "on a curve"; if you measure up to the standards for a high grade, you get it regardless of how other students in the same class are performing. You should also not regard each test or report or paper as a "do-or-die" crisis. Some freshmen may not do as well as others initially but there have been many instances in which students have become excellent despite a slow start.

### ADVISING

In addition to your regular academic advisers, there is a committee of Pre-Medical Advisers. We hope you will make use of us. During the first two years of college, we do not assign each prospective health career applicant to an adviser. Students should feel free to consult with any member of the committee about his/her program of study or other aspects of best qualifying for eventual admission to a professional program.

During the year prior to your making applications for admission to a health professional school, you will be assigned to a specific adviser. For most students that will occur during junior year. At that point we will do our best to help you as an individual to maximize your chances in the application process. The Office for Pre-Professional Advising will assist you in the application procedure. The office is located on the first floor of Main, Room N-162, telephone (845) 437-5263. You may contact this office and arrange to speak with Mrs. Lisa Kooperman, Director, or any of the pre-medical advisers for information if you have any questions or concerns. (or email: [Likooperman@Vassar.edu](mailto:Likooperman@Vassar.edu)) The office also has information on summer programs, professional school bulletins, test application packets and other literature of interest.

Our Committee has always taken the position that we will support any student who wishes to apply. Obviously we cannot recommend each student equally; however, we will recommend as strongly as we can depending upon the individual's performance and characteristics. We firmly believe that many students can enhance their probabilities of successful achievement of careers in the health professions by early consultation with one or more of us.

The Pre-Medical Advisory Committee