



Health Professions Advising

The purpose of the following is to give students who are applying, or thinking about applying, to health professional school an overview of the application process at Lehigh. Further information may be obtained through workshops and information sessions held throughout the year on the various topics discussed below or through individual counseling sessions with the pre-professional counselor (please call Career Services at 610-758-3710 to schedule an appointment). Although the information contained herein pertains primarily to juniors and seniors, first-year students and sophomores are encouraged to meet with the pre-professional counselor early in their undergraduate careers and as questions or concerns arise. Pre-health information sessions are held each fall. Dates for these meetings may be obtained via Career Services Weekly (e-newsletter) or the Career Services Web site (www.lehigh.edu/careerservices).

Obtaining a Committee Letter

Juniors and seniors interested in applying to medical, dental, optometry, or podiatry school should attend the Junior/Senior Information Session: Applying to Health Professional Schools held each October. At this meeting information about the Health Professions Advisory Committee (a committee comprising six faculty and the pre-professional counselor), assessing a potential application, and opening a pre-professional file at Lehigh will be provided. After submission of the pre-professional form, the student should make an appointment with the pre-professional counselor (Career Services, 610-758-3710). This interview will serve to address any questions or concerns about the application process; it also provides practice for future health professional school interviews.

Coursework

Students are advised to think carefully about their undergraduate education not only in terms of academic interests and being able to excel in their coursework, but also in terms of flexibility so that alternative career paths may be engaged if necessary. A basic guideline is to fulfill the major requirements in a discipline that is interesting and challenging while also completing the necessary prerequisite coursework for health professional schools. For *medical* and *dental* schools, the following courses should be taken: 2 semesters of general chemistry with labs, 2 semesters of physics with labs, 2 semesters of biology with labs, 2 semesters of calculus (recommended), 2 of semesters organic chemistry with labs, and 2 semesters of English. Additionally, for *medical school*, the following courses should be taken: 2 semesters of Biochemistry, 1 additional semester of Biology, 1 semester of Psychology, 1 semester of Sociology, and 1 semester of Statistics.

See elsewhere on Health Professions Advising (www.lehigh.edu/careerservices) for more information about course requirements for health professional schools. It is the *student's responsibility* to check the specific requirements of each program to which they wish to apply. Remember that health professional schools are looking for well-rounded students with excellent analytical, critical thinking, and writing skills, with appropriate pre-professional preparation.

Letters of Evaluation

Lehigh's Health Professions Advisory Committee provides an institutional letter of support (committee letter) for undergraduate students and recent alums applying to medical, dental, optometry, and podiatry schools. To obtain a committee letter, students must open a pre-professional file (by submitting the on-line pre-professional form; see Registration above), schedule an interview with the pre-professional counselor (610-758-3710) and, if desired, a faculty committee member, and arrange for four to five faculty evaluations to be sent to the pre-professional office by the end of May. These evaluations should include letters from Lehigh faculty in the following areas: two science (biological science, chemistry, organic chemistry, physics), one from your major area of study, and two additional (may be academic or non-academic (only one non-academic)). Students applying to dental, optometry, or podiatry school should have three to four letters, with at least two being from faculty in the sciences.

Evaluations from faculty in classes who know you through class participation or a research project discussion are likely to be more effective than evaluations from course instructors in large lectures who know you only from examination performance. One evaluation may also come from a non-faculty individual (Dean's staff, administrative staff, coach, club advisor). *Because your letters of evaluations should contain material about your intellectual qualities, character, and personality traits (in addition to your performance in class), you must make an effort to become personally acquainted with your professors throughout your Lehigh career.* These evaluations are included in the Committee Letter Packet sent to health professional schools by the Health Professions Advisory Committee. Committee Letters carry considerable weight in your application, so be sure to select recommenders who know you well and will agree to write favorable letters.

The overall evaluation comprising a committee letter is based on the student's academic record, faculty evaluations, personal interview, and any other features of the student's application that have a bearing on his/her candidacy. The overall evaluation (Very Highly Recommend, Highly Recommend, Recommend, Recommend with Reservation, Present for Consideration) is included as part of the letter sent to the health professional schools.

Recommenders complete the letter of evaluation form given to them by students and also write (and sign) an evaluation on letterhead stationery (these may be submitted through e-mail or as hard copy). Students are responsible for monitoring the receipt of their recommendations by the Pre-Professional Counselor. Letters of evaluations should be submitted by recommenders no later than May 30th in the year in which the student is planning to apply. Individuals not affiliated with Lehigh University who are asked to evaluate students should write the letter (and sign it) on letterhead stationery and send it to the pre-professional counselor. Outside letters do not become of the Lehigh committee letter, but will be sent along with the credentials packet from Lehigh. One or two outside letters are acceptable in a committee letter packet.

Student Waiver/Request for Committee Letter Release

Students receive a student waiver form with an explanation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA; the Buckley Amendment). A signed student waiver must be on file for the committee letter to be released. Students also must submit a signed request for committee letter packet send-out.

Testing

Students are advised to prepare as completely as possible for standardized admissions exams (e.g., MCAT, DAT, OAT) and to register early. A late spring/early summer exam is advised, if the student is prepared, for several reasons: (1) Having scores at the beginning of the application cycle helps applicants choose a reasonable list of schools to which to apply, (2) a second test may be arranged in a timely fashion, in case of illness, personal emergency, or unacceptable performance on the first test, (3) admission committees usually require receipt of test scores before reviewing applications. Successful performance has been obtained by Lehigh students who have studied on their own, who have taken commercial prep courses, and who have utilized a combination of these strategies.

Application

The American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS), the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS), the Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS), the Pharmacy College Application Service (PharmCAS), the Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS), the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA), the Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (PTCAS), the Optometry Centralized Application Service (OptomCAS), the Schools of Public Health Application Service (SOPHAS), and the American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine Application Service (AACPMAS) are the central application processing services for participating health professional schools. They facilitate the application process by collecting student data (transcripts, test scores, application information) and transmitting them to the participating schools. There is an initial fee and then additional fees for each individual school. It is advisable to file applications early in the application cycle.

Committee Letter Packets

The completed checklist for release of committee letter packet, a signed waiver form, and a signed request for committee letter packet send-out form must be submitted for the committee letter packet to be released. The committee letter packet contains the committee letter (including the student's overall rating by the committee) along with the individual letters of evaluation submitted on the student's behalf and information about Lehigh University and the committee process. One or two letters of evaluation from recommenders outside the University can accompany the committee letter Packet. *Note:* Letters of recommendation may be forwarded *only* to health professional schools, post-baccalaureate programs, or military programs in conjunction with the above schools. Letters cannot be forwarded to third parties including, but not limited to, employers or graduate schools other than the above or other educational programs. Please contact individual recommenders for such letters.

Career Counseling

Presenting as strong an application as possible to health professional schools, in this highly competitive process, requires careful attention. There are also numerous health professions, all of which require academic skill, maturity, and a genuine desire to help others. No one is denied an institutional letter of support (Lehigh committee letter) for health professional schools if the steps/deadlines specified by the Health Professions Advisory Committee are followed. Individual counseling is available through the office of the pre-professional counselor for all students throughout their Lehigh career and after graduation. Appointments may be made by calling 610-758-3710.

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