What does it mean to be Pre-Med at WWU?

At any given time, Western has more than 400 students on a pre-medicine pathway. Pre-Med students are those who identify themselves as such, formally or informally. Western does not offer a “Pre-Med” major, and there is no formula for getting into medical school. Selection committees evaluate applicants across multiple areas through a holistic review process. Important components include MCAT score, GPA (both cumulative and science/math), letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, community service, diversity awareness, and an interview, as well as background checks (including legal, conduct, and social records).

Pre-Med Education

Medical schools emphasize the importance of a liberal arts education and do not recruit students from one specific major or discipline. This gives you flexibility in planning your Pre-Med educational program. Use your undergraduate years to explore many academic fields, to develop basic skills and knowledge, to demonstrate expertise and to experience a field of study (major) of your choice. Align with a major in which you both excel and enjoy. While Biology and Chemistry are popular choices, Pre-Med students have majored in a diverse range of disciplines including Anthropology, Behavioral Neuroscience, Business, Kinesiology, Languages (i.e. Spanish, French), Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, and Fairhaven self-designed programs. Some pursue combined majors such as Anthropology/Biology, Biochemistry, and Cellular & Molecular Biology.

Core Courses

Regardless of your major, certain prerequisite courses expected by most schools include:

**CHEMISTRY** (a sequence of eight courses)

**NOTE:** It is imperative that students begin general chemistry as early in their program as possible

- General Chemistry series (includes labs): CHEM 161, 162, 163 [or Honors equivalent]
- Organic Chemistry lecture series: CHEM 351, 352, 353;
  - with two accompanying labs: 354 and either 355 or 356 (depending upon major)
- Biochemistry: CHEM 471, 472

**BIOLOGY**

- General Biology series (includes labs): BIOL 204, 205, 206
- additional courses under advisement

**PHYSICS**

- Physics series (includes labs): PHYS 114, 115, 116 [or PHYS 161, 162, 163 series]

**MATHEMATICS**

- Calculus: MATH 124, 125
- Statistics: MATH 240 [or major equivalent; i.e. BIOL 340 for Biology majors]

**OTHER (NON-SCIENCE)**

- One or more introductory Social Science GUR course: [i.e. PSY 101]
- One year of English is highly recommended or required by some schools

*This document is for preliminary advising purposes only.*

*We encourage you to meet with a Pre-Healthcare advisor on a regular basis to determine a plan that is best for you.*

Keep informed

- WWU students may join the Advisor’s Pre-med Listserv. To join, e-mail Anna.Tognazzini@wwu.edu with the following SUBJECT information: Pre-med listserv, Last name, First name, WWU student number, and major (if declared).
- Pre-Med Club: Join this and other WWU Associated Students clubs at www.as.wwu.edu/clubs/.
Notes

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP): Check with individual medical schools you are interested in as to whether they recognize AP as college-earned credit. Not all do. It is better to view any earned credits as qualifying to enroll in upper-division courses rather than as “testing out” of prerequisites.

DECLARING A MAJOR: Departments vary in how to declare majors. Behavioral Neuroscience, Biology, Chemistry, and others allow students to declare as a “pre-major” while taking their specified prerequisites. Some majors require a specific GPA in certain courses. Declare early, even as a “pre-major”, to help shorten your time to degree. While working on any pre-major content, explore many disciplines to keep your options open.

ACCESS TO CLASSES: High demand exists for upper-division courses, especially in the sciences. Many departments grant enrollment priority to students declared in specific majors over those seeking enrollment for professional school purposes. Registration access procedures for courses can change, and departments generally provide updates via their websites and email notifications, or by checking with the department’s program coordinator.

REPEATING/DROPPING COURSES: When you repeat a course, only your most recent grade is used when Western calculates your GPA. However, the class still shows up on your transcript. Although some students think that repeating a course will help them get into professional schools, this is almost always untrue. Medical schools will take into account ALL college-level coursework when performing their own calculation of your GPA, and this will include any courses you have repeated at Western. Still, in some circumstances it may be appropriate to repeat a course so talk to an advisor to be sure. Also, dropping a course can have an impact on eligibility for financial aid, scholarships, and athletic participation so consider your options carefully and speak with an advisor before making a decision.

SHADOWING: Students should gain at least 40 hours shadowing experience with an MD physician (or with a DO physician for application to osteopathic medical schools). Discuss your shadowing options with Pre-healthcare advisors.

MCAT: The Medical College Admission Test is offered January-September. Applicants must take the exam no later than August of the year preceding anticipated admission, but it’s recommended to take it even early to increase your chances of admission. MCAT information is available at www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat.

Additional Resources

WWU Allied Health Advising: www.wwu.edu/alliedhealth
WWU Pre-health Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/wwuprehealth/
Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC): www.aamc.org
Explore Health Careers: www.explorehealthcareers.org

Pre-Healthcare Advising Events

Typical programming events offered by Pre-Healthcare Advising include (but are not limited to):

Fall:
Orientation Session: Getting you from WWU to professional school (MEDIC)
Health Professional & Grad School Info Fair, October 18 in MAC gym
Winter Registration Walk-in Advising: Nov 14 and Nov 15, 12-2 in BI 415

Winter:
Kaplan-sponsored practice MCAT in late January/February

Spring:
The Healthcare Professional School Application: A session overviewing the process
Fall Registration Walk-in Advising: May 15 and 16, 12-2 in BI 415

This document is for preliminary advising purposes only. Contact Advising for Pre-Healthcare Professions for updates and changes.