Some Tips for Healthcare Majors

Every student is different in what he/she brings to their medical school, professional program, or graduate school application. That's a good thing! The standard areas to focus on are: good grades, strong MCAT/GRE/DAT/PCAT scores, experience in healthcare, research skills/experience, and involvement/leadership. Different interest areas (in healthcare, etc.) can also drive different experiences.

You may want to start planning your time out – perhaps make a check list of those things you would like to accomplish. Often it's best to try to focus on one or two experiences/activities at a time around your coursework, depending on the amount of hours you plan to devote to an activity.

- **Application Preparation:** When looking at applications, the entrance exam, and thinking about planning, most students work on their application (with much of their related work and activities to include) by the summer before senior year. The entrance exam is typically taken at that time, so please consider the coursework necessary to prepare for the entrance exam. You will want to look ahead at what you plan to accomplish, especially in regard to pre-requisite coursework for medical school or a particular program. If you have schools that you are interested in applying to, we would encourage you to review their pre-requisite requirements, as some do differ. Please visit the Graduate School Fair on October 10th, if you'd like to find out more about the entrance exams. https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/tools/

- **Healthcare Direct Care:** Volunteer work (e.g., hospice, hospital, nursing home) and employment (e.g., CNA, EMT) in the healthcare field not only shows your capability and dedication to the field, but also helps you to make valuable connections for shadowing. Some medical schools and graduate school programs indicate a specific amount of hours they would like to see in regards to direct care and shadowing. Some programs will also specify the type of direct-care activity they would like to see.

- **Shadowing:** Some hospitals and healthcare facilities allow for brief, or more short-term, shadowing experiences. Often it is necessary to have a physician or other healthcare provider agree prior to your experience. This is why making valuable connections through your experiences (e.g., volunteer work, employment, research) and your network is so vital! Show you are determined, dedicated, empathetic, and a hard worker!

- **Research Skills/Undergraduate Research Programs:** Students take part in various types of activities to expand on their experience and add different types of involvement and knowledge to their application. As you accrue more research-related skills through your courses, you may also want to consider applying for summer undergraduate research programs or lab-related internships. There are some programs at PITT and in the Pittsburgh area, but often their application information does not come out until the middle of the year. This is an interesting article: http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/medical-school-admissions-doctor/2014/02/18/elevate-medical-school-applications-with-research-experience.

- **Study Abroad – Healthcare Opportunities:** There are international opportunities that you might explore as well, which are affiliated with the University. Please visit Study Abroad to talk about international healthcare opportunities. Lauren Perri, Study Abroad: lap140@pitt.edu

- **Professional Development:** Sometimes there are different professional development opportunities that you can take part in, such as professional symposiums, workshops, and certification programs.

- **Student Organizations/Leadership:** In addition, many students join science-related student organizations on campus (e.g., Science Club), or perhaps a community-focused one, where they are helping in a nursing home or some similar endeavor. You may also consider leadership opportunities (e.g., Emerging Leaders programs or holding an office).

Research your programs of interest to determine what they look for in a competitive applicant!