

Seattle Central College Transfer Major Planning Guide

PRE-HEALTH SCIENCES

What path should I follow if I want to be a doctor, dentist, veterinarian, pharmacist, optometrist, or physical therapist?

To pursue a career in any of the health professions listed above, a student will need to complete a multi-year professional graduate degree after completing a bachelor's degree, or at least a certain number of undergraduate credits. For example, to become a doctor, students usually finish a bachelor's degree, attend medical school for four years, and then complete a residency, or period of internship. Students planning to apply to a professional program in health sciences can choose any major as undergraduates, as long as they complete the required prerequisites for the professional program. While biology is a popular choice, students majoring in the humanities and social sciences have as good a chance of being accepted to medical schools as those who major in the natural sciences. "Pre-health science" is often not offered as a major, but most universities have pre-health science clubs and advising services that can help students prepare to apply to graduate school for a medical profession.

How can I prepare at Seattle Central for a career in the health sciences?

Most professional health sciences graduate programs require a number of science classes as prerequisites. Depending on the program, these may include biology, biochemistry, anatomy and physiology, chemistry, organic chemistry, physics, and/or genetics. Many programs will require calculus and statistics; some will also have specific requirements in the social sciences or humanities. The list of prerequisites leads many students to choose to major in biology or chemistry, but it is possible to choose any major as long as the student can find time to complete the prerequisites. How students prepare for a career in the health sciences at Seattle Central will depend on the prerequisite requirements for their professional program and the major they decide to pursue once they transfer to a university.

A student planning to study biology for the bachelor's degree and then go to medical school should focus on completing prerequisites for the biology major and additional prerequisites for medical school as space allows. A student who plans to major in anthropology and then apply to pharmacy school should complete prerequisites for anthropology and fit pharmacy school prerequisites into general education requirements and electives. Any remaining prerequisites can be completed during the last two years of the bachelor's degree.

Students planning a career in the health sciences should choose a transfer degree based on the major they plan to study for their bachelor's degree. Advisors can help students look at prerequisite requirements for both the major and the professional program and choose the degree that will work best for them.

Consider an emphasis to your associate degree before you transfer, such as Global Studies, Global Health, Sustainable Agriculture or Equity and Social Justice. This can enhance your resume, personal experience and be something you put into your personal statement. You may even already have completed it without knowing it! For questions on how to plan your emphasis, please contact your advisor.

Tips for Success for Students Interested in Pre-Health Sciences

- Prerequisite requirements for health sciences graduate programs often include several sequences of science courses, for example, three-course sequences of biology and chemistry for majors. Check prerequisites for these courses, start early, and make sure to complete the entire sequence at the same college.
- Many health sciences graduate programs will require at least some calculus, or a combination of calculus and statistics. If your math skills are weak or it has been some time since you took math, do not put off getting started! Depending on your placement scores, you may need to take math for several quarters before you are ready to start calculus.
- Check prerequisites, admission requirements, and GPA requirements at your intended transfer university as well as your possible graduate programs early so you can be well-prepared to transfer.
- Check both university *admission* and *graduation* requirements at your preferred transfer university as a guide to choosing your classes. Some universities, for example, may require a year of foreign language as a graduation requirement. It may be much easier (and cheaper!) to meet that requirement at Seattle Central rather than waiting until later.

Where can I prepare for a health sciences graduate program in Washington?

You should be able to prepare to apply to a graduate program in the health sciences at almost any college or university in Washington, since the programs don't require a specific major. You may want to consider what kind of pre-health sciences advising services and student organizations the university offers. You can also ask about admission rates of applicants to graduate health sciences programs to get an idea of how well the university prepares its graduates to apply to professional graduate programs.

Next Steps:

- Research the universities you might like to attend for medical, pharmacy, veterinary, etc. school and find out what courses you need to take to be eligible to apply.
- Choose an undergraduate major that interests you and will allow you (either as part of the major or as electives) to take the prerequisite classes required by your professional program.
- Research the universities you are interested in attending and the prerequisite classes they require for your major.
- Meet with an advisor to choose a transfer degree, discuss prerequisites, and plan what classes you need to take in the next quarter or two.
- Explore the professional organizations in your area of interest for more information about education and career options.