

## Preparing for Your Pre-Professional Health Career Before You Get to USF

Preparation for Pre-Professional studies at USF involves preparation even at the high school or community college/transfer level. This guide serves to provide you with pathways to becoming a successful Pre-Professional student at USF. By all means not an exhaustive list, these are some important considerations that you can make before coming to USF. The list may focus on the pre-medical experience, but is applicable to other health professions such as pharmacy, dentistry, veterinary, physical therapy, and optometry.

### High School Students

It is never too early for you to begin your preparation for pre-professional school. Here are some simple steps for you to do while you are in high school that can help prepare you to be an outstanding Pre-Professional student at USF.

1. *Do research into the profession.* Get a solid foundation on the profession by learning about your chosen field. Many students are interested in medicine/dentistry/veterinary medicine, etc., but often do not understand what the job entails. Take some time to do this; many jobs vary from what you see on television or may have heard from a friend!
2. *Identify role models and mentors in the profession.* As part of your research into the profession, you should interview professionals in the field. Take this time to ask questions about their interest in the field, why they chose the field they are in, as well as the things they did to prepare to become a doctor.
3. *Volunteer and perform community service.* Serving others is one of the best ways to not only learn about a profession, but it is also the best way to meet like-minded individuals. You will have the opportunity to “try on” a profession before committing to it. Volunteering is also very helpful to others in need! While volunteering in any setting is appropriate, focus on medical settings (clinics, hospitals, health fairs, etc.) and get concrete experience in the field.
4. *Excel academically.* Even though you might be a few years or months away from college, that doesn't mean that you can wait until you get to USF to study hard. By the time you get to USF, you should already have a strong academic record as well as developed excellent study habits. Both will be important as you arrive on campus because your Pre-Professional career starts with the very first course you take at USF.
5. *Be well-rounded.* While you may love science and health care, be sure to be attentive to other areas of academics and current events/trends. As a doctor, you might have to consider how economics can affect a patient when assigning a care plan or how societal influences help guide decision making. You should be prepared to be a life-long learner, and not just in the area of your profession.
6. *Know yourself.* Understand what you are passionate about. What you are passionate about, you will excel in: academics, hobbies, etc. Be sure to take the time to learn about your strengths and areas of development. You will be challenged in many areas while a student at USF, and knowing what you are good at and what you need more support in will make you a more successful student.

## Community College/Four-Year Transfers

Carefully shaping your college experience can be helpful to preparing for your transfer to USF. As well as doing everything that a High School student in the list above, consider the following options for enhancing your college experience before you arrive at USF:

1. *Choose courses that will challenge you; focus on UC/CSU transferable courses.* These are the courses that are comparable to four-year school coursework. Not only will they expose you to “college level” coursework, you will also learn how to study, prepare, and learn like a four year college student. Many professors who teach in these courses also work at four-year schools!
2. *Participate in summer research programs designed for college students, or take opportunities to do research.* Many colleges, universities, and industries have summer research programs for students. These programs typically run from June-August, can be paid via stipend or hourly rate, and be eligible for elective units. These summer research programs provide you with valuable experience in the lab, expose you to scientist-practitioners and teach you critical thinking skills that will be important as you proceed with your education into more complex courses. Many summer research experiences are affiliated with pre-professional schools. This is a great way to see the schools, meet some current students, and participate in ground-breaking research.
3. *Join pre-professional health organizations on your campus.* Organizations on campus are a great way to meet other like-minded students. Many organizations host professional school visits and have opportunities for volunteer service already set up. Student organizations are a great way to get involved in community service and meet school representatives in a group.
4. *Attend graduate school fairs.* Every college hosts a graduate school fair every fall. This is an opportunity for you to dialogue with representatives from schools as well as get more information on what they are looking for in successful applicants. Many of the admission representatives read applications. Take advantage of this and bring your questions. During graduate school fairs, there are often many workshops sponsored by Career Services that are focused on the graduate school application process.
5. *Get clinical volunteer experiences.* Similar to the recommendation for High School students, it is imperative that you take the time to get clinical experience. The clinical experience can involve work with patients, doctors, and other medical professionals. Clinical experiences will allow you to get hands-on experience in the medical field and should provide clarity into your chosen area of study (i.e., oncology, pediatrics, orthodontics).

For more information on the Pre-Professional Health Committee at the University of San Francisco, please go to: <http://www.usfca.edu/pphc>