Parents’ Guide to Pre-Professional Studies at Purdue University

Congratulations on helping your son/daughter gain acceptance to one of the country’s finest universities—Purdue. Your student’s success was in no small part due to your support, persistence, and caring. As a student, your child is now in charge of making decisions that affect his/her education and future. This guide will help you understand a bit more about what it takes to be admitted in a professional program after graduation from Purdue so that you can support your student in his/her efforts.

- A major should be chosen based on the interests of the student. **Pre-med, pre-law, etc. are vocational interests—not majors.** Professional schools have no preference for major but do generally identify key classes or competencies that students must have (see our Career Guides for a list of coursework).
- Good grades will be required. For most professional programs a 3.0 is the minimum. Realistically, though, to be competitive in many programs a 3.6 to a 3.8 GPA or higher is needed.
- Students need to shadow someone in their chosen profession. You may be able to assist with this by helping them contact people you know in those fields.
- Students need to be involved in campus activities and community volunteering to gain leadership experience and to show that they are service oriented.
- Summer research and study abroad are great opportunities, but they may also have timing and financial aspects for which you will need to plan ahead.
- Encourage your student to get to know faculty, seek help with classes, and generally make the most of their time at Purdue.
- At Purdue your student has both an academic advisor in his/her major to help with choosing classes and picking careers, and a Pre-Professional Advisor. Your student has additional resources such as the Center for Career Opportunities and the Writing Lab. Encourage them to make use of all of these resources.
- Depending on the field your son or daughter wishes to pursue, he/she may need to take a standardized aptitude test. These are: MCAT for medical and podiatric schools, DAT for dental schools, OAT for optometry programs, PCAT for pharmacy, LSAT for law schools, and the GRE for many other health fields including PT, OT, PA, and Veterinary Medicine. These are intense exams and students are often under a lot of pressure before taking them.
- Professional programs require several letters of evaluation/recommendation. For medical (both MD and DO), dental, and podiatry applicants, we have a service for electronically sending out letters through the Center for Pre-Professional Advising. For other programs, letters are submitted directly online by the letter writers. Unfortunately, even if you or a family member are in the professional field yourself, most schools will not use a letter written by you on behalf of your child.
- Professional schools will appreciate students taking charge of all correspondence with their program. They also do not typically want parents involved during interview days.
- The process of preparing for and applying to professional schools can be difficult. Your student will appreciate your support as they learn to take responsibility for this process and their future.