

Parallel Planning

Setting your sights on a career in a professional field such as law, medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or other health related area is a challenging, yet attainable goal. The stark reality, however, is not all applicants to these highly competitive programs are accepted.

Why Do You Need a Parallel Plan?

- As they gain experiences that expose them to other career options, students sometimes change their goals.
- People in other fields may be your future colleagues when you work in your chosen field—it is helpful to learn more about what they do.
- If you are not immediately admitted to professional school, you will need to decide how much time, money, and effort you are willing to put in to reapplying. You may decide you would rather consider another field.
- At professional school interviews, you may be asked what your plan is if you are not admitted. You need an answer to this question.

Even if you feel you are building a competitive application, preparing other viable career paths as potential back-up are a must.

Developing Your Parallel Plan

- Consider whether you might find related careers just as fulfilling? For example, if you want to be an MD, you should also consider osteopathic medicine (DO) and podiatry (DPM). Physician assistant and nurse practitioner programs might also be areas to explore. Anesthesiologist assistant could be a fulfilling career as well.
- Many professional fields are available. A master's degree in public health might fit your interests. Medical informatics is a hot field if you like computers. You could always apply to the professional program you want after your master's is complete.
- Many pre-law students are hoping to help make people's lives better. They can often do this through graduate study in social work, public health, philanthropy, or public policy programs. Some of the new Master of Science in Law (MSL) programs at law schools allow students to gain a background in law while not investing the years and dollars in becoming a lawyer. A paralegal program could also be a great fit as paralegals move into a number of new areas of practice.

Before Applying or Re-Applying

- One of the most significant things to remember if you are applying at the end of your junior year is that your senior year is still important! If you do not get in by the end of your senior year, what has changed in your application? Many students resubmit what was essentially a failed application and end up with the same results. Keep your grades up during your senior year, gain more professional experience, and continue your volunteer work. No senioritis for you!
- Ask yourself: what can I do to improve my credentials and experience if I take a year off and apply (or apply again)?
- Many students are accepted when they apply again. So keep trying and continue to build your credentials. Be smart about your applications and critical about your qualifications so you can realistically plan for re-application.
- Discuss your parallel plan with your academic advisor and a pre-professional advisor.
- Meet with a CCO Career Consultant to develop a career plan, learn internship and job search strategies, review a résumé or cover letter, or explore graduate school.

Resources

- [Center for Career Opportunities](https://www.cco.purdue.edu/) <https://www.cco.purdue.edu/>
- [CCO Career Planning Handbook](https://www.cco.purdue.edu/Students/WhatWeOffer#CCOHandbook) <https://www.cco.purdue.edu/Students/WhatWeOffer#CCOHandbook>
- [Pre-Professional Advising](https://www.purdue.edu/preprofessional/) <https://www.purdue.edu/preprofessional/>
- [Explore Health Careers](https://explorehealthcareers.org/) <https://explorehealthcareers.org/>
- [Law School Admissions Council](https://www.lsac.org/discover-law) <https://www.lsac.org/discover-law>
- [US Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/) <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

