

Non- PreMed Essentials.

For other Health Professions and Veterinary Medicine.

How to become a competitive applicant to non-medical health profession schools while at Rhodes

This document is meant to be an all-inclusive guide to what you need to do from your first year through the application process and, hopefully, your acceptance to a non-medical health profession school. Please read, print, highlight and refer to this document as needed. Also see HPA timelines, links and other advice. We hope to update this document as needed. It is not meant to replace the important programming that we present and which you are expected to attend. Nor will emails with additional instructions or clarifications merely repeat the information here.

Many good books and sites are recommended. Our books and test sets are held under “Health Professions Advising” at the Barrett Reserve Desk.

Factors in Non-Medical Health Profession School Selection that matter from your start at Rhodes.

Health Profession schools and veterinary medicine schools work hard to look at applicants holistically based on their undergraduate career, preparation, and personal attributes.

They are asking:

Can you do the work in their program?

Will you do the program?

Should you be a member of your chosen health profession?

Can you do the work in their program? Do you have the prerequisite courses and the academic record in the sciences (if required), as well as in all of your courses? Did you do this course work while taking full loads, which may be a consideration in some programs? Can you perform well on standardized tests, especially the standardized admissions test (GRE, PCAT, OAT, or DAT), as well as future board licensure exams? Not everyone can handle the academic or standardized test work required by a health profession school.

Will you do the program? Have you juggled academic and pre-professional experience, along with work, service, and leadership (if appropriate)? Have you explored health careers and exposed yourself to all aspects of your chosen profession? Have you talked with health

practitioners candidly about their lives and experiences? Do you know what you are getting yourself into? Do you show a multi-year exploration and commitment to your chosen field? Have you read about current events in the profession and know what professional discourse is ongoing? Do you know about a specific school's programs? Do you work through obstacles, and are you persistent? Can you articulate this ability? Not everyone has the commitment or perseverance to overcome the time and rigor obstacles of a health profession school.

Should you be a member of your chosen profession? Do you have the appropriate attributes? Do you have good people skills and gain the trust of others easily? Are you honest and clear in communication? Have you lived a life making good choices without risky behaviors? Do you follow instructions well? Will you be a life-long learner willing to reinvent yourself as your chosen career changes throughout your life? Can you articulate why you want to join your chosen career, and why you are well suited to do so? Not every good and motivated student should become a health care professional.

Will you have professors and mentors who know you and will speak to these points when you apply to a health profession school? Students with stellar work and scores in all three areas above will still need someone to speak for them and to recommend them when writing an evaluation.

Early Preparation at Rhodes:

Becoming a competitive applicant starts from your first year at Rhodes. Be on the Health Profession Advising (HPA) email distribution list. Read HPA emails, come to our programming, and always work toward your goal. Regular meetings with the HPA Director will allow you to discuss your progress as you go with plenty of time for adjustments as needed. If your goal is to go to a health profession school directly after graduation, then you need to be ready to apply as a competitive candidate as early as May of your junior year. Some professions will open their applications in May, others will not open them until September. Join the student Health Professionals Society (HPS).

Your Academic Record at Rhodes – Non-medical health profession schools will look at a science GPA (for some) and overall GPA. They will have access to all of the transcripts from all of the schools you attended. For some schools, such as dental school and veterinary medicine, it may be important to take the majority of your prerequisites at your home institution. For programs such as nursing, it may not be as important. Often students take some summer work to allow foreign study and other activities and projects. Some prerequisites are found in easier form at other institutions or may not be offered at all at Rhodes; you can take these at other institutions. Discuss all of these career specific plans for specific courses with the HPA Director.

Health profession schools and admissions committee members can take into consideration the rigor of your program and life when evaluating your GPA. They can look at progress and understand less than stellar starts, as long as good progress and improvement to the level that

they expect follows. Whether they will consider you competitive in your third year after a weaker first year followed by four good semesters, or whether having your fourth year in hand to show six semesters of exemplary work is necessary will depend on the specifics of your situation. Some health profession programs do not use committees and have strict cut-offs on scores and grades that are made without consideration of the rigor of your program.

Some programs such as veterinary medicine and dentistry like to see evidence of time management skills that allow success with the rigors of academics coupled with multiple sciences with labs, research, work, sports, service, healthcare experience. Other programs such as nursing just want to see that the work was completed. Most students find that adjusting to the rigorous work at Rhodes, both in classwork and outside preparation, requires some adjustment or fine tuning of work habits. Please go visit and get to know your professors from the start. If you have trouble make changes in what you do and seek help. Rhodes has a number of services that provide help, including Ms. Kathleen Laakso in Academic Support services, Robert Dove in the Counseling Center, and Carol Casey in Student Affairs. [Click here](#) for contact. Also see Alan Jaslow's "How to Study Tips", which can be found in the [HPA Documents](#) (campus only, note if offsite, you must use an FTP program).

Some health profession schools will not accept C's in any of the prerequisite courses. Others will. You will need to study your specific program's requirement for several sample schools. Some programs will accept AP credit for the required science courses, others will not. If they do not, they will take the same hours from appropriate upper-level course work in the specific science department. Again, programs will differ on whether they accept work from a 2-year institution. If your program requires B's or above in prerequisites and you earn a grade lower than a B- , you can remediate this by repeating the course at Rhodes, or another accredited four-year institution (as needed), or take appropriate upper-level work in the area and receive a grade of B- or above.

Rhodes has the courses to fulfill requirements at all Veterinary, Dental, Pharmacy, Optometry, Podiatric Medicine, Chiropractic, and Public Health programs. We have courses to fulfill all of the prerequisite courses for some Nursing, Physician Assistant, and Physical Therapy Programs. There are other private and many state institution programs in Nursing, PA and PT that only accept Human Anatomy and Physiology, which we do not directly offer at Rhodes. Programs such as Kinesiology, Occupational Therapy, Nutrition, Anesthesia Assistant, Speech Pathology and Audiology all require some technical course work that we do not provide.

Programs differ on the amount of prerequisite course work that must be done before application to the program vs. before matriculation.

It will take a bit of bookkeeping to stay on track with your specific program's requirements. Be sure to come to our HPA programming and have regular meetings with the HPA Director to keep you on track. You will want to start looking at a few schools, including your state institution, to see specific requirements.

Most health profession schools do not require a specific major. However, it is hard to obtain all of the sciences required for one pharmacy school and most veterinary medicine programs

without being a science major. Most programs want you to be able to communicate well and think critically. A few programs require statistics, such as schools of public health. Several require or recommend public speaking (our, Voice and Diction for Public Speaking – INTD 240). Other programs, such as dentistry and veterinary medicine, recommend a few business course or more. Courses such as sculpture can help to improve and demonstrate your three-dimensional perception and the fine motor skills required for dentistry. Any program dealing with people may require or recommend a psychology course like our Psychology-150. Each school and program will have different average acceptance statistics. Usually to be competitive, you want to be near or above the central average or median values. The bottom thresholds, if given, are often going to apply to special applicants or maybe our average applicants of smaller programs and school. Factors such as how you've finished and special circumstances during your undergraduate years contribute to acceptances with less than average statistics. Applicants from underrepresented groups and those with commitments to work in underserved locations or professional niches are more highly sought by health profession schools to fulfill the needs of our changing demographics and disparities in healthcare availability.

Most health profession schools have become much more competitive in the past few years. Make sure that you are on track with needed benchmarks. Stay open to the wide range of career options available.

Getting to Know Professors: It's important for all students to meet their professors early in the term. For you it will be critical to get to know your professors each term and by the end of each year have one or more possible writers for your future letters of evaluation. This is one of your responsibilities. Think about and keep in touch with some professors so that they will be able to say that they know you well, allowing them to evaluate you credibly.

Living Well and with Good Behavior: Some non-medical health profession school applications require self-disclosure of any criminal or social regulation actions. Many schools now have criminal background checks at some point in the application process or when state licensure occurs. One can expect many programs or future job sites to have some form of drug testing as well. On one level, health profession schools want to make sure that you do not have a criminal background that could prevent future healthcare licensure. On another level, they want to see if you make good decisions and avoid risky behaviors. How will you deal with decisions about the welfare of others or behave around prescription drugs? Admissions deans always say that early youthful indiscretion and minor social violations can be overcome by years of clean behavior and demonstrated maturity. However, if your mother ever told you that one poor decision can change your whole life and block some goals, this was good advice.

Honesty is one of those traits we expect of our healthcare workers. Respect for others is also expected. How you go about your life at Rhodes inside and outside of the classroom is visible to others. When you ask a teacher for a Letter of Evaluation (LOE), he or she will write it based on his or her observations of you and maybe in conference with colleagues. You don't want to have a reputation as a person who parks illegally, throws trash, comes to class late, is rude, acts out, etc. This doesn't mean that you can't be a normal young adult, but if you are truly a good match with the practice of healthcare, you need to hold yourself to different standards than some of

your peers. Many health profession schools and society do this and, hopefully, this is who you are anyway.

You have all heard about pictures from Facebook and other social networks being available to future employers and schools. Your site shouldn't show bad behavior and poor judgment. Be sure to keep your pages and tagged photos policed. Being private isn't as important as being polite. You never know who is a friend of a friend, where they work or where they may be working someday. Always ask yourself how you want schools and future patients, clients, or customers to know you. Some internet actions never disappear. Could some of those celebrities with outlandish photos ever be taken seriously as a pharmacist or physician's assistant?

Are you a good team member? Do you work well with others? Do others like working with you? Do you communicate well? Take instruction well? Work independently but are not hesitant to seek answers from others when needed? In most healthcare professions, you will be a part of many teams, while you are learning in professional school. Although you may later have a solo practice or business in a small town and be very successful on your own, during your years at your health profession school you will be expected to be good, contributing, trusted team member. Therefore admission departments are looking for those good team members they need to make their program a success.

Healthcare and Professional Experience. Most healthcare programs state that experience is a requirement. A few, such as PT and Veterinary Medicine, want a formal record of your time logged with different practitioners and practices. Even for schools that only "highly recommend" it, experience really is a critical requirement to be competitive. For most professions, you should begin healthcare experience no later than the start of your sophomore year. Some careers will be satisfied with a start just a year before your application. Some programs may not have a set number of hours but they want a long time line and enough total exposure to reveal your commitment to and understanding of good professional and clinical behaviors. Experiences can vary widely and may not always need to be with practitioners in your chosen profession to be relevant. For some professions, you should see and discuss both the clinical and the business side of a practice. The more areas within a chosen field that you can see the better, but you should always have general experience. For example, orthodontistry and periodontistry are two specialties that a dentist may choose. However, you should have experience with a general dentist as well, since all specialists start with general training.

You should keep a journal of all of your experiences, noting dates, times and what you saw. Ask every professional in your chosen field that you can what the best thing is about his or her job, what the worst thing is about his or her job, and ask what else you should be asking. Try to write how you feel about your experience. What did you see the practitioner do that you liked or that you did not like? These records of events, feelings, and changes in how you react and feel about what you see will be critical when you later write essays about your journey and understanding of your chosen profession for your application. It's hard for some, but be sure early on that you aren't just journaling facts. You'll want to show introspection about your journey and growth down the road.

Experience can be found in the form of a formal Rhodes internship, job experience, class experience, or volunteer experience and shadowing. The more hands-on the experience is (for you and your mentoring practitioners), the better.

If you are interested in working in underserved communities or with underserved populations, you will want to show evidence to that effect by seeking out such experiences now.

A great advantage Rhodes has is its Memphis location with a wide number of healthcare practitioners and community partners with whom you can gain experience.

Check the following sites to find potential medical experience venues:

[Kinney Program](#)

[Career Services](#)

[Chaplain's Office](#)

[Fellowships](#)

Continue your experience through your application year. If by chance you are not accepted based on your current record, the next application will include what you've done lately and how you've continued to exhibit your commitment and enhance your experience.

Ease with Others. Health profession schools are looking for applicants who, in addition to everything else, put people at ease and communicate with ease. Being part of a healthcare profession requires these client/patient/customer/team skills as well as the ability to act professional.

Other Attributes: Depending on your career path, admissions personnel may be looking at your community service, leadership, team work, and/or research skills. This all varies with programs. Be sure to read their admissions literature and visit their online sites.

Preparation for a standardized Exam used for Admissions: GRE, DAT, OAT, & PCAT.
Also a start on when to apply.

The ideal time to take the test(s) required for admission to your programs depends on when you plan to apply and when you are prepared for the test. Few people will be prepared to take the test earlier than their junior year; most students will take the exam in the spring/summer after their junior year. If your application cycle opens in the spring, it is best if you can complete your application and exam to receive an early review. Most programs have rolling admissions so this is a critical point as most seats fill at the start of a cycle. If your program's cycle starts in the fall, then you have more time to schedule your exam and still be at the start of the cycle. Do not use deadlines for applications as a planning tool. Except for a very few programs or schools, it will be too late for most schools and programs if you apply late in the cycle.

Your GPA and standardized tests are the first important filters for the application process. Although there are exceptions, many programs will not have holistic applicant review until after basic benchmarks have been met.

The different tests have different content, and all of this can be found at their appropriate sites as well as in the study guides on reserve at Barrett (HPA at the reserve desk). The DAT does not assume that you've taken physics. The GRE does not expect science coursework. If a test assumes an introductory science sequence, it may cover material that you did not cover in your courses. However, this content should be available in the introductory textbooks that you used. Therefore, you may want to keep these textbooks to review, study, and learn throughout your years at Rhodes.

These exams are given throughout the year. Some tests will give you the results at the end of the exam, while others will post results within two weeks. Testing organizations and testing centers have specific rules to follow and different registration procedures.

Any fee waivers and financial assistance criteria for these tests can be found at their sites, but documentation and application for such assistance will need to be done in advance.

These tests usually have different sub sections. Balance among the section's scores is valued, and for some programs, the total of all subsection scores is important. For other programs and tests, there may be summary statistics that are most important.

Experience has shown that an organized and systematic review of the science and other topics tested can result in a considerable, sometimes dramatic, improvement in scores. Many students will have taken the relevant undergraduate courses for tested subjects as many as two or three years before the test. It is also important to practice writing on a topic for 30 minutes in an organized and clear manner if your exam includes a writing sample or timed essay. Most of these exams reward those who can remember great amounts of material and those with excellent analytical and reasoning skills. There is a great deal to review, but it can be done. Some of our students have reviewed throughout their years at Rhodes and take one month for concentrated study. Some take an entire summer (but then have late score reports for most schools). Some students study on their own, or in groups. Some students sign up for exam preparation courses but most study on their own and do fine

The students who say they thought a commercial study preparation course was worth the money said that they would not have studied systematically without paying for such a course and its schedule. Some said that they would not have studied unless someone had been paying that amount of money. There are many fine review resources available as books, sets, online help, and material on reserve in Barrett. Most folks use one or more of many of these resources. Practice sample questions and test overviews are often available as well. Rhodes Career Services offers mini practice exams for the GRE (and sometimes DAT) through Kaplan as well.

The following discussion should not be considered an endorsement of any private test preparation course over your own or group study for such tests. This discussion should not be considered an endorsement of any specific company over any other test preparation organizations. Kaplan offers DAT and GRE preparation courses in Memphis. Kaplan offers a fee reduction based on need. Generally, if you receive government funding for school, such as a Pell grant, you can receive a 40-50% reduction. Rhodes has been awarding need-based scholarships for one or more of these courses per year to students as donated by Kaplan. Other

commercial preparation reviews are recommended by some students nationwide and have on-line tutorials.

In general, you don't want to retake a standardized test unless you need to. Health profession schools vary in how they handle repeated tests. For example, some schools may weigh the most recent, while others may average scores. Applicants are only allowed to take the DAT three times in their lifetime. That being said, many applicants will retake their admission exam to improve scores.

Your Letters of Evaluation (LOE) - And the Rhodes Pre-Application Form

Health profession schools read and consider LOEs very carefully. They are an important part of the review process. Schools want honest evaluations that critically describe an applicant's attributes, capabilities and experience.

For Dental, Optometry, and Podiatric Medical schools and a few individual Pharmacy and other schools Rhodes will solicit your LOEs and put them together into a packet with Rhodes-specific information to upload or mail to your application services or individual schools as directed. Currently, for most other programs and other schools, you will arrange to have your letters sent or uploaded directly from the individual LOE writers to the appropriate application services or schools.

The positions and number of required LOE writers will vary by program and school. As always, read the school and application service Web sites for more information and discuss this issue with the HPA Director early in the process. Some programs want two or three science professors to write. In these cases, they want those science professors to be from sciences that are most like your future coursework at their school. Some programs require a health professional to write for you. Some want input from all health practitioners that you have dealt with in your experience.

Whether or not you will have Rhodes handle your letters, we ask that you complete the Rhodes Pre-Application Form. This will allow us to advise you and future students better.

If you plan to apply at the end of your junior year for health profession school matriculation in the fall after you graduate, identify the names of LOE writers early and throughout the winter of your junior year. Before asking professors, be sure to talk with the HPA Director about your possible writers and see [Comments on requesting letters of recommendation](#) (HPA documents, campus only, must use FTP program if offsite).

When you have settled on professors and clinical mentors, and they have agreed to your request, you can submit these names with your Rhodes Pre-Application Form, along with a waiver or non-waiver of your rights to see these letters. You are not required to waive your rights, but most health professional schools put much more weight on letters which the student has waived his or her rights to read. In that case, they are considered more candid and thorough in evaluation.

It is your responsibility to supply your writers with any materials that you want them to have or which they request. We will not pass on any of this information.

If we assist with your letters:

During the school year we give letter writers four weeks to complete these letters. We will need letters well before you apply; usually by the end of May at the latest if your cycle opens in May or June. We need letters early no matter when you decide to put in your application. (Do **not** confuse your LOE writers by telling them that you won't get your exam score back until, or maybe won't apply until, June/July etc. We need their letters earlier, and we need for you to tell them this. Reassure your LOE writers that letters are required by Rhodes early in the process!) This allows us to finish all of our letters at the start of your cycle, so that folks who put in early applications, as recommended, have letters waiting. All of our dates are planned to help you, the applicant.

If you are using AADSAS for a dental school application we will upload your packet electronically.

For most programs of Podiatric Medicine and Optometry, we currently upload our final and assembled packet to VirtualEvalsClient or VEclient. This site then allows access to appropriate application services or individual schools to download the packet electronically. You, the application services and the schools are all notified of the upload. Schools may or may not download immediately. Some will wait to see if your scores are competitive before downloading.

For other programs, your schools will send you a request for your letters or tell you that you need to have letters sent when you submit your application. Be sure to pass these requests on to the HPA Director so that we can send paper copies as requested. If any schools give you an option for an electronic upload of a committee packet, be sure to use that option.

If you really don't want the HPA Director to assemble your letters, one of the other members of the Health Professions Advising Committee (HPAC) can do this. The Director will still have to sign the letter, but the other HPAC member can assure you that the composite letter was assembled without modification or additional comment beyond campus participation.

If we do not assemble your letters:

If you are dealing with programs and schools where you get individuals to supply letters, you will be able to offer electronic upload options to your writers in some cases. In others you will want to supply your authors with stamped and completely addressed envelopes to use.

Provide needed forms and instructions on how to handle each letter. Print out a program description for each school as well for your LOE writers. Some programs will have a school-specific evaluation form that must be attached to an individual's letter. All may have different due dates. A few may request that you have the LOE returned to you to send in with all of your LOEs and application materials in a single mailing. If this is the case your

author is asked to return the sealed envelope with his/her signature and date written across the flap seal. Some professors may not wish to do this. Those programs asking for this method can and do receive these individually mailed letters, even though they don't mention it in their directions. Any addresses for the programs should also be given to the LOE writer in an email, so he/she can copy and paste address blocks into her/his formal letter as needed.

On the Rhodes Pre-Application Form (letter request form) we ask for a tentative list of schools. When you turn in this form you may not have decided on all of your schools or made final decisions. Please email the HPA Director your final list of schools to which you did apply, whether we are involved with your letter process or not.

Where to Apply – Deciding on Schools

Although you will not be asked to finally decide on schools until you actually submit an application, it is very important to consider schools throughout your undergraduate career, especially before the names are needed for your application. Typically students start doing the harder work on school study and finalizing their choices during their junior year (for those wishing to matriculate the fall after graduation) if his or her chosen profession opens their application cycle in May or June. If your application cycle opens in September, you will have more time.

Start with your large state institution(s) at major teaching hospitals. If you are applying to a program such as Podiatric Medicine or Optometry, all available programs are at private schools and there are only a small number nationwide. (A program such as veterinary medicine is usually pursued only at one's state's program, if your state has a program. For nursing, PA, PT, and pharmacy, there are numerous programs at a mix of state institutions and private schools throughout the country, large and small. Start with ones at major teaching hospitals or associated with a large medical hospital center. These will offer the most diverse interactions and exposure to possible careers. Many small schools may offer such partnerships with teaching centers, or community hospitals, but there are more small schools with smaller, less diverse programs. If you already know that you are best suited for a specific niche in a profession and a program feeds to that niche, then your selection may not depend on other surrounding healthcare. Some programs have national organizations or portals to link and identify all programs (see our helpful URL's for non-med). An ADEA info booklet on dental programs, Podiatric Info booklet, Optometry, Veterinary Medicine, and Pharmacy program guides are on reserve at Barrett Library. Many schools and programs do not have single portals, so working the Web and searching with a search engine may be your best way to find those programs.

Even though you will find school-specific information in guide books and on similar Web sites, you will always need to visit the school's own admissions site to learn of the latest requirements and recommendations. We have found inconsistencies between a school's site and guide sites or books. Most inconsistencies, we are sure, are due to changes between the guide preparation and procedure change, but some can be because schools are asked specific questions and those questions only when guides are prepared. Sometimes critical information is not solicited in a way that can be communicated clearly by the guides. Be sure to double check residency requirements, if any, when required courses must be taken and the number of required hours.

How many schools you apply to will vary by program and by your circumstances. We always recommend applying to several if at all possible, including some that may be safety backups.

Although we can tell you where past alumni have gone, it should not restrict you from applying to other institutions. We are a small school and there are many schools where our students rarely apply due to residency requirements or regional attraction. It may be useful to talk with recent alumni who interviewed at or went to different schools. Please ask the HPA Director for contacts.

Your application to a Health Profession School

Many of the health professions now have application services, though many schools still work independent of these services. Check at the school's admissions Web site, not just the application service pages, for specifics on your options for application methodology. If you apply to schools using one of the following services, you will find complete instructions at their site which should be read well in advance. The opening dates below will change from year to year. Schools not using the service will have their own application dates. Be sure to research these openings for your cycle and schools.

TMDSAS – Currently opens May 1, for use for application to Texas state system, for use for application to Texas state system dental and veterinary medicine programs.

Nursing CAS - Will be initiated in the spring of 2010. It is proposed as a service for some BSN and MS and clinical PhD programs.

ADDAS – Currently opens June 1, for use for application to many Dental Schools (award the DDS or DMD degree)

PharmCAS – Currently opens June 1, for use for application to many pharmacy schools (award the PharmD degree)

VMCAS – Currently opens June 4, for use for application to Veterinary Medical Schools (award the DVM degree)

PTCAS – Currently opens July 15, for use for application to physical therapist programs (award the Dr. PT degree)

OptomCAS – Currently opens July 15, for use for application to optometry programs (award the OD degree).

SOPHAS – Currently opens Sept 1, for use for application to public health programs (award the MSPH degree)

AACPMAS – Currently opens Sept 1, for use for application to all podiatric medicine programs (award the DPM degree).

There are very good instruction guides, tips, and FAQ's at each of these application sites. Be sure to read the appropriate cycle's information when it becomes available.

When all of these application services open they allow users to start an account and to start filling in data, printing transcript and LOE packet requests, before submission and payment. If you paid for an application in a prior year some or all of your entered information may be available for the new cycle. If you did not submit an application the previous year, then any work done in a previous year's application will be lost when the new cycle opens. This is why it is important to work offline for long essays and to be sure you have opened an account for the correct cycle's application. Be sure to investigate what you need to receive a fee waiver or a reduction if you are in financial need. If letter perfect, your goal should be to apply as early as possible to an application service. This can be done before you know your test scores for some services. For others such as AADSAS they do not want submissions before your test scores are available.

One advantage of an early application is that most schools have a rolling admissions process and book limited interview spots on a first-come, first-served basis. It is also financially advantageous to apply early, as there are more interview dates available and you may be able to make travel plans more easily without paying for premium fares or to face inconvenient timing of trips.

The first thing you should do once the application service opens is print a transcript request. Do this for each US college and university where you earned credit, even if those credits were transferred to Rhodes. Request that these transcripts be sent AFTER CURRENT TERM grades are recorded (if the transcript is from a school you are currently attending, i.e., Rhodes). For Rhodes, this means that if you are current student, you can print this request (if found with your application service or school instruction) and/or prepare a Rhodes registrar's request form before you leave at the end of the term. Highlight or circle that the registrar is to wait for the current term's grades to be recorded before sending.

Coursework to enter on the application. Some applications have a section of the application which will request that you enter all of your colleges and courses per term. Follow their instructions. [AP courses are entered in the semester they are recorded on your Rhodes transcript]. In most cases it is best that you have your unofficial transcript(s) in front of you while completing this section of the application.

Experience and Significant Activities Most applications ask for a varied number of these. Some will want to know specific hours worked and ask for contacts to verify (your journal should help with this). Some will barely have room for a title or subject, while others will allow you to discuss what the title or experience involved. You do not need to list all experiences and activities unless asked. Do not repeat explanation with text in other sections. Readers will have your entire application to read. If you talk about an experience in your personal statement or in answers to other questions on your application, make sure that it can be found in terms of dates and times in your list. For example, when reading in your personal statement that you shadowed Doctor Jones during your sophomore year, the reader should be able to find this item in your list of "most significant activities" and learn how many hours and hours/week this included.

Your personal statement. As discussed in our yearly HPA programming, the personal statement is extremely important in many applications. In applications without a single long statement,

there are usually a number of prompts that lead you to answer questions in the same way as a single statement might read. These essays provide the schools with opportunities to make evaluations about you as well as your writing skills. Along with LOEs, the personal statement is one of the only ways that schools are introduced to how you reflect and think before they meet you, if you are invited for an interview. Hopefully, you have been working on your statement for awhile. Some applications may focus on asking **what** you know about your chosen field instead of **how** you got to this place.

You should carefully check the final version for spelling, punctuation, grammatical errors, and organization. There is a lot of advice available to you on writing a personal statement. Be sure to look at “Write for Success” by NAAHP and other advice books [on reserve at Barrett Library, in the HPA holdings].

There is a lot of differing advice about how to write your personal essay. Please know that there is not one way to write your personal statement or a single correct essay, unless a specific prompt or direction is requested during the application process. Start early on several different essay themes or topics. This is a way to avoid getting bogged down in writing the one perfect essay. Also, the pieces that you don’t use may be perfect for the additional required primary or possible secondary application essays requested later in the application process. Keep working on these extra paragraphs and different paragraphs after you have finished your personal statement so that they will be ready to paste into your secondary applications, if your programs use secondary applications.

At Rhodes, you can get help with mechanics and voice from the writing center. There is also an interdisciplinary course, called ID 331 “Introduction to Postgraduate Scholarships,” which is a way to work on your personal statement, although they often recommend stylized essays that do not allow healthcare programs to get to know you as a person as well as they want. The HPA Director will read your statement once for style and voice. Be sure to have the HPA Director read your essay(s) early before you are too wedded to a finished essay. Have many other worthy editors (friend, students, professors, family) help you check for voice, grammar and continuity issues.

After sitting through many discussions with fellow advisees, health profession school deans, and admissions staff, as well as several mock admissions committee meetings, we have learned a few key points that should apply to writing all personal essays. All of this is in recommended books and other sources, but important points for all health profession schools are listed below.

Schools do read your essay very carefully.

It should be truthful and accurate.

It should be well written and without punctuation or spelling errors.

Most health profession programs are looking to learn whether you can communicate complex thought and introspection, not just write a biography or a list of events.

Anything that you put in the essay is fair game for discussion at interviews.

Health profession programs want to get a sense of who you are and how you got to this point or what you know about your chosen career (varies by discipline). They want to see that you have thought about your “journey”.

They do not want a repeat of events and experiences that you have already listed. However, the essay could be a chance to further explain what you did in one (or more) of these experiences and what it meant to you and your journey. Again, they want introspection.

If you say that you are committed to a life of helping folks through healthcare, you must support your claim with your experiences. They look for support of your statements in your listed experiences.

You may use many topics and approaches.

This is an opportunity to explain a low grade or semester. However, you must communicate how you have grown and succeeded beyond this weak spot, and your record needs to support this growth. Be positive, not negative. Never use an angry voice, or one that a reader might read as angry. This is a place where any questionable legal or social actions and subsequent growth need to be explained. Again explain, and discuss your post event growth and maturity. Don’t make excuses.

The above paragraph can refer to a life-changing event as well. Whether you wish to discuss such an event or condition may depend on whether it is needed to explain a bad semester, or your “journey.” However, if it is in your essay it is fair game for the interview. Things you do not want to discuss could be presented by a trusted letter writer instead, the content of which legally should not be revealed during an interview.

Strong beliefs may be critical to your journey and of course they may actually not affect your tolerance of others and ability to be compassionate and act professionally beyond those beliefs, but if your record does not support such tolerance and ability to be truly empathetic to others with different beliefs, you may be viewed as a risk. Remember any number of folks will be reading these letters who have their own beliefs or definition of a professional practitioner’s manner with others.

Don’t use overly cute trick hooks in the first paragraph or famous quotes unless this is really the way you communicate. Remember, the readers want to know who you are. They may use this essay for your interview, and past students have been asked about such quotes and authors. Readers will not be happy to conclude that someone else wrote your essay or seemed to. I know that there is a lot of advice that seems to differ from this point, but if you do a good job of introducing yourself, showing something about who you truly are, and how you got to this point, it will be to your best benefit.

If this is your second application for this profession, you should address what has changed and what you’ve done to become more competitive this time. Schools where you applied

the previous year will use your previous essay to compare and to see why you are more competitive this year. Always be positive and explain, but do not make excuses.

Work off-line in a word processor to write and edit this statement. However, many application services currently count all characters and do not allow for anything other than simple text. Therefore, before cutting and pasting into this section, be sure to save as a .txt document and remove any extra spacing and blanks. Indents, if desired, will be counted as spaces. Blank lines, I believe, count as characters. Other services will allow you to upload a Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF document. Some schools want you to submit all materials as hard copy. Be sure to read the relevant application service documents about this.

The schools where you apply. If you add a school to apply to after your original notification to the HPA Director, be sure to remember to let the HPA Director know by email. If you decide to no longer pursue application to a given school, be sure to let the HPA Director and the individual schools know. Notifying the schools is polite as it saves them from keeping further track of your records. Remember that you may be coming back to apply to these programs for a fellowship or job later, so good manners are important. Whether or not you can formally remove a school from your application on an application service will vary. Check their instructions.

Secondary Applications and Requests

Secondary applications or additional materials may be requested by some programs after a primary application. Some state schools with secondary requests will send all residents a request for additional essays or materials. Some schools only ask for secondary applications from students who meet some set statistical requirements. Some schools, after careful consideration, only invite highly competitive applicants to submit their secondary application. You should be ready to return any and all secondary applications within two weeks of the request to show your interest, keenness, and ability to manage time and fulfill demanded tasks. Some programs will not request any materials beyond that requested with your original application.

It helps if you already have these new essays written or started. Keep false starts, alternative ideas, and cut paragraphs from your personal essay. These could be used here. Keep working on these after you have turned in your primary applications. Any secondary application essays should not repeat previous material, although you can go into more depth on a topic introduced before. Some of you will have new events or things to add that happened after you put in your primary application. If explanations are needed at this point, again be positive and explain, don't make excuses. Most secondary requests will direct answers.

Some secondary applications will ask, "Is there anything else you want us to know?" You should always have something to add. If not asked elsewhere, you should speak to why their specific institution and program is of interest and/or a good fit for you. If you know this program is your first choice, be sure to say this. You should only add this if it is true; for most students, this may not become obvious until he or she has visited several institutions for interviews.

If a secondary request comes after application via an application service, there may be another fee required. Again, waivers and reduction are available under certain criteria.

If you decide not to pursue a school's application at this time, be sure to let the school and the HPA Director know. Don't simply forgo the submission of a secondary application.

The Interview and Visit

Not all programs recommend, require, or allow interviews. The following is for those who are invited for a visit. Once you are invited to one, the interview becomes perhaps the most important way that a program will evaluate you as a person and decide whether they think you have the qualities they expect in a future health professional. Interview times are limited and there are many more capable applicants than there are time slots allowed for interviews. You are expected to come when a school invites you even if it does not allow time to find the best airfare or is at an inconvenient time. If you cannot make a time or wish to try for another time, you can ask once, politely. If a second time offer is much later, it is not in your best interest to make this change simply for convenience or economy. Sometimes there are no other options.

The earliest interviews we've seen were scheduled for the beginning of September, for early applicants. Most interviews stretch through the fall. A few programs will continue interviews through the winter, though if they have rolling admissions these may only be for a wait list position.

The actual interview is conducted in different formats at different schools. Most schools utilize a "one-on-one" personal interview with from one to as many as five or six different interviewers. Others use a "group interview." Personal interviews are often quite unstructured, lasting from less than 30 minutes to more than one hour. Many are like pleasant visits in which just about anything might be discussed.

Be prepared and know what to expect. Read from your various sources about interviews and check out http://www.studentdoctor.net/interview/interview_read.asp for an infinite list of questions asked at various places for some programs, such as pharmacy, optometry, veterinary medicine, audiology, and podiatric medicine. [warning: Student doctor.net has many hyper blog posters and may give extreme or unwarranted advice in other blog topics. I recommend it as a source of additional interview questions and how interview days are run at specific schools.] At a minimum, you should be able to make eye contact and put your interviewer at ease. You should be able to articulate clearly why you want to go into your chosen profession and how you are a good fit for the career and with their program. Further, you should be able to discuss and explain any application materials or content, short of your confidential LOE's. Your research or service may be discussed. Sometimes applicants are asked about the future of the profession, or a public debate that concerns the profession. Try to be somewhat conversant with the public and business side of healthcare (HMOs, socialization, insurance, pet insurance, dental coverage).

To prepare, review your record. Be prepared to address questions regarding your GPA, science average, standardized test scores and grades in specific courses. Be prepared to discuss what you will do if you are not admitted. The key to answering this question is to insist (if honest) on how determined you are to continue trying. Admissions Committees will question your determination if you immediately provide some alternative plan that would make you equally happy, rather

than insisting that you would continue to apply in a future cycle. Many interviewers ask this question

Be somewhat familiar with the specific school before the interview or visit. Some applicants appear naive or uninformed about a school to which they have applied to spend years of their life. You should have some idea of the particular strengths of the school such as special programs in teaching, opportunities for research or innovative programs for their students. This information may be gained in a short conversation with a friend who is currently enrolled, or it may be obtained from the school catalogue or online. Be sure to glance at the school's teaching philosophy and specifically whether they have special goals as to the type or specialty career goals of students they hope to train.

.One thing many health profession schools such as pharmacy, nursing and physician assistant are looking for during this process is whether you will be a contributing, dependable team member during your apprenticeship years as a student and perhaps beyond. Although you might plan to live a more isolated life eventually or have a solo practice, during your school years you will be part of various teams who will depend on your free communication and ability to work in a group.

Do practice interviews, or mock interviews. These should be arranged through [Career Services](#). These can include appropriate wardrobe, makeup and hair style as well as content. If you have an early application in May, you may want to schedule a mock interview before you leave in May, or schedule one for as soon as you return to Rhodes in August.

A good interview will determine what makes the applicant "tick," how well he/she relates to others, and how well-informed he/she is on current events, particularly regarding events that will have an impact on healthcare and its practice. Many aspects of healthcare demand that a person be articulate and have well-developed interpersonal skills.

Most experienced interviewers try not to place unnecessary stress on an applicant during the interview, but on some occasions an interviewer will purposely ask questions or exhibit attitudes that seem designed to stress a student. Applicants must be prepared to answer some rather personal questions about their own background, beliefs, and experiences, as well as some general moral and ethical questions. This is known as the "encounter session" format. It doesn't seem to be common and may not always be intentional. A mature student will not become unduly flustered or antagonistic if subjected to a stressful situation, but will remain composed and continue to answer questions in a candid and straight-forward manner.

Some schools now use formally trained interviewers and prescribed interviews. These may seem cool and less engaging. Don't fret; assume this is the type of interview, if it isn't chatty and friendly. Connection to the individual interviewer isn't as important in these formal interviews. Applicants should be aware that they may very well obtain an excellent rating from a person who may speak in disagreement or seem unfriendly. They may also have a poor rating from the "friendly doctor" with whom they had such a pleasant visit.

If you want something revealed in your application but not discussed at an interview, an LOE writer can address it. These letters are confidential and should not be available or on the table for discussion during interviews. Please discuss this strategy with the HPA Director as you may be best served by more openly discussing some topics and allowing them for the interview.

Interview Wardrobe: Most interview advice sources will give tips on what to wear. They are usually too prescribed. Any office interview attire that shows you are serious and professional is more important than borrowing or buying an ill-fitting suit or one in which you are not comfortable. Extreme hair, piercings, and other style statements that would draw undue attention away from your professionalism, if you were a practitioner in the field of choice, are best left at home. This is really the point when it comes to appearance. Will a patient, parent, or owner, deal with you and respect you for your professional knowledge and manner or will he/she first spend a few minutes thinking about your hair/piercing/etc? Most alumnae talk about the importance of wearing shoes in which you can walk and be comfortable for a long period. Break in those new shoes before your visit. This is good advice for all.

You are my First Choice.

If this is true of a single school, be sure to state this. This may be asked on an application or during an interview. If it isn't asked and you can truly say that a school is your first choice, be sure to send a letter stating this to be added to your folder. Repeating this message, if honest, is also important. For some it may be already stated in the application, but when writing a follow-up thank you to an interview one could say "and from everything I saw over my visit, Big-U continues to be my first choice for dental school." This may be even more important when private schools know that you could spend less money going to your state school and wonder if you would accept their invitation to matriculate. They want to make up their class as early, easily, and securely, just as Rhodes does during its admissions process, to yield high quality students and a high yield of acceptances from offered spots.

If you do not have a first choice, do not mislead a school by saying so.

Financing a Your Health Profession Education.

The AAMC has created a great Web resource to help premed students review and prepare to finance their schooling. Although these pages are designed for medical school students, I find that most of their general advice is great for anyone applying to a health profession school. This resource can be found at the [AAMC FIRST](#) site. Most health profession schools will have very helpful financial aid offices and most guides have brief discussions of financing.

Health profession schools recognize that most students will not be able to pay for their professional education completely from family financial resources. Every school has a Student Financial Aid Office that will assist accepted students to arrange a financial aid package if such help is needed. The majority of students currently enrolled in U.S. health profession schools receive some form of financial aid. Aid is not awarded until a student has been accepted for admission, but it is not necessary or desirable to wait for an acceptance to apply. An application for financial aid should be filed with the Student Financial Aid Office between January and April

at most schools. Students applying after this time may find that most of the less expensive loan funds are committed. Even if you are waiting on an acceptance decision, talk with Financial Aid officers to make sure that you apply for aid on time.

Some students finance their dental, nursing and some other education through Service Awards. These are commonly the Armed Forces Health Professions Scholarships or National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Scholarships. There is also an Indian Health Services Scholarship available to Native Americans or Alaska natives. Some communities help with funding to attract future practitioners, but these opportunities are harder to find. Some hospitals and practices help to repay loans when a practitioner is hired.

Students accepted into the Armed Forces Health Professions program are commissioned as a second lieutenant or ensign in the inactive reserve of the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Army, or the U.S. Navy. The scholarship pays all tuition, fees and books plus a living allowance. The student must serve on active duty during the summer, but is paid normal active duty rates as a commissioned officer for this time. An obligation of one year active service as a commissioned dentist or nurse for each year of support is incurred, but recently a minimum three-year obligation was imposed.

Students accepted into the National Health Service Corps, similarly receive all tuition and fees as well as a living expense stipend. One year of service for each funded education year follows with the health professional agreeing to serve in underserved locations or with underserved populations.

Some health profession schools have a few scholarships, fellowships, and grants from their endowments or from special funds donated to the school by alumni, friends, and private companies and philanthropic organizations that are available for talented students. Such scholarships should be carefully investigated by students with strong academic credentials. There are only a few of these merit awards offered from most schools, but a number of awards may exist to encourage students from underrepresented groups and from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Some states will offset non-resident costs if a resident must go to another state's school for specific program not offered in the resident state. For example, the state of Tennessee will pay non-resident costs for their residents who attend University of Alabama-Birmingham surgery physician assistant program, because Tennessee does not currently offer such a specialty program. Texas out of state tuition may be less than some states' in-state tuition. Some programs have assistance for applicants changing careers or looking to be employed in underserved areas.

Acceptances and Multiple Acceptances

Accept the first school to offer you a position. You can then politely withdraw your acceptance if you are accepted by a school you would rather attend. Be sure to notify schools that you won't attend, when you are accepted into a school you'd rather attend. Normally you should not keep more than one acceptance at a time. Remember to be polite and free schools to make other

offers that may be to your friends. Also remember that the schools you politely decline now may be favored sites for fellowships and jobs later on. Some administrators will overlap with these programs and times and they have long memories of some applicants.

When you receive an acceptance, review your list of schools where you are active and release any schools that you rank beneath your currently held acceptance. Your email or note should thank them for their time and tell them that you have been accepted to (program name) where you will attend, or just that you are no longer pursuing your application at their institution. It will help them to speed their class makeup and ease their work.

After receiving an acceptance you might want to ask new and different questions of the student affairs office or admissions office. At this time it is appropriate to ask about issues that will add quality to your life outside of class. Maybe you want to know about a religious community, GLBT groups, or access for disabilities.

Schools will require deposits by a specific date or in a set window of time. Be sure to make any deposits to hold your spot. If and when you are accepted somewhere else and you decline the prior acceptance, you most likely will be refunded this deposit in full or in some portion. Individual schools will define the rules of refunds, amounts, and relevant dates.

Remember if you have multiple acceptances you might want to consider any offered financial aid package before making a decision, but don't collect acceptances just to collect them as it wastes everyone's time and may prevent a friend from receiving a timely acceptance.

These processing rules and dates differ by program and school schedule, so make sure you read your offers and follow directions. Dates for final decisions for matriculation and financial aid may differ as well. After a certain date, if you are holding acceptances at multiple schools, the schools participating in centralized admissions services will be informed, and you could be dropped from any or all after a specified date late in the cycle.

Deferment of Acceptance. Very few non-medical health professions schools will defer acceptance to a later year. If you want to take time off, or try for a special program, you should not apply to non-medical health profession programs until ready to attend. Certainly if medical or family emergency prevents your start of a school year there may be a process that will allow you a later or deferred start. You will need to discuss your options with the admissions office as needed.

Keeping in Touch with Us. Please keep in touch with the HPA Director and our Alumni office. Be sure to come to our HPA reunion events on the Friday of Homecoming weekend to meet your old friends and to offer advice and answers to our future students. Please keep your contact information updated as you move through your training and jobs. We will want to ask your help with questions from future students looking toward your career. We hope you remember how important your healthcare experience was and that you offer future Rhod'ents shadow and internship experiences, no matter where you are.

Wait Lists or Alternate Lists

If you are on a wait list or listed as an alternate, you should let the schools know that you are still interested in attending their school. Some admissions directors will tell you generally whether you are in the top, middle or bottom third. A rare few will tell you specific rankings. Some schools will tell you how far down a ranking or section they accepted last cycle. Some schools will have fixed the list at the time you were put on it or by a certain date. For these schools, no additional information will be considered. Nevertheless, you should drop them a note and repeat every few months that you are still interested in their program. Some schools reconsider students' placements on the list when they go to the list to admit someone. If this is the case with your school and if you have new things to add (i.e., fall or spring semester grades, additional experience, or an award) you should be in contact to add this new information to your file.

Schools will make up their class from the wait list right up to orientation, though for most non-medical programs, we've seen very little use of wait lists. For those on a wait list when the next cycle starts, you will be best served by working on a new early application for the next cycle and getting letters in line before this.

Reapplication in the next cycle

If you plan to reapply, you must keep working toward becoming a more prepared and competent applicant. You should make preparations and apply for the next cycle even though you may still be waiting to hear final results from the current cycle.

Admissions personnel will be looking for something new. You will need to discuss something that you've done in terms of GPA, test scores, or experience enhancement that shows why they should reconsider your application after already considering it and making a negative decision. This may not seem fair as if you were simply late or sloppy before; why would you need to improve your stats? One way to look at this is that applicants with a true commitment and work ethic will not have sat pat and let a GPA decline or stopped their clinical experience or community service.

After the majority of a class has been accepted, most directors of admissions will talk candidly about how you might continue to become more competitive in a future application. You must have this conversation with the HPA Director as well. If you had a just acceptable test score, even though it was in the acceptable range, admissions committee members might want to see you improve on that. For some with a low undergraduate GPA or weak start, it may just take additional courses. For graduates looking toward dentistry or veterinary medicine, if they can fit it in around work, taking a previously untaken upper level course such as biochemistry or histology, will show the desire to make the first year of professional school easier, and the her ability to succeed in such upper-level courses. For those who did not have as much or as committed professional experience, adding to that experience now will help. Some might want to take a job in their chosen profession, both to earn money and gain experience.

For those with an unacceptable GPA, it may be best to take a formal post-graduate program to reinvent yourself as a newly-committed, academically serious student. You have to ask, though, what will be different this time. There are not specific programs for preparation for most fields, although they do exist for pharmacy and two are found currently for dentistry. For most, more

than a few courses taken independent of a second degree or certificate is not a good plan. Some of the masters programs that exist allow for preparation for a career if future acceptance to your desired professional school doesn't happen, which may be good planning for some.

We continue to work with alumni for their health profession applications. In some cases this may be advisory and another institution may actually gather letters.

Gap or Glide Years

If you are applying as a senior you will have time between your time at Rhodes and your start in a health profession school. This is a common occurrence. For reapplications, read the comments above about continuing your experience and demonstrating your commitment.

Your undergraduate loans may come due after six months. If you are accepted for a health profession school in the next fall, you will be able to delay repayment again. Because of this window, some loan officers may allow you to wait until your acceptance decision is made before starting repayment. It is not a fixed rule or offer. If you want this option, ask your loan officer if it is possible.

Applying after several Years Out.

All health profession schools actively recruit older students who may have been in a different work force for many years. In fact, at some schools, just-graduated students will be in the minority of the incoming professional school class. Admission committee members have told us frequently how it is nice to talk with students who bring more life experiences to the table with an older application. We continue to work with alumni and are available to help whenever you decide to apply.