

# Medical School Admissions

## Myths and Realities

### Medical School Admissions

### Myths and Realities



#### *Myth*

#### *Reality*

<i>I need to major in Biology or some other science.</i>	You must complete the pre-med coursework requirements to prepare for the MCAT. However, you can major in anything. If you enjoy another subject area, you will likely enjoy school more and earn a higher overall GPA.
<i>If I am in an undergraduate major in UB's School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences I am accepted as a med student.</i>	UB's School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences offers undergraduate majors leading to Bachelor's Degrees in Biochemistry, Biochemical Pharmacology, Biomedical Sciences, Biophysics, Biotechnology, Medical Technology, and Nuclear Medicine Technology. Acceptance into one of these majors or graduation with these degrees does not guarantee admission into the professional program.
<i>If I do really well as a freshman, it will impress medical schools.</i>	Medical schools pay more attention to the trends of your grades. Your freshman grades are not a great indicator of your medical school performance. Your grades will become increasingly important until you apply to medical school. It is best to do well in all your classes, but your overall science GPA is more important.
<i>Freshman year doesn't count.</i>	All your college grades will be considered by admissions committees when you apply for admission to medical schools.
<i>I must take every pre-med prerequisite before I apply.</i>	Medical school applications contain a provision for classes you will take before enrolling, but after applying. There is no penalty for doing this, especially if you fill the gaps with other challenging classes that make you a more interesting applicant.
<i>If I don't finish college in four years I will appear weak.</i>	Students with life experience often work better with patients. Taking extra time in or after college (i.e., for a dual major or study abroad) may strengthen your application.
<i>If I drop any of the classes I attempt, I will not be accepted.</i>	If you routinely drop classes to get through school, medical school will be difficult for you. However, dropping one or two classes may be practical. An "R" grade is better than an "F." Every student has one or two difficult semesters, especially at first.
<i>The most important part of my application is my GPA.</i>	Academic preparation is the most important piece of your application. However, your application will also consist of letters of recommendation, a personal essay, an activities list, an MCAT score, and an interview. To get into medical school, you should have volunteer/research experience. All of these aspects deserve equal attention.
<i>A high MCAT score will get me into medical school.</i>	If you score within the general range for your target school, you have passed a threshold after which other factors will have a strong influence on your application. Research studies have demonstrated that there is no correlation between extremely high MCAT scores and being a good doctor. Aim to do well, but not to be perfect.
<i>I don't need to prepare for my MCATs if I'm doing well in my pre-med courses.</i>	Nearly 50% of all MCAT test takers sit for the MCAT a second time due to inadequate preparation the first time, and many of those people were doing fine in their science courses. Most students who do well on the MCAT spend between 200 to 300 hours preparing for the exam.
<i>The MCAT tests Science. I don't need to worry about Verbal.</i>	Good reading skills are very important for the MCAT, even the Science sections. Medical school admissions officers actually weigh the Verbal Reasoning section the heaviest. They view it as a measure of a student's ability to learn and communicate.

# Myth

# Reality

## Myth

## Reality

---

*I can take all my pre-requisite courses at a community college.*

Completing prerequisite courses at the university level can help to assure the strongest application. Some community college courses in conjunction with the majority of courses taken at UB is fine. Students should meet with the prehealth advisor to discuss the types of courses they will complete at each type of institution.

---

*Repeating a course I did poorly in won't improve my chances of being accepted.*

US medical and dental schools will average grades for a repeated course in consideration of your science GPA. However, the second grade for a repeated course will be averaged into your UB GPA, which is also important for acceptance. Other professional health programs (i.e., chiropractic, podiatry, optometry, etc.) should be consulted for repeat policies.

---

*I can take only one Science course at a time with a minimum number of credits to enhance my GPA.*

US medical schools carefully analyze transcripts and prefer to see an average of 15 credits hours per semester with challenging academic loads.

---

*I can start volunteering or shadowing just prior to applying to medical school.*

You should begin volunteer work and shadowing experiences right away. Medical schools want to see an ongoing pattern of volunteer work in varied settings. You should spend as much time as possible getting involved in volunteer work without sacrificing your academic work.

---

*My motivation to pursue a medical career is enough to get me accepted.*

Students need to possess a number of strengths to be a competitive applicant for medical school. These include strong, consistent grades in the sciences and overall, relevant volunteer experience, strong letters of recommendation, good interpersonal skills, and much more.

---

*There are no other health professions I would enjoy.*

There are numerous health careers that offer patient interaction, independence, job security, and a sense of reward through helping others. There may be an alternative option to medical school that is better suited to your strengths and interests.

---

*I can take my tough science courses during the summer to ease my load during the fall and spring semesters.*

Some medical schools specifically state that they prefer that science prerequisites are NOT completed in the summer. You must master the material covered in these courses to do well on the MCAT. Since summer courses go by so quickly, it may be difficult for you to learn the material and retain it for the future.

---

**It is important that you discuss your record individually with a pre-health advisor!**