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Explore Pre-Dental Studies at UWM

If you are considering dental school, UWM will provide you with a solid foundation to help you reach your goal. There are 64 dental schools in the United States, only one of which is in Wisconsin at Marquette University. The application process is highly competitive so it is important that pre-dental students begin careful planning of their academic career during the freshman year. Requirements vary among dental schools, making early planning in consultation with a pre-dental advisor vital.

While rare, some dental schools will accept highly-qualified students who have completed only three years of college (90 credits) and the necessary science and math prerequisites. The vast majority of students complete their bachelor's degree before proceeding to dental school.

An understanding of the dental profession is essential for students interested in dental school. Direct experience is highly recommended, either through volunteer opportunities or paid work at a dental practice or community dental clinic. Applicants to dental school also should have demonstrated leadership skills through extracurricular activities during college, jobs, or other opportunities.

Majors for Pre-Dental Students

It is important to note that "pre-dental" is not a major. While many pre-dental students choose a natural science major such as chemistry or biology, dental schools do not require any particular major, and there is no advantage to

one major over another. Rather, it is important that students successfully complete the science and math courses required for dental school and then round out their schedule with an interesting and challenging major.

Dental schools are interested in well-rounded students who have the necessary scientific preparation and who demonstrate excellence in communication, working well with diverse groups of people, and problem-solving. Other qualities valued by dental schools are patience, attention to detail, a desire to help others, and strong hand-eye coordination and dexterity.

Advising

Students who identify themselves as pre-dental will be assigned to a dedicated pre-dental advisor. Our pre-dental advisor has many years of experience in this specific type of advising and understands the long-term planning required to successfully complete the bachelor's program and move on to dental school.

Students will be counseled on the required science courses needed for application to dental school, and those courses will be integrated into the student's schedule. Because many science courses have prerequisites and follow a very structured order, it is important that students plan their schedule carefully. Getting off track can delay graduation.

After Undergraduate Studies

The most common degrees earned to practice dentistry are the Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) or the Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD). Either degree takes four years to complete after undergraduate studies, with the first two years dedicated to dental science and the last two years spent on disease diagnosis, surgery and clinical practice. Students who want to specialize may also continue their education and training for an additional

Quick Fact: Dental school applicants take the Dental Admission Test (DAT) usually during the junior year of college. This computerized exam covers the sciences (biology, general chemistry, and organic chemistry), reading comprehension, quantitative ability, and perceptual ability (the ability to interpret and analyze visual information).

two to six years. Prior to practicing dentistry, students must pass a state licensure written and oral exam.

Career Outlook

Dentistry plays an important role in public health. Proper oral care can prevent other serious diseases as well as improve a person's self-esteem. The field of dentistry includes many areas of expertise, including general practice, orthodontics, pediatrics, and oral surgery. Some dentists work in private practice while others choose to work in hospitals, community clinics, research labs, or international relief organizations.

Dentists often enjoy a more balanced lifestyle than medical doctors. Those in private practice usually can set their own work schedules, and while emergencies do sometimes require off-hours work, these situations are less frequent than in the medical profession. However, private practice dentists also must have savvy business skills to manage staff, inventory, finances and equipment.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects faster than average growth in dentistry, particularly as more links are identified between oral health and overall health.

The median annual salary for all dentists in 2015 was \$158,310. Specialists such as orthodontists and oral surgeons had higher average wages, with a median of \$196,170.

UWM Advantages

Students in the pre-dental program at UWM have several unique opportunities outside of the classroom to enhance their preparation for dental school:

» **Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR):** The OUR program provides access to research experiences for undergraduates. Students work directly with faculty members and graduate students in their chosen field of study.

» **Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership, and Research.** The Center helps match interested students with opportunities on campus or in the community. It also offers leadership development courses and training to provide students with the philosophical background and tangible skills to make a difference as active citizens during college and after graduation.

» **Pre-Dental Club.** The Club promotes opportunities for professional development and achievement to pre-dental students. Activities include:

- informational meetings, including discussions about DAT preparation
- social events
- visits to dental schools
- community volunteerism such as Rak-A-Thon and Mission of Mercy

Suggested Pre-Dental Courses

Two semesters of General Chemistry with lab (Chem 102 and Chem 104)
One year of Organic Chemistry with lab (Chem 343, 344, 345)
Biochemistry (Chem 501)
One year of Biology with lab (Bio Sci 150, 152)
One advanced (300+ level) Biology course with lab
One year of Physics with lab (Physics 120/121 and 122/123)
6 credits of English, including composition
College-level algebra or higher math (Math 105 or higher)

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