Professional School Prep:
Dental School

What is Dental School?
Dental School is a four-year doctorate-level program, in which students learn the science of oral medicine and patient care. After completing a bachelor’s degree and the prerequisites from a regionally accredited college or university, students can enter Dental School. Following graduation, students may choose to specialize, or participate in a general dentistry residency.

What should I know about Dental School?

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Dental school is very similar to medical school; for approximately the first two years both medical and dental students share lab space, work closely together, and often share a lecture hall. After that, dentistry becomes more specific focusing in on dental care. Students should be prepared, to have a keen eye for detail and particularly a strong ability to work with their hands as molding and crafting are large parts of their coursework.

Where can I study Dentistry?
Currently, we have one dental school in the state of Washington (UW) with approximately 64 dental schools across the country.

How do I get started?

When considering dental school, ask: Is this the only profession I could ever see myself doing? Am I willing to go into substantial debt in order to pursue this dream? Am I willing to give up a significant portion of my social life (e.g. birthdays, holidays, parties, weddings) for the rest of my life? While answering these questions, students pursing dental school can remember the acronym “S-T-A-R-T”:

**Shadow**
Shadowing is the act of working with, and observing a current dentist practicing in a clinical setting. Often this can occur in a private practice, hospital, or possibly experiential trip. Shadowing is a huge part of becoming an well-rounded and competitive applicant. One of the main purposes of shadowing is to help you, the student, become more aware of what it means to be a dentist. Students will often work with dentists in a variety of settings and specialties in order to gain a better sense of the day to day life of a dentist. Shadowing opportunities are out there but they can be hard to find, often students may find the most success with contacting their own dentist to begin with or through programs run through pre health clubs or internships.

**Talk**
Talk to someone! Being a student interested in going to dental school means that a large part of your time should be spent learning as much about the opportunities available to you to develop as a student as possible. Working with your adviser, instructors, and classmates can all be incredibly helpful in helping connect you with the resources you will need. A large part of being a part of a medical team is being able to rely on not only your expertise, but the skills and expertise of others. Therefore, get started utilizing these skills early by consulting with friends, attending campus info sessions, being involved in our pre health community here on campus.
**Academics**

Applying to a dental school generally requires that you have a bachelor’s degree and all of the *prerequisites* necessary. Every school will have slightly different prerequisite requirements, but in general you will complete:

- One year of General Chemistry
- One year of Biology
- One year of Organic Chemistry
- One year of Physics
- English
- Biochemistry
- Anatomy and Physiology

* prerequisites are subject to differ depending on desired dental school.

In addition to the above prerequisite courses, there are two major things to note if you are a student pursuing your bachelor’s degree:

1. Most universities do not offer a degree in “pre-dent”.
2. There is no particular major that “looks good” to a dental school. You can major in whatever you would like and still be a competitive applicant. However, most students try and fit the majority if not all of their pre-dental requirements within their initial bachelor degree (see diagram) and thus biology, chemistry, biochemistry and environmental health tend to be popular pre-dent major choices.

**Research**

This does not mean academic research (although undergraduate research is and always can be a great experience for any student), this is referring to research regarding the dental school(s) to which you wish to apply. Generally speaking, students may apply to anywhere between 10-12 schools per application cycle; each school will most likely have a slightly different set of prerequisite courses they require. Therefore, it is important that you as the applicant, have a clear vision of the type of education you will want in both your undergraduate and dental school experience. To get this vision or background information try attending information sessions early, making connections with the dentists you shadow, and by thoroughly exploring university and dental school websites.

**Test**

All students wishing to apply to a dental school should first complete a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution and then take the Dental Admissions Test (the DATs). This test is taken approximately one year prior to when the student is looking to apply for their first application cycle and covers a variety of biological and physical sciences.

**What should I do now?**

Students interested in getting started with the road toward dental school can use a variety of resources here on campus. The Docs and Dents Club here on campus is an excellent resource, as well as attending one of our quarterly pre-professional info sessions. Lastly you may consider meeting with an adviser, you can do so by calling 425 564 2212 or by stopping by the advising front desk located on the second floor of the B building.

**Step Three: Make a Plan**

This is an unofficial guide only. It is the student’s responsibility to research and communicate with all community college and university programs to which he/she intends to apply to establish prerequisites and admission requirements, as they vary and are subject to change without notice.

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