YOUR APPLICATION ESSAYS

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http://prepro.tamucc.edu/
SECRETS OF SUCCESS

• Visit your faculty mentor frequently
• Get to know your science professors – they will be writing your letters of evaluation
• Shadowing: more is better
• Community service: expected
• Campus involvement: expected
• Follow the suggested degree plan
  – If you take all courses highlighted in yellow, you will be able to apply to all Texas schools
• DO NOT APPLY TO ONLY ONE SCHOOL
  – Apply to as many schools as you can afford
  – What is the best school?

The one that accepts you!
THREE CAUTIONS

• Do not believe everything you read
• Choose an appropriate photo to include with your application
• Be prepared for a criminal background check
DO NOT BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ, ESPECIALLY ON THE WEB AND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

• No guarantee that the author is legitimate
• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_CgPsGY5Mw
YOUR PHOTO

YES

NO
CRIMINAL BACKGROUND

Most common transgressions

– Public Intoxication
– Drunk driving
– Shoplifting

• Be honest
• You **will** be dropped/expelled if info turns up

• To expunge your record – hire a lawyer
• Consider having a national criminal background check run to see what is turned up about you
GENERAL POINTERS

• ADDRESS ALL TOPICS IN THE PROMPT
• Write to convince the admissions committee that they have to interview you
• Compose in a word document, then type it into the application
  – Save
  – Check to ensure correct formatting
• Well written
  – Spell, grammar check
  – Written communication skills are important and are being evaluated
• Thoughtful
  – Essays cannot be written in two or three hours
  – Write --- put away ---- re-read --- polish; repeat; repeat; repeat
• Original
  – No plagiarism
  – Nothing from web
  – Your own ideas
  – Help in editing OK
• Have other people critique essays
• Respond to all prompts, even if “optional”
• Start writing now
Types of Essays

• Personal Statement: all schools require this essay
• TMDSAS medical and dental schools also require:
  – Personal Characteristics Essay
  – And have an “Optional” Essay (NOT optional):
    The Unique Circumstances or Life Experiences Essay
TMDSAS VET APPLICATION ESSAYS

• Personal Statement
• Two “Optional” Essays (NOT optional)
  – Briefly state any unique circumstances or life experiences that are relevant to your application. *This is not an area to continue your essay or reiterate what you have previously stated - this area is provided to address any issues which have not previously been addressed.*
  – Describe any personal characteristics and/or important or challenging experiences you have had that will contribute to the diversity (broadly defined) of/or provide educational benefits to the student body.
PURPOSE OF PERSONAL STATEMENT

• Explain who you are
• Delineate your values
• Describe your motivation for the career
• Demonstrate that you understand what it takes to practice the profession
• Highlight your leadership skills
• Confirm your commitment to community service
• Demonstrate your ability to work as a professional
• Your purpose for writing the personal statement: TO GET AN INTERVIEW
YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

• Hardest part of application
  • **MUST** be your best work
    – Excellent writing skills
    – Active voice
    – No clichés
  • Engage the reader
  • Reflect your goals, your qualities, your values
  • Describe experiences that led you to this career choice
  • Use concrete examples and personal details
  • Be concise, no fluff
  • Be authentic
  • No autobiography
CRITERIA FOR EVALUATORS

• Consistency of response
  – Comments in essay match activities cited elsewhere in application
  – Inconsistencies:
    • “I care about people,” but there are no other-centered activities cited
    • “I want to practice in undeserved and/or rural area,” but does not discuss underserved/rural topic or is not involved in these issues

• Depth of understanding of applicant
  – Understands him/herself
  – Understands the professional field

• Conviction
  – Displays passion for profession
  – Has a sense of self

• Social desirability
  – Does not try to please reader
  – Is honest

• Conceptualization of essays
  – Organized in both thought and structure
  – Responded to all topics in prompt
PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Positive
• Commitment to service
• Realistic about strengths and weaknesses
• Involved in activities
• Evolution of desire for health care

Negative
• Compulsiveness
• Fanaticism
• Providing info without discussing importance
• Insensitivity to needs of others
• Patronizing
• Hostile
• Arrogant
ALL ABOUT YOU

YES
• Your driver to career
• Values with examples
• Explain your passion
• Why you would be a good....
• Desire to serve
• EXAMPLES

NO
• I was born on....
• I am dependable, motivated, intelligent, sincere....
• I’ve always wanted to be a ....
• I can do it better than....
• I want to help people
• Anything from high school, politics, religion
Professional Life

**YES**
- Health care experience
- Medical missions, such as International Service Learning
- Research
- Understand the rigors associated with practice

**NO**
- I love ER, Grey’s Anatomy, House, etc.
- I like to read medical thrillers
- I want to help
- I feel sorry for the poor
- I want status
- I want to make money
Leadership Skills

**YES**
- Extracurricular
- Committee chair
- Club Officer
- Coach
- Tutor; Peer Mentor
- Island Ambassador

**NO**
- I wanted to do it but I had to work
- Nobody listened to my ideas
- It was just a popularity contest
- I was too busy
Community Service

**YES**
- Sustained commitment
- Two or three organizations
- Desire to serve

**NO**
- Laundry list of mediocre activities
  - Walk of this
  - March of that
  - One day wonder child
- Multiple clubs
Do

• Make it real – tell a story – engage the reader
• Make it flow
• Explain why you are passionate about your career choice
• Support claims with examples
• Demonstrate your values
• Use formal writing – no contractions
• Include long-term goals
• Have other (smart) people read/critique essays
DO NOT

- Introduce yourself
- Use “I” excessively
- Use quotes
- Use words that you have to look up
- Plagiarize
- Write, “I know that I will be a good__.”
- Discuss the failings of the poor professionals, practitioners, professors you have known
- Make excuses
  - I had to work
  - The professors did not like me
  - The tutors were no good

- Whine
Explain your motivation to seek a career in medicine. Be sure to include the value of your experiences that prepare you to be a physician.
DENTAL SCHOOL PROMPT
(From TMDSAS)

The personal essay asks you to explain your motivation to seek a career in dentistry. You are asked to discuss your philosophy of the dental profession and indicate your goals relevant to the profession.
VET SCHOOL PROMPT
(From TMDSAS)

The personal essay asks you to discuss why you would like to be a veterinarian and indicate your goals relevant to the profession.
Your Personal Essay should address why you selected pharmacy as a career and how the Doctor of Pharmacy degree relates to your immediate and long-term professional goals. Describe how your personal, educational, and professional background will help you achieve your goals.
Write a brief statement expressing your motivation or desire to become a physician assistant.
Submit a letter that expresses your interest in and knowledge of PT. Be reflective of your feelings concerning this as a career in health care and what motivates you to pursue a DPT. Include examples of formative relationships and explain why and how you think you may contribute to the profession of physical therapy.
PUBLIC HEALTH
(From SOPHOS)

Your statement of purpose and objectives should describe your:

• Reasons for interest in public health
  Reasons for interest in academic department or concentration
• Reasons for interest in the school or program
• Career goals
MOTIVATION

• What has **driven** you to want to be a _____
• Why you would be a good _____
  – Illustrate with **examples**
• Delineate your relevant **experiences**
• Include your **values**
• Tell a story
• Usually the largest part of the PS
FOR DENTAL: YOUR PHILOSOPHY

• Your perspective on
  – What the profession is/should be
  – How the profession should be practiced

• How you would practice

• Service profession
LONG TERM GOALS

• Include long term goals even if not specifically requested

• Long term goals are not
  – To finish college
  – To go to ___ school

• Long term goals are
  – Where do you see yourself in 10 years
  – Where do you want to practice and why there

• About two – three sentences at conclusion of personal statement
Learning from others is enhanced in educational settings that include individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Please describe unique personal characteristics (background, talents, skills, etc.) or experiences that would add to the educational experience of others.
DIVERSITY: NOT JUST SEX, RACE, ETHNICITY

- How your experiences enrich the entire class
- Work full time during college: why
- Cultural differences
  - Military
  - Immigrant
- Non-traditional student
  - Why did you delay college
  - What have you learned that can help your peers
- Special skills and/or talents
  - Bilingual/multilingual
  - Sports/Arts
- Disadvantaged factors
DISADVANTAGED FACTORS

• Parents’ level of education (HS/GED)
• Type of community: rural/underserved/urban/military
• Parent/guardian of dependent children
• Household size, income and value of residence
• Subsidized housing
• Federal Free and Reduced Meal Program
• Raise other children while attending elementary/HS
• First generation college student
• Employed steadily during HS/college to contribute to family income
“OPTIONAL” ESSAY  
(TMDSAS)

Briefly state any unique circumstances or life experiences that are relevant to your application.  
This is not an area to continue your essay or reiterate what you have previously stated - this area is provided to address any issues which have not previously been addressed.
UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES OR LIFE EXPERIENCES

- Involved in the arts
  - Play an instrument
  - Sing
  - Paint
  - Published writer

- Athletics
  - Varsity player
  - Coach

- Time abroad

- Most students address problem areas in this essay
PROBLEM AREAS

• Why only 12 hr/semester?
• Why no extracurricular activities?
• Why do you have a “W”?
• Why was your education not continuous?
• Why were your grades poor in freshman year? In one semester?
• Why did you go to more than one institution?
• Take responsibility
• EXPLAIN -- NO WHINING
WHAT IS HPAC?

- Health Professions Advising Committee
- Advises students in the application process for professional schools
- Interviews students applying to professional school
- Prepares committee letters of evaluation for
  - Medical School
  - Dental School
  - Physical Therapy School
  - Physician Assistant School
- Students who do not need a HPAC letter but can still visit with HPAC:
  - Pharmacy --- Optometry --- Veterinary
HPAC MEMBERS

• Pamela Brouillard, Psy.D., Psychology
• Greg Buck, PhD., Microbiology
• Suzzette Chopin, Ph.D., Biomedical Sciences
• Riccardo Mozzachiodi, Ph.D., Neurosciences
• Jean Sparks, Ph.D., Clinical Lab Science
SPRING WORKSHOPS
CI 108

• **HPAC Workshop:** Wednesday March 4; 5:00 PM dinner; 5:15 workshop
  – Committee functions
  – Review the requirements for application to professional schools
  – For all pre-professional students

• **Interview Workshop:** Wednesday, March 25; 5:00 PM dinner; 5:15 workshop
  – Wanda Watson from Texas A&M College of Medicine
  – Interviewing tips, what to expect at the interview and types of interview questions
  – For pre-professional students applying this application cycle

• **TMDSAS Workshop:** Wednesday April 22; 5:00 PM dinner; 5:15 workshop
  – Nicole Dubuque from the Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS)
  – How to complete the TMDSAS application
  – For pre-med, pre-dent and pre-vet students applying to Texas schools this application cycle
DO NOT MISS THE BOAT: PLAN YOUR ESSAYS NOW

Oh, crap! Was that TODAY?