

Path to Dentistry

Dentists are highly trained professionals who specialize in oral health and perform clinical procedures such as oral exams, fillings, and extractions. Dentists can specialize in a variety of areas including pediatrics, orthodontics, endodontics, and oral surgery.

Though many students interested in dentistry pursue a major in COSAM, a student can earn a degree in any major and attend dental school if the correct prerequisite courses are taken. Prerequisites vary by dental school, so students should research the requirements for the schools that interest them. All dental school applicants are required to take the Dental Admission Test (DAT).

In addition to metrics, dental schools are interested in the experiences that students have had during their undergraduate careers. It is important that students shadow a variety of dentists, participate in community service activities, interact with diverse populations, and develop leadership skills. Research and clinical experiences are also highly valued and encouraged.

Since dentists work with their hands on an extremely small scale, it is important for applicants to demonstrate manual dexterity. Many students enhance their fine-motor skills through activities such as drawing, painting, playing the guitar or piano, tying fishing knots, and knitting.

After graduating from dental school, dentists can begin practicing general dentistry or specialize in one of nine areas. Those who wish to specialize must complete a residency which requires two to six years of additional training.

Preparation Checklist

- Research programs that interest you.
- Shadow practicing dentists.
- Volunteer with an organization that you like.
- Gain clinical experience.
- Develop core competencies.
- Get involved on campus.
- Take prerequisite courses.
- Maintain a strong overall and science GPA.
- Conduct undergraduate research.
- Take the DAT.



Common Prerequisites

- General Biology I & II and Labs
- 4 additional hours of Biology
- General Chemistry I & II and Labs
- Organic Chemistry I & II and Labs
- Physics I & II
- Calculus
- Statistics
- English Comp I & II
- Behavioral & Social Sciences (3 hours)



Metrics

- Average GPA: 3.75
- Average DAT Academic Average: 21
- Average DAT Perceptual Average: 20



Standardized Tests

- Dental Admission Test (DAT)



Helpful Organizations

- American Dental Education Association (ADEA)
- American Dental Association (ADA)