



PRE-APPLICATION SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. COMPETITIVE GPA

By the time you submit your professional school application, your GPA should meet one of the following standards:

- Ideal:* Your cumulative *and* science GPAs meet or exceed the averages for accepted students at each of your schools

OR

- Your cumulative and science GPAs are both above 3.0 AND
- In each of the four full-time semesters leading up to application time, your term GPAs (both overall and science) meet or exceed the national averages.

National GPA averages for accepted applicants, by field:

- Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant: 3.5 overall, 3.5 science
- Dentistry: 3.5 overall, 3.5 science
- D.O. Physician: 3.5 overall, 3.4 science
- M.D. Physician: 3.8 overall, 3.7 science
- Naturopathic physician: varies by program, range is 3.1 to 3.4 overall
- Nursing: varies by program, but range is 3.0 to 3.7
- Optometry: varies by program, range is 3.0 to 3.6 overall
- Pharmacy: 3.4 overall, 3.2 science
- Physical Therapy: 3.6 overall, 3.4 science
- Physician Assistant: 3.5 overall, 3.5 science
- Veterinary Medicine: 3.6 overall, 3.5 science

2. EXPERIENCE CRITERIA

You are on track to be a competitive applicant if, by the time you submit your professional school application, you meet the following standards:

- Score "2" or higher in at least three categories, including Direct Patient Interaction.
- Total score of 8 or higher.

Category	Rating
Shadowing/Scribing	
Direct Patient Interaction	[Min: 2]
Non-Clinical Interpersonal Service	
Cultural Humility and Understanding of Barriers to Care	
Interpersonal Leadership and Collaboration	
Research/Scholarly Inquiry	[If MD only, Min: 2]
TOTAL	[Min: 8]

Category			1 - Sufficient	0 - Insufficient
Shadowing/ Scribing (within past 3 years)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 or more clinicians • Multiple specialties and professions OR hundreds of hours in one area • Articulates thoughtful reflection on best practices in patient care • Articulates insights into the challenges/rewards inherent to chosen profession • Expresses developing understanding of the roles of different members of healthcare team. Cites strategies for responding to challenges in profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No shadowing OR • 1-2 clinicians • Similar or different specialties • Starting to articulate insights from the experiences

Category	3 - Outstanding	2 - Competitive	1 - Introductory	0 – Limited or None
Direct Patient Interaction (emphasis on past 2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged in meaningful, ongoing patient interaction for an extended period of time (typically years, not months) • Typically serves in a role requiring formal training, certification, or substantial on-the-job preparation to provide direct patient care. • Expresses nuanced insights into the experiences of patients • Exhibits thoughtfulness about how to interact with patients, adjusting approach depending on situation • Demonstrates sustained commitment to patient-centered care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged in regular, ongoing clinical experiences, typically for more than one year by time of application • Primary form of engagement with patients is through simple, straightforward interactions • Expresses a developing understanding of the experiences of patients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced to the clinical setting through limited/short-term patient interaction experiences • Insights into patient care are derived primarily through observation rather than sustained first-hand patient interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No patient interaction
Non-Clinical Interpersonal Service (since graduating from high school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently involved in non-clinical interpersonal service roles for many years (paid or unpaid) • Articulates personal motivation to be of service to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular involvement in non-clinical interpersonal service roles, typically over a period of one or more years (with emphasis on recent years). • Articulates personal motivation to be of service to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has spent some time (typically less than one year) in one or more non-clinical interpersonal service roles, but this has not been a primary area of focus. • Developing ability to articulate motivation to help others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No or sporadic involvement in interpersonal service roles.

Category	3 - Outstanding	2 - Competitive	1 - Introductory	0 – Limited or None
Cultural Humility and Understanding of Barriers to Care (emphasis on past 2-3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently engaged in meaningful interpersonal service roles that provide deep insight into the lives of people from varied sociocultural or socioeconomic backgrounds, typically over a period of years • Exhibits empathy, respect, cultural humility, adaptability, and nonjudgmental interpersonal skills when interacting with people with varied lived experiences and cultural contexts • Reflects thoughtfully on how their own personal background, assumptions, and experiences influence their interactions with others • Demonstrates sophisticated awareness of ways in which sociocultural, economic, systemic, or structural factors can influence healthcare access and patient experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has spent a period of time (typically several months) engaged in direct service roles that provided insight into the lives of people from different sociocultural backgrounds • Exhibits empathy, respect, and cultural humility when interacting with people of varied backgrounds and life circumstances • Demonstrates growing awareness of the ways in which sociocultural and socioeconomic factors impact health and access to care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited involvement in service activities that provide insight into the lives of people from different sociocultural backgrounds • Developing an understanding of the differing needs of people in groups other than one’s own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited experience interacting with people of varied backgrounds and life circumstances
Interpersonal Leadership and Collaboration (emphasis on past 5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held formal leadership position involving coordination, mentorship, or guidance of others for an extended period of time (typically 2+ years) • Demonstrates thoughtful insights into strategies for navigating interpersonal dynamics to collaborate effectively • Clearly articulates personal approach to effective leadership and collaboration, as informed by extensive experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held formal leadership position involving coordination, mentorship, or guidance of others, typically for 1+ years • As a team member, demonstrates ability to collaborate effectively with others • Able to articulate personal philosophy of effective leadership and collaboration, as supported by concrete experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held a short-term position of responsibility with a purpose of guiding/directing others • Able to articulate contributions as a leader • Able to articulate approach to collaborating with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited or no sustained experience in collaborative or leadership roles

Category	3 - Outstanding	2 - Competitive	1 - Introductory	0 – Limited or None
Research/ Scholarly Inquiry (emphasis on past 2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates sustained and highly engaged participation in scholarly or investigative work in an academic setting, with direct mentorship by individuals for whom research is a significant professional focus (typically 1+ years) • Exhibits sophisticated intellectual engagement with the research topic • Demonstrates growing intellectual ownership of the project, including contributions to developing the research question, study design, interpretation, and/or troubleshooting • Actively participates in the intellectual culture of scholarship (e.g., lab meetings, journal clubs, collaborative discussion, presentations) • May have presented or published scholarly work at the regional, national, or international level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates consistent and sustained participation in scholarly or investigative work in an academic setting, with direct mentorship by individuals for whom research is a significant professional focus (typically 2 semesters or longer) • Demonstrates an intellectual understanding of the big-picture context for the research project, the rationale for asking the specific research question, and the implications of the potential results • Exhibits an emerging understanding of the principles of research design, data analysis, and interpretation of results • Developing the ability to critically read, interpret, and discuss primary scholarly literature • Engages in problem-solving and adaptability when projects encounter challenges or unexpected findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has had limited or short-term exposure to scholarly or investigative work outside of coursework • Demonstrates a developing understanding of research processes and scholarly inquiry • Participation is primarily observational or task-oriented, with limited intellectual engagement • May have completed a literature review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited or no engagement in scholarly or investigative work outside of coursework

DEFINITIONS OF EXPERIENCE CATEGORIES

Shadowing/Scribing

Shadowing is the observation of healthcare clinicians as they care for and treat patients in clinical settings. Competitive applicants will be able to articulate how these experiences have informed their desire to enter their intended field as compared to other clinical, scientific, or service-based professions. Strong applicants also are able to articulate what they have learned about effective, compassionate, and patient-centered approaches to healthcare delivery and patient care. We recommend devoting at least one day each to shadowing clinicians in the following areas of practice: primary care, a medical specialty, a surgical specialty, and a clinician in a different related profession.

Direct Patient Interaction

Being in a position to offer comfort, reassurance, and direct interpersonal support to conscious patients (and, for pre-vet students, their human clients) in a clinical setting. Direct patient interaction roles may include supporting patients through health maintenance, illness, recovery, chronic disease management, or end-of-life care. It is important that applicants become comfortable caring for patients who are sick or injured. Direct patient exposure can be gained in a variety of ways, such as volunteering or working in hospitals, emergency rooms, clinics, nursing care facilities, or hospice settings. This category does not include working in more peripheral roles in clinical settings, such as at the reception desk, in the gift shop, or in the cafeteria.

Strong applicants will be able to share meaningful interactions they have had with patients in clinical settings, identifying how those experiences not only reinforced their interest in entering a career focused on patient care but also informed their personal approaches to caring for patients and their loved ones.

- **Most fields:** Competitive applicants typically have spent at least one year (often more) volunteering or working regularly (typically 4+ hours/week) in a direct patient interaction role, within the past two years.
- **Pre-PA and Pre-Vet:** Most successful applicants will have spent over 1,000 hours working in a hands-on patient care role within the past three years.

Non-Clinical Interpersonal Service

Serving in jobs and volunteer roles that are focused on helping others directly. Examples include retail/restaurant jobs, caregiving, teaching, tutoring, mentoring, coaching, advocacy, and other roles centered on helping or supporting others directly. Candidates should be able to articulate why they are motivated to work in a service-based profession and why they find such work meaningful.

Cultural Humility and Understanding of Barriers to Care

Clinicians are responsible for serving each of their patients in a respectful and well-informed manner. Our candidates' future patients will represent a rich variety of life experiences, values, and belief systems. Strong applicants have engaged in sustained service-based activities with people of varied socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, geographic, educational, religious, disability-related, or identity-based backgrounds. As informed by these experiences, strong applicants will be able to express insights into the ways in which people's lived experiences, identities, cultural contexts, and structural factors can influence their health status, their access to healthcare, and their experiences as patients.

Interpersonal Leadership and Collaboration

Interpersonal leadership is the ability to guide, support, and positively influence others toward shared goals. Leadership capacity can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, including formal leadership roles at work, in volunteer roles, in the classroom, and on athletic teams, among other examples. Applicants should be able to articulate their personal approaches to effective interpersonal leadership. Likewise, strong candidates have demonstrated a consistent ability to engage constructively and collaboratively on teams, with an ability to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics. They should be able to articulate their approach to engaging in effective collaboration, with concrete examples.

Research and Scholarly Inquiry

Engagement in scholarly inquiry within an academic (or academic medical) environment under the direct mentorship of individuals for whom research is a significant professional focus. Research-for-credit college courses may qualify if they involve authentic scholarly inquiry beyond highly structured instructional laboratory exercises. Strong applicants demonstrate intellectual engagement in scholarly inquiry and are able to discuss the broader context, rationale, methodology, and implications of their work. Research may occur across a variety of scholarly disciplines, including basic science, clinical research, public health, social science, and the humanities.

Pre-Vet students only: Animal handling experience

Animal handling experience is defined as formal animal care positions that are not classified as "clinical" or "research." Examples include dog walking and cat care positions at a humane society, working in a doggie daycare facility or on a farm, volunteering at an animal sanctuary, or participating in 4-H. Personal pet ownership alone does not qualify as formal animal handling experience. This category is not listed on the rubric, but competitive pre-vet applicants will have spent over 1,000 hours working or volunteering in animal care roles, with a variety of species (pets, exotic pets, livestock, wildlife, lab animals, etc.).