Pre-Dentistry Advising Guide
You can use the outline feature to jump to sections

Overview of Career

Dentistry is the branch of the healing arts and sciences devoted to maintaining the health of the teeth, gums, and other hard and soft tissues of the oral cavity and adjacent structures. A *dentist* is a clinician dedicated to the highest standards of health through prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of oral diseases and conditions. A dentist examines patients' teeth and mouth tissue to diagnose and treat any problems they find. Treatment may include removing tooth decay, filling cavities, and repairing or removing damaged teeth when necessary. Most dentists are general practitioners, but some are specialists. General practice dentists give [primary dental care](#) while specialists have advanced knowledge of specific areas of dental care. Most dentists work full time and some have schedules that include evenings and weekends.

You can learn more about the career through [Explore Health Careers](#) or the [Occupational Outlook Handbook from the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

Major Map

By using major maps, students are able to engage in academic and career exploration while gaining experience in their field of study, ultimately graduating on time, with minimal debt, and the greatest professional success.
- ❏ Review the Pre-Dentistry (Pre-Dent) [Major Map](#).

Academic Requirements & Declaring a Pre-Dentistry Minor

Students can pursue any major at VCU while completing the academic prerequisites for admission to dental school. Admissions committees do not give preference for any specific major. It is highly recommended that students take all prerequisite courses at VCU or a 4-year institution as well as completing 2-3 recommended science and math courses each semester within a full course load.
- ❏ To declare a Pre-Dentistry minor while at VCU:
  - Complete a minimum of 12 graded credit hours
  - Obtain a minimum cumulative VCU GPA of 3.0
  - Complete BIOL 151 and BIOZ 151 with minimum grades of C
- ❏ Review the [VCU Bulletin](#) for a detailed overview of the academic requirements for each of the pre-professional health minors.
- ❏ After completing the declaration requirements students must complete the [Change of Minor Form](#). You must indicate which pre-professional health minor you wish to declare. Students are strongly encouraged to **declare one pre-professional health minor at a time**. Please consult with your Academic Advisor if you have any questions regarding completing the Change of Minor Form.
- ❏ Establish a partnership with your Pre-Professional Health and STEM Career Advisor. [Schedule an appointment](#) now.

APPOINTMENT HOURS

Monday - Friday, 8 A.M. - 5 P.M.
Schedule on Handshake.
Log in at careers.vcu.edu.

OFFICE LOCATION

University Student Commons,
1st Floor, Rm. 143

CONTACT INFORMATION

careers.vcu.edu
careers@vcu.edu
(804) 828-1645

Pre-Professional Health Hub

Join the **Pre-Professional Health Hub in Canvas** to access resources specifically for pre-professional health students. Joining the PPH Hub as a student will enable you to continue to have access after graduation. Resources available to students who declare a Pre-Professional Health minor include:

- Pre-Professional Health Journal - track your shadowing, volunteering, research, and other opportunities
- GPA Calculator
- Pre-Professional Health Admissions & Application Resources
- Pre-Professional Health Admissions Program Tracker

Application Process and Timeline

Students should plan to complete all academic and experiential prerequisites at least 12 months prior to their desired start date in dental school. Essentially, if a student is planning on starting a program the fall after graduation, the student would apply to a dental school in the summer **after** their junior year.

- ❏ Establish a partnership with your Pre-Professional Health and STEM Career Advisor. Schedule an appointment now.
- ❏ Review the American Dental Education Association's (ADEA) website The Application to Dental School to gain insight into what to expect when applying.
- ❏ Review the Dental School Applicant Quick Guide for additional resources and tips for applying to traditional D.D.S. or D.M.D programs through ADEA AADSAS.

Considering & Navigating a Gap Year(s)

"Gap year" reflects the year(s) after graduation before beginning health professions school. The term gap year is often misunderstood or misleading. While it does refer to the gap in time between graduation and matriculation, you should still use the year(s) to engage in experiences and opportunities to strengthen your application. It is important to use this time to explore, grow, and develop yourself as a future healthcare professional.

Students and alumni that are considering taking a gap year or more before applying to professional health programs should view our Gap Year Planning Resource to learn more about the reasons, advantages, various educational options, and timelines to consider before starting your gap period. The Gap Year Planning Resource includes links and information about the popular admissions exam tests that professional health programs require or recommend. We encourage each person to do their research on what test preparation resources are a good fit based on cost, time, or any other personal preferences.

Informational Resources

- ❏ Review the American Dental Education Association's website for a comprehensive overview of the dental school application process.
- ❏ Visit VCU's School of Dentistry website.

❏ Review the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA)'s website to begin researching accredited programs.

❏ Vault Guides – A sample of careers in healthcare. Each guide gives, among other valuable information, an overview of the job and entry-level requirements.

❏ Explore the career summary for a dentist on O*Net Online.

❏ Use VCU's online community, VCU LINK, which connects students, alumni, and friends of the university for career advice, industry contacts, and meaningful professional relationships.

Gaining Experiences

❏ Review Explore Health Careers Enrichment Programs.

❏ Review our Summer Research Guide.

❏ Review our Healthcare Opportunities Guide.

❏ Review our Health & Research Opportunities Spreadsheet (updated throughout the year).

❏ Review our Volunteering with Vulnerable Populations in RVA resource.

❏ Visit our Undergraduate Research Office's website.

Professional Organizations

❏ Follow and/or join the American Dental Association (ADA) to build up your knowledge and professional network.

❏ Follow and/or join the Virginia Dental Association (VDA).

Find more professional organizations using the CareerOneStop Association Finder Tool!

Student Organizations

The VCU student body offers a variety of organizations designed to help you build your student-based network. We strongly recommend joining both career-interest and personal-interest specific groups using RamsConnect.

❏ Join one or more student groups

➢ Utilize the keyword function to narrow down groups. Good ones to start with would be "healthcare" or "dentistry".

Appointments

If you are interested in making an appointment with one of our Career Advisors to review your resume or discuss any other career-related topics/questions, see which advisor advises your industry of interest.

We recommend that first appointments with our office are with a career advisor. In addition, we offer several different appointment mediums to better meet your needs. Choose the medium that best fits your needs.

You can schedule an appointment by logging into Handshake and selecting the time that works best for you.

Events and Career Fairs

To see our upcoming events and career fairs you can check our website or log into Handshake.

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Questions

If you have any questions, call our front desk at (804) 828-1645, or email us at careers@vcu.edu.

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