Closing the gap to the pre-health dream: Effectively advising pre-health students on their paths toward professional school goals

ANNIE LAIB JENKINS & CAROL ROBINSON
MARCH 2020
They say they are “pre-health.” Now what?
Consider

**SERVICE**
Work with a disadvantaged group

**ACADEMICS**
Prerequisites on website

**CLINICAL EXPERIENCE**
Direct Patient Care and Observation

**LEADERSHIP**
Demonstrate initiative
Two questions:

1. Can you handle a science curriculum?

2. Can you handle the intensity of a professional program?
Admissions committees used holistic review practices to put MCAT scores in context in 2017-2018 selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.80-4.00</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3/107</td>
<td>7/217</td>
<td>40/482</td>
<td>204/1,061</td>
<td>668/2,141</td>
<td>1,782/3,500</td>
<td>3,207/5,009</td>
<td>4,156/5,492</td>
<td>3971/4,772</td>
<td>4213/4,732</td>
<td>18,251/27,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.60-3.79</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0/250</td>
<td>6/416</td>
<td>40/884</td>
<td>221/1,692</td>
<td>707/2,869</td>
<td>1,520/4,177</td>
<td>2,538/4,929</td>
<td>3,014/4,549</td>
<td>2,209/2,944</td>
<td>1,478/1,774</td>
<td>11,733/24,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.40-3.59</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5/382</td>
<td>7/577</td>
<td>41/1,108</td>
<td>190/1,865</td>
<td>510/2,691</td>
<td>939/3,366</td>
<td>1,359/3,554</td>
<td>1,475/2,835</td>
<td>979/1,559</td>
<td>565/791</td>
<td>6,070/18,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.20-3.39</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/455</td>
<td>2/569</td>
<td>26/1,001</td>
<td>118/1,483</td>
<td>290/1,864</td>
<td>471/2,138</td>
<td>584/1,919</td>
<td>566/1,383</td>
<td>334/695</td>
<td>158/273</td>
<td>2,553/11,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00-3.19</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/499</td>
<td>5/515</td>
<td>13/710</td>
<td>62/959</td>
<td>136/1,070</td>
<td>223/1,034</td>
<td>237/908</td>
<td>228/650</td>
<td>103/245</td>
<td>57/123</td>
<td>1,065/6,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.80-2.99</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.60-2.79</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0/306</td>
<td>2/212</td>
<td>1/278</td>
<td>10/254</td>
<td>22/257</td>
<td>31/175</td>
<td>17/124</td>
<td>11/69</td>
<td>18/42</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>117/1,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.40-2.59</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.20-2.39</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0/126</td>
<td>0/67</td>
<td>0/55</td>
<td>1/37</td>
<td>4/34</td>
<td>6/26</td>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19/387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00-2.19</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0/76</td>
<td>0/22</td>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>0/18</td>
<td>1/11</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2/159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less than 2.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0/38</td>
<td>1/10</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1/67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13/2,927</td>
<td>32/3,081</td>
<td>174/5,109</td>
<td>834/7,981</td>
<td>2,377/11,522</td>
<td>5,059/14,953</td>
<td>8,030/16,888</td>
<td>9,498/15,217</td>
<td>7,663/10,381</td>
<td>6,494/7,758</td>
<td>40,174/95,797</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clinical

Two questions:

1. Do you want to be a ______ and will you make a good ______?
   Observation helps answer

2. Do you want to work with patients and will you excel at that work?
   Direct patient care helps answer
Community Service?

Why does it matter?
Beginning the conversation:

“How do you define leadership?”

“What have you done that fits with that definition?”
Myths and Facts
Myth #1

Students must have a 3.6+ GPA to be competitive
Reality

It’s not that simple.

- Rigor of curriculum
- Holistic application review
- Trends in grades
- School’s “personality”
Myth #2

Students usually apply at the end of junior year

LATE?
Average age of matriculants to health professions is ~24-25

Less than 30% of those who went through our 2019 Health Professions Evaluation Committee were juniors
Myth #3

Students must major in a science.
Prerequisites and doing well matter
Myth #4

Community college credit is “bad.”
Reality

Bigger picture matters

• School-by-school variation
• Motivation?
Myth #5

Students need to add ALL THE THINGS to their schedule.
Reality

Get them to think about what they’re already doing

- Transferability of skills
- Cross-over of experiences
- Using your full year (summers, winters, and other “off” seasons)
Myth #6

There’s no harm in applying “just to see.”
• Schools may wonder *why*
• It’s not cheap to apply!
CASE STUDIES
John is a sophomore who is majoring in biomedical engineering. He is a first-generation college student who aspires to go to medical school one day. Thus far, John has achieved a cumulative GPA of 2.97, with Cs in most of his mathematics classes. He comes to your office to ask how he can be a competitive applicant to medical schools.

Addition: When you ask him about his collegiate experiences, he tells you that he works 35 hours per week as a waiter at a local restaurant to help make ends meet, but otherwise is not involved in extra- or co-curricular activities.
Sara is a junior pre-PA student with a 3.72 GPA. She arrives to your office and is fretting because she thinks she may earn her first C this semester. She isn’t sure whether to take a “W.”

Addition: As you talk, it becomes apparent that some of the PA programs on her list require at least a B- in this course to consider it as a required prerequisite for admission.
Lily is a junior pre-PT student majoring in human development. She had been interested in pursuing a career in education, but recently changed her mind. She tells you that she is worried because she wants to apply on-time to PT programs, but she isn’t sure if she has the right coursework completed.

Addition: As you get to chatting, Lily tells you that all of her experiences are related to her former pre-education goals. She is wondering what she should do this spring break to gain pre-PT experience.
Marcus is a senior who is interested in medical school. He shadowed a physician a few years ago for two days and participates in the Big Event and Relay for Life once per year. He knows that he could stand to be more involved, but tells you that he figures he will simply apply this cycle to “see what happens.”

Addition: He got a late start in his chemistry sequence, and hasn’t yet taken biochemistry. The medical schools that he is applying to don’t officially require biochemistry, so he tells you he is going to study biochemistry on his own over the summer, take the MCAT in August, and then apply in the fall once he gets his score back.
Questions?