



Professional School Prep: School of Pharmacy

What is Pharmacy School?

Pharmacy School is a four-year doctorate-level program, in which students learn the science of pharmaceuticals including: physiology, pathophysiology, medicinal chemistry, pharmacognosy (the study of the origins of drugs), pharmacology, and toxicology. Once they have mastered these basic concepts, students will work on gaining the practicum experience gaining and clinical skills necessary to practice as a pharmacist.

What should I know about Pharmacy

Pharmacists are drug information experts; ultimately they are concerned about patients' health and wellness. Pharmacists work in community pharmacies, hospitals, managed care settings, public health offices, the armed forces, private industry, and in governmental positions. While their responsibilities vary depending on their area of practice and specialty, pharmacists remain an incredibly important part of the health care team. Pharmacists dispense medications, monitor patient health and progress, and help maximize patient response to medication. In a clinical setting they also advise physicians, nurses, and other health professionals on drug decisions. Retail pharmacists educate consumers and patients on the use of prescriptions and over-the-counter meds.

Related Fields

Biochemistry/Chemistry	Clinical Psychology
Advanced-Practice Nursing	Oriental Medicine
Chiropractic Medicine	Public Health
Medical Scientists	Nursing
Anesthesiology	Pharmacy Aides
Naturopathy	Pharmacy Technicians

Where can I study Pharmacy?

Currently there are two pharmacy schools in Washington state (UW and WSU: Spokane & Yakima) and approximately 129 schools across the country.

How do I get started?

When considering pharmacy school, ask: Is this the only profession I could ever see myself doing? Am I willing to go into substantial debt in order to pursue this dream? Am I potentially willing to give up a significant portion of my social life (eg. birthdays, holidays, parties, weddings) for the rest of my life? To help answer these questions, students who are pursuing the goal of attending pharmacy school should remember the acronym "S-T-A-R-T":

Shadow

Shadowing is the act of working with, and observing a current pharmacist practicing in a clinical setting. Often this can occur in a private practice, hospital, or possibly in a retail setting. Shadowing is a huge part of becoming a well-rounded and competitive applicant. One of the main purposes of shadowing is to help you, the student, become more aware of what it means to be a pharmacist. Students interested in working in a pharmacy should note that each pharmacy will have strict regulations and qualifications necessary for volunteers/employees. This may require a student consider obtaining special certification or licensure to meet the qualifications outlined for volunteers/technicians required by pharmacies they are interested in working at.

Talk

Talk to someone! Being a student interested in going to pharmacy school means that a large part of your time should be spent learning as much about the opportunities available to you to develop as a student as possible. Working with your adviser, instructors, and classmates can all be incredibly helpful in helping connect you with the resources and opportunities you will need. A large part of being a pharmacist is being able to work as part of an intricate team; being able to rely on your expertise as well as the skills and expertise of others. Therefore, get started utilizing these skills early by consulting with friends, conducting informational interviews, and attending campus info sessions.

Academics

In order to be eligible to apply to pharmacy school, a student must complete all of the prerequisites for the school in question. Every school will have a slightly different set of prerequisite requirements, but in general you will complete:

Science Coursework

- ◆ One year of General Chemistry
- ◆ One quarter of Calculus
- ◆ One quarter of Statistics
- ◆ One year of General Biology
- ◆ One year of Organic Chemistry
- ◆ Microbiology
- ◆ Anatomy and Physiology (WSU only)
- ◆ Two quarters of Biochemistry

* Most math & science classes must be taken within 7 yrs. of application

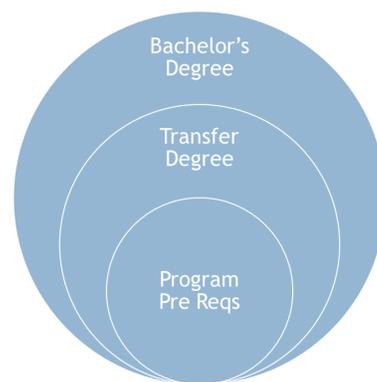
Other coursework

- ◆ English
- ◆ Speech Communications (UW only)
- ◆ Micro Economics
- ◆ Psychology
- ◆ Ethics (Philosophy)

*Disclaimer: Prerequisites are different at every school. Students **must** check at each school they are considering.

In addition to the above prerequisite courses, there are three major things to note about pharmacy school:

1. While technically not required by some schools, completing a bachelor's degree is highly recommended for prospective pharmacy students.
2. Most universities do not offer a bachelor's degree in "pre-pharmacy".
3. There is no particular major that "looks good" to a Pharmacy school. You can major in whatever you would like and still be a competitive applicant. However, most students try and fit the majority if not all of their pre-pharmacy requirements within their initial bachelor degree (see diagram) and thus biology, chemistry, biochemistry and environmental health tend to be popular pre-pharm major choices.



Research

It is necessary to thoroughly research the pharmacy schools you wish to apply to. Every student interested in pharmacy should familiarize themselves with American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (website www.aacp.org). The AACP is a great resource to learn more in depth about everything discussed on this guide, and get a jump start to your career in pharmacy. Generally speaking students may apply to anywhere between 10-12 schools per application cycle. Each school will most likely have a slightly different set of prerequisite courses they require. Therefore, it is important that you have a clear vision of the type of education you will want in both your undergraduate and pharmacy school experience. You can gain this information by attending information sessions and exploring university and pharmacy school websites.

Test

All students wishing to apply to a Pharmacy School should first complete a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution and take the Pharmacy College Admissions Test (the PCAT). This test covers a variety of biological, behavioral, and physical sciences and is taken approximately one year prior to when the student is planning to apply for their first application cycle.

What should I do now?

Students interested in getting started with the road toward pharmacy school can use a variety of resources here on campus. The Docs and Dents Club at BC is a great resource, as well as attending one of our quarterly pre-professional info sessions. Lastly you should consider meeting with an adviser. Schedule an appointment with an advisor by calling 425-564-2212 or by stopping by the advising front desk located on the 2nd floor of the B building. You can also schedule an appointment at the Science Division, L200.

This is an unofficial guide only. It is the student's responsibility to research and communicate with all community college and university programs to which he/she intends to apply to establish prerequisites and admission requirements, as they vary and are subject to change without notice.

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