**Advising for Students Interested in Dental Programs**

At the College of William and Mary, predental students can schedule individual advising appointments with Professor Beverly Sher, the College’s Health Professions Advisor, by emailing her at btsher@wm.edu. These appointments can be scheduled as early as the summer before the beginning of freshman year. She also provides advice by email.

Dental school representatives give presentations to the College’s Health Careers Club nearly every year, usually in the fall. To receive announcements about these presentations, subscribe to the health careers advising listserv, healthcareersadvising@lists.wm.edu, as follows:

1) Log in to lists.wm.edu

2) Click on "Academic" on the list of types of lists

3) Scroll down to healthcareersadvising@lists.wm.edu and click on the name of the listserv

4) Click the Subscribe link on the left side of the page to subscribe.

To learn more about dentistry, as well as about the admissions policies and requirements of the various U.S. and Canadian dental schools, consult the *ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools*. This exceptionally useful publication can be ordered online from the American Dental Education Association. It includes detailed information about the dental profession and the dental school application process as well as school-specific admissions information.

To be ready to apply to dental school, you will need to accomplish two important tasks: you must successfully complete the prerequisite courses required for dental school, and you must familiarize yourself with the work of the dental profession by spending a significant amount of time in dental settings.

**Course Selection**

Because different dental schools have differing requirements, be sure to consult the current version of the *ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools* to learn which undergraduate courses the dental schools that most interest you expect you to take. That said, most of the dental schools in the United States require 8 semester hours each of introductory biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics. Laboratory work is required in all of these sciences. At the College, these requirements can be met with Biology 220/221 and Biology 225/226; Chemistry 103/103L, 206/206L, 307/353, and 308/354; and Physics 101/101L plus Physics 102/102L or Physics 107/107L plus Physics 108/108L. Students planning to major in Chemistry or Physics should take Physics
Many dental schools also require a semester of biochemistry; predental students should thus plan to take Biochemistry. Biochemistry is required by the VCU School of Dentistry.

In addition to the required predental science courses, many dental schools have long lists of recommended courses; the VCU School of Dentistry’s representatives tell us that they expect students to have taken 4 to 6 of the recommended science courses in addition to the required science courses by the time they apply to dental school (i.e., by the end of the junior year, for students who are not planning to take time off between college and dental school) and such policies are common at other dental schools as well. The table below shows the science courses recommended by the VCU School of Dentistry as of August 2014 and their William and Mary equivalents (see [http://www.dentistry.vcu.edu/programs/dds/admissioncriteria/](http://www.dentistry.vcu.edu/programs/dds/admissioncriteria/) for details.) Courses in the VCU column that are marked with asterisks are strongly recommended; courses that are not marked with asterisks are highly recommended if time permits. VCU requires that students earn at least a C in the prerequisite courses. For lists of the recommended courses for other dental schools, see the *ADEA Guide*.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>VCU Recommendation</th>
<th>William &amp;Mary Course</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anatomy*</td>
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<td>Cell Biology*</td>
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<td>Microbiology*</td>
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<td>Genetics*</td>
<td>Molecular Genetics, Genetic Analysis</td>
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Many dental schools also require two semesters of English. “W” freshman seminars and English literature and composition courses can generally be used to fulfill this requirement; many dental schools also accept AP credit.

Mathematics requirements vary. Some dental schools require or recommend taking calculus or statistics. For the requirements of schools that interest you, see the ADEA Guide.

While the dental schools will allow you to choose any major you like, it is often most convenient for predental students to major in one of the sciences, given the large degree of overlap between the requirements for majors such as Biology, Chemistry and Neuroscience and the courses required and/or recommended by the dental schools.

Clinical Experience

Dental school admissions committees expect competitive applicants to have spent a significant amount of time volunteering or working in dental settings. The VCU School of Dentistry’s representatives have suggested that students should acquire about 150 hours of dental experience before applying to dental school; 130 of these hours should be split between two general dentists, 10 should be spent with an orthodontist, and 10 with an oral surgeon.

Additional opportunities to acquire dental experience and learn more about the dental profession include volunteering in a free clinic that offers dental care, participating in vacation enrichment programs such as UMDNJ’s Gateway to Dentistry program (see http://dentalschool.umdnj.edu/gateway.htm) and SMDEP (http://www.smdep.org/), and even participating in medical/dental service trips abroad. The ADEA has developed ethical guidelines for predental students who participate in clinical activities abroad, and students should familiarize themselves with these guidelines before signing up for any international service opportunity to be sure that the things that they will be doing on the trip will not violate the ADEA guidelines. The guidelines are available in PDF form on the ADEA website; the College’s Office of Community Engagement and Scholarship can provide further information and guidance.