

UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON**

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PRE-HEALTH ADVISING CENTER

# **Introductory Orientation**

## **for new Allied-Health students**

**Dr. Gregory Spillers**

Director | Pre-Health Advising Center

# About the Pre-Health Advising Center

- **Mission:** To assist UH students interested in healthcare careers.
  - This includes medicine, dentistry, nursing, or allied-health.
- We can provide guidance on:
  - Various healthcare career paths
  - Admission requirements
  - Application process and timelines.
- We also offer various Pre-Health Events throughout the year.
- We are not a major/department and will not replace your major advisor.

# About the Pre-Health Advising Center

- We are located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of CBB (across from Writing Center)
  - Email: [prehealth@uh.edu](mailto:prehealth@uh.edu)
  - Website: [www.uh.edu/pre-health](http://www.uh.edu/pre-health)
- Appointments can be scheduled in [Navigate](#).
  - Formal appointments are restricted to currently enrolled students. Prospective students and alumni may contact us at [prehealth@uh.edu](mailto:prehealth@uh.edu).
- We also offer [walk-in sessions](#) each week for quick questions.
- Please sign-up to the [Pre-Health Email List](#) to receive emails from our office.

# Pre-Health Advising Center Staff

- **Dr. Gregory Spillers—Director**

- Dr. Spillers joined the Pre-Health Advising Center as Director in 2020. He previously served as the first full-time Director of Pre-Health Advising at the University of Georgia. In 2017, he became Associate Director of Academic Programs in the Department of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Houston.
- Dr. Spillers received his B.A. from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro and both his M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Georgia.

- **Mr. Ricardo Garza—Health Professions Advisor**

- Mr. Ricardo Garza joined the Pre-Health Advising Center in 2021. Mr. Garza previously served as Health Professions Advisor at the University of Texas - Dallas. He has many years of experience assisting undergraduate students in Texas achieve their healthcare career goals.
- Mr. Garza received his B.S. from Prairie View A&M University and his M.A. from Texas State University.

# First Steps for New Students!

1. Join the [Pre-Health mailing list](#) to receive email updates from our office.

- We send regular emails about upcoming events and pertinent application information.

2. Explore our website: [www.uh.edu/pre-health](http://www.uh.edu/pre-health)

- Includes information on various career paths, required courses for admission, resources for building a strong application, and other information.

3. Download the *pre-PA/PT/OT Quick Facts Handout and 4-year Plan*.

- These 1-page guides provide detailed overview of course requirements, application components, and overall timeline to get you started.

4. Bookmark the [Pre-Health Event Calendar](#)

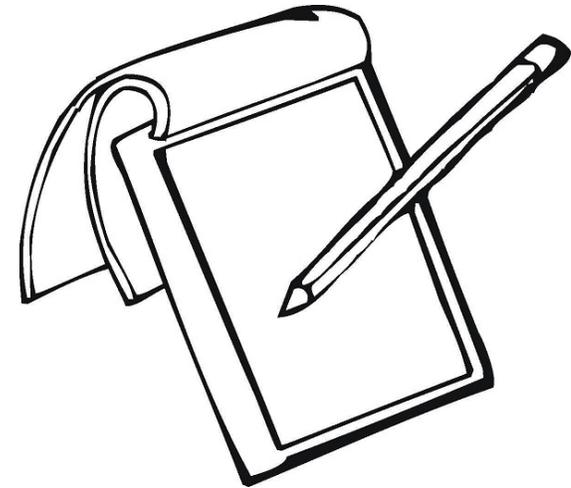
- Includes student organization meetings, events, and workshops!

# When should you meet with our office?

- Before making an appointment with our office, please ensure you have first:
  - Met with your major advisor to discuss your degree plan and course enrollment schedule.
  - Reviewed the information found in this orientation as well as on our [website](#).
  - Joined the [Pre-Health email list](#).
  - Considered submitting quick questions to [prehealth@uh.edu](mailto:prehealth@uh.edu) (usually much faster than scheduling an appointment).
- Actively enrolled Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors can schedule an appointment with our office in [Navigate](#).
- Incoming Freshman are asked to wait until their second semester at UH to schedule an individual appointment with our office.
- Pre-Nursing students are required to meet with College of Nursing advisors, rather than our office.

# Orientation Outline

- What does it mean to be pre-Allied Health at UH?
- Allied-Health programs in Texas
- Choosing a Major
- Admission Requirements
- GRE



# What does it mean to be pre-”Allied-Health” at UH?

- Allied-Health encompasses several healthcare fields, including Physician Assistant, Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy.
- The University of Houston does not offer any formal Pre-Health programs.
  - You cannot major in pre-PA, pre-PT, etc. nor can you officially “declare” that you are Pre-Health.
  - You are not required to meet with our office—though we strongly encourage you to.
  - Our office will not replace your major advisor—you will still need to meet with them every semester.
- Recommended first steps as a new student at UH:
  - Focus primarily on establishing strong study habits and acclimating to university-life
  - Earn strong grades (A’s/B’s) in your first-year
  - Utilize campus resources, such as LAUNCH Tutoring and SEP Workshops in NSM
  - Utilize the resources available on our website: [www.uh.edu/pre-health](http://www.uh.edu/pre-health)

# Key Points To Consider As You Get Started

- **Major does not matter that much!**
  - Science majors may be more practical—but they are not required nor automatically the best fit.
  - Common majors include: Health, Nutrition Science, Exercise Science, Psychology, and Biology
  - Our office encourages you to pursue majors/minors that you think you would really enjoy.
- **Challenge yourself! Explore what UH has to offer you!**
  - Avoid thinking there's only one path to PA or PT/OT school.
  - Pursue clubs, activities, minors/majors that you are interested in (*not what you think looks better*)
  - Try to take a full-load every semester (>12 credit hours/term), unless you are working full-time.
- **Admissions committees appreciate well-rounded students who “love to learn”**
  - Do not simply look for the path of least-resistance to protect their GPA. A student with a 4.0 is not automatically better than a student with a 3.6.
  - Overall GPA vs. Pre-requisite GPA

# Allied-Health Programs in Texas

## ■ Physician Assistant Programs

- Baylor College of Medicine
- Hardin-Simmons University
- Texas Tech University
- University of Mary-Hardin Baylor
- University of North Texas

## ■ Physical Therapy Programs

- Angelo State University
- Baylor College of Medicine
- Hardin-Simmons University
- Texas State University
- Texas Tech University
- Texas Woman's University
- University of Mary-Hardin Baylor

## ■ Occupational Therapy Programs

- Abilene Christian University
- Texas Tech University
- Texas Woman's University
- University of St. Augustine

- University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley
- University of Texas Health – San Antonio
- University of Texas – Southwestern
- University of Texas Medical Branch - Galveston

- University of Texas – El Paso
- US Army Baylor University
- University of North Texas
- University of Texas Health – San Antonio
- University of Texas – Southwestern
- University of Texas Medical Branch – Galveston
- University of the Incarnate Word

- University of Texas – El Paso
- University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley
- University of Texas Health – San Antonio
- University of Texas Medical Branch – Galveston

# What is a Physician Assistant?

- Physician Assistants (PAs) provide services under the supervision of physicians. PAs are trained to provide diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventive healthcare services, as deemed necessary by a physician.
- PAs are educated as generalists in medicine. However, many PAs work in specialty fields, such as: cardiovascular surgery, orthopedics, and emergency medicine. Most PAs work in the primary care specialty areas of family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics and gynecology.
- PAs work under the supervision of a physician, examine and treat patients, order and interpret laboratory tests and X-rays, make diagnoses and prescribe medications, and give treatment, such as setting broken bones and immunizing patients

# PA Admission Requirements

- The minimum pre-requisites for admission into PA programs include:
  - **Anatomy & Physiology I and II:** BIOL 2301/2101 and BIOL 2302/2102
  - **Biology I and II:** BIOL 1306/1106 and BIOL 1307/1107
  - **English I and II:** ENGL 1301 and ENGL 1302
  - **General Chemistry I and II:** CHEM 1311/1111 and CHEM 1312/1112
  - **Genetics:** BIOL 3301
  - **Immunology:** BIOL 4323 (*only for UTMB*)
  - **Medical Terminology:** HLT 3325
  - **Microbiology:** BIOL 2321/2121
  - **Organic Chemistry I:** CHEM 2323/2123
  - **Psychology:** PSYC 2301
  - **Sociology:** SOCI 1301
  - **Statistics:** MATH 3339 or PSYC 2317 (\*Statistics course must cover Analysis of Variance-ANOVA)
- Additional information regarding course requirements can be found on our [website](#).
- It is important you verify the specific course requirements of each PA program in which you hope to apply, as they may vary.

# What is a Physical Therapist?

- Doctors of Physical Therapy (DPTs) treat patients with injuries, disabilities, and disease, and can work with a variety of populations with a wide range of functional problems. Physical therapy uses physical methods to assist patients with functional problems from injuries or illnesses.
- The goal of physical therapy is to help restore function, improve movement, manage pain, and prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs. Physical therapists spend time learning the functional limitations of their patients in order to make individualized treatment plans and to monitor improvement.
- Some physical therapists specialize in a particular type of care (by patient age or type of therapy). Physical therapists often actively work with patients and spend a large portion of their days on their feet.

# PT Admission Requirements

- The minimum pre-requisites for admission into PT programs include:
  - **Anatomy & Physiology I and II:** BIOL 2301/2101 and BIOL 2302/2102
  - **Biology I and II:** BIOL 1306/1106 and BIOL 1307/1107
  - **Developmental Psychology:** PSYC 2307 and/or PSYC 2308
    - HDFS 2317 and PSYC 4321 are accepted by some institutions in lieu of Developmental Psychology
  - **English I and II:** ENGL 1301 and ENGL 1302
  - **General Chemistry I and II:** CHEM 1311/1111 and CHEM 1312/1112
  - **Medical Terminology:** HLT 3325
  - **Physics I and II:** PHYS 1301/1101 and PHYS 1302/1102
  - **Psychology:** PSYC 2301
  - **Statistics:** MATH 1342 or MATH 3339 or PSYC 2317
- Additional information regarding course requirements can be found on our [website](#).
- It is important you verify the specific course requirements of each PT program in which you hope to apply, as they may vary.

# What is an Occupational Therapist?

- Occupational therapy is the use of assessment and intervention to develop, recover, or maintain meaningful activities (occupations) for people with disabilities, injuries or impairments.
- Occupational therapists (OTs) can work in a variety of settings with a wide variety of populations. OTs can work in hospitals, rehab facilities, skilled nursing facilities, outpatient clinics, schools, home, and community settings. The different practice areas of OT include children and youth, mental health, disability and rehabilitation, healthy living, aging, and work-related.
- Occupational Therapists earn either a master's (M.S.O.T.) or doctorate (O.T.D) degree in Occupational Therapy through an Occupational Therapy School.

# OT Admission Requirements

- The minimum pre-requisites for admission into OT programs include:
  - **Anatomy & Physiology I and II:** BIOL 2301/2101 and BIOL 2302/2102
  - **Abnormal Psychology:** PSYC 4321
  - **Biology I and II:** BIOL 1306/1106 and BIOL 1307/1107
  - **English I and II:** ENGL 1301 and ENGL 1302
  - **Lifespan/Human Development:** PSYC 2307 or PSYC 2308 or HDFS 2317 (confirm requirement with intended OTD programs)
  - **Kinesiology:** KIN 1532, or KIN 3309 if Biomechanics is required
  - **Medical Terminology:** HLT 3325
  - **Physics I:** PHYS 1301/1101
  - **Social Sciences:** PSYC 1300 and/or SOCI 1300
  - **Statistics:** MATH 1342 or MATH 3339 or PSYC 2317
- Additional information regarding course requirements can be found on our [website](#).
- It is important you verify the specific course requirements of each OT program in which you hope to apply, as they may vary.

# Other Allied-Health Careers

- If you are interested in a career in healthcare, but unsure of where to start check out [explorehealthcareers.org](https://www.explorehealthcareers.org).
- Our office also has an overview of some other popular careers, including:
  - Anesthesiology Assistant
  - Chiropractic Medicine
  - Genetic Counseling
  - Healthcare Administration
  - Mental Health and Counseling
  - Podiatric Medicine
  - Public Health
  - Speech-Language Pathology

# Is AP or IB credit accepted?

- Course credit earned by exams, such as AP or IB can sometimes be used for pre-requisite requirements. However, these policies vary widely.
- You are not automatically required to retake a course if you have earned AP or IB credit for a pre-requisite.
- Generally speaking, you may use AP/IB credit for Allied-Health programs, but it never hurts to confirm the admissions policies for the specific programs in which you hope to apply.

# What is the GRE?

- GRE is the test that most allied-health programs require for admission.
- GRE consists of three sections:
  1. *Quantitative Reasoning*
  2. *Verbal Reasoning*
  3. *Essay (two prompts)*
- GRE scores range from 260-340
  - The quantitative and verbal sections are scored on a 130-170 scale.
  - Essay section is scored from 0-6, with both prompts averaged to produce a total score.
  - A score of 300 is ~50<sup>th</sup> percentile
  - A competitive applicant should score >305-310.
- The GRE takes ~3 hours and 45 minutes to complete and costs \$205.

# GRE Frequently Asked Questions

- **Is there any required coursework that I must complete to prepare for the GRE?**
  - No, the GRE is a “general” exam and covers topics that most students have had in high school.
- **When and where can I take the exam?**
  - The GRE is offered on-campus at UH as well as testing sites throughout Houston.
  - Most students take the GRE during the Spring term ahead of their specific application cycle.
- **What is the policy regarding re-takes?**
  - You can take the GRE once every 21 days, up to 5-times within any 12-month period.
  - Retakes are not recommended but permitted. Most applicants take the GRE 1-2 times.
- **How long will my scores be valid?**
  - Your GRE scores are kept on file for a maximum of 5-years following your test-date.
- **How should I prepare?**
  - Our office does not endorse any specific test prep resource, but encourage you to explore the different options: Educational Testing Service, GRE Prep, NextStep, Kaplan, Princeton Review, etc.
  - You can study on your own and do well—key is to make study plan and take practice tests.

# What is Shadowing?

- Shadowing involves observing healthcare professionals in action.
  - Most allied-health programs will require experience as well as a letter of evaluation.
- Many schools require a set minimum—usually 20-100 hours.
  - Variety is encouraged if possible (indeed, PT programs usually require two settings).
- Start with your family healthcare providers.
  - Campus organizations are also a great way for connecting and networking with potential clinical opportunities.
- Do not engage in any activity that could be considered the practice of medicine.
  - This is especially important for medical mission trips abroad.

# What is Direct Patient Care Experience?

- Many PA programs recommend or require direct patient care experience.
  - Direct patient care is different from shadowing, in that you are directly involved in the “hands-on” care and treatment of patients.
- Most TX programs do not require minimum hours of direct patient care.
  - That said, out-of-state programs often require experience ranging from 100-1000 hours.
  - Competitive applicants will have consistent patient-care experience and engagement.
- Some potential options include working as a CNA, MA, or EMT.

# What is Volunteering?

- Volunteering involves doing good work and giving back to your community.
  - You want to be in healthcare to help people? Well, prove it!
- Importantly, volunteer experiences do not have to be medical or clinical in nature
- No minimum hours, but strong applicants show consistent engagement.
  - Try to find activities where you are regularly involved, rather than one-offs.
- Keep a record of your experiences/activities (dates, locations, responsibilities).
  - This will make completing your eventual application much easier

# What is Research?

- Participating in a research lab is recommended, but not required for admission.
  - You may participate in a lab for course-credit, for pay, or as a volunteer.
  - Most students begin looking for research opportunities in their sophomore year.
- Only do research if you are truly interested in it.
  - Plan to be involved in a lab or project for at least a year.
  - You must be able to discuss the research (goals, results, your role) in-depth.
  - Does not have to be medical or translational.
- Talk to your advisor, your professors, and review departmental websites.
  - All it takes is a few emails to prospective professors to become a research assistant.

# What is Leadership?

- Get involved in student organizations and the community.
  - Admissions committees prefer applicants who take charge in the activities in which they are most passionate.
- Attending organization meetings is helpful but leading one is better!
  - Who cares if you are a member of 10 clubs? Active involvement is what matters!
  - You do not need to be President, but some executive or advisory role is helpful.
- Check out our [website for a list of student organizations](#) to get started.

# Letters of Evaluation

- Most Allied-Health programs will require 3 letters of evaluation:
  - 1 healthcare provider (PA, PT, OT)
  - 1 professor (usually within major area or pre-requisite course)
  - 1 additional letter from another healthcare provider or academic professional
- Letters should come from people who know you!
  - Will need to describe you as an individual, not just as a student—behavior, character, maturity-level, etc. are all important.

# Overall aspects to building a competitive application

## ■ **Academics**

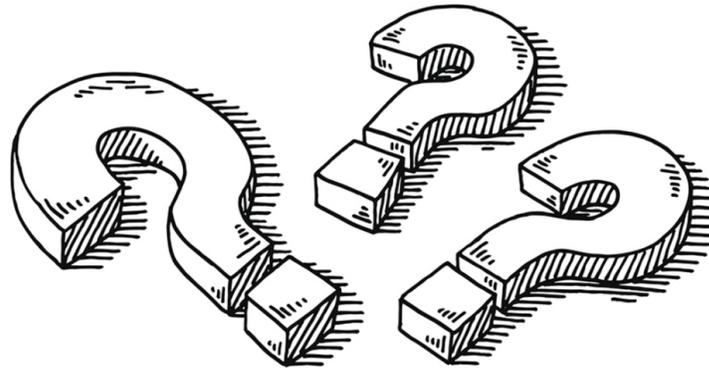
- Strong performance in pre-requisite courses (C or better required—A or B preferred)
- Limit withdrawals (W's) and number of courses taken outside of UH.
- Challenge yourself! Try taking pre-requisite classes concurrently. (>12 hours/semester)
- Not all about 4.0.

## ■ **Extracurricular activities**

- Shadowing (Exposure to “clinician-patient” interaction)
- Volunteering (Commitment to helping others and community involvement)
- Leadership (Extracurricular engagement)
- Research (does not need to be medical or clinical)

# Major Takeaways!

- Major/minor in whatever you are most interested.
  - Biology and other “science” majors are a good fit—but not necessarily the best choice!
  - Do not worry about what you think health professional schools want to see.
  - Seek out activities and organizations that you are passionate about—even if non-medical
- Your primary focus in your first year should be on strong grades (A’s/B’s)
  - Do not stress about the GRE, when to apply, or other application components
  - The best thing you can do to prepare as a Freshman/Sophomore is get good grades!
- Utilize the resources available in the Pre-Health Advising Center!
  - Join our [Pre-Health listserv](#) for email updates
  - Review our website: [www.uh.edu/pre-health](http://www.uh.edu/pre-health)
  - Contact us with questions: [prehealth@uh.edu](mailto:prehealth@uh.edu).



**Thank you! Questions?**

**Feel free to contact our office at [prehealth@uh.edu](mailto:prehealth@uh.edu)**

**Visit our website at [www.uh.edu/pre-health](http://www.uh.edu/pre-health)**