

Planning for Dental School

CAREER SERVICES



Southwestern University at Georgetown, Texas
McCook-Crain Building (512) 863-1346 (512) 863-1270 fax
career.services@southwestern.edu www.southwestern.edu/careers

Explore. Experience. Engage.

Why?

Do you really want to be a dentist? Career Services and SU natural science faculty can advise you about the process for applying to dental school, but only you can decide if that's what you really want to do. One way to explore your interests is to volunteer at a dentist's office locally or in your hometown. Another way is to read information about dental schools and dentistry as a career. Be sure to join the SU Pre-Dental Society or any other health-related organizations.

What?

In addition to providing primary dental care, dentists teach in dental schools, conduct research, serve in government organizations, and educate their patients and the community about oral and overall health. While most dentists (about 80%) practice general dentistry, the profession also offers eight dental specialties, including orthodontics, endodontics, and periodontics. General dentists under the age of 35 earn on average \$77,760 per year, while salaries of all ages average \$109,000 per year. The average income for all dental specialists is \$175,000 per year.

How?

Dental school is usually a four-year professional curriculum. Students must have completed at least 60 hours of undergraduate/pre-professional courses prior to admission. However, completion of a bachelor's degree is highly recommended. In 1997, almost 92% of new dental students had completed four or more years of college. Students may also elect to pursue additional course work in one of the eight dental specialties, although application to these specific programs is often necessary. These students must complete an additional two years of school with the exception of Oral Surgeons, who need an additional four-to-six years. The remaining seven specialties include Dental Public Health, Endodontics, Orthodontics, Oral Pathology, Pediatric Dentistry, Periodontics, and Prosthodontics.

To enter dental school, students should:

1. Complete the recommended courses listed on the back of this page as part of the chosen degree plan.
2. Work or volunteer for a dentist.
3. Register for and take the Dental Admissions Test (DAT). Students should take the DAT 17 months prior to when they plan to enter school. The DAT is a half-day exam that includes four sections. These sections cover biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, reading comprehension, qualitative reasoning, and a perceptual ability section. DAT practice tests are available in the DAT registration book and study guides can be purchased at the bookstore. The DAT is now given only in the computerized version at Sylvan Learning Centers. ***Never take the DAT for practice!***
4. Complete the applications to their chosen schools.

Selection Criteria

1. **Academic Performance:** Overall academic performance is considered (including transfer hours) with science courses weighted heavily. The minimum grade point average (in order to apply) is 2.00 for all course work. However, the average grade point average at the Texas dental schools (for 1999) were: 3.32 science GPA and a 3.42 overall GPA.
2. **Test scores:** Students should achieve competitive scores on the DAT. The average accepted score in Texas for the perceptual ability section was a 16.6, while the average for the science sections was an 18.
3. **Semester Course Load:** Withdrawals, frequent drops and low course loads may cause concern for admissions committees.
4. **Letters of Recommendation:** Students must submit four letters of recommendation, one of which must be from a dentist, that address their motivation, leadership potential, dedication, and integrity.
5. **Interview:** Competitive applicants undergo two or three 30-minute interviews in which personal traits such as maturity and interpersonal ability are evaluated.
6. **Writing Skills:** Dental schools require that students write a biographical sketch or personal essay to assess clarity of communication skills.

Timeline

First and Sophomore Years: Complete prerequisites (see below), join health/science student groups, begin building relationships with professors and volunteer with dentists.

Junior and Senior Years: Students should follow the schedule below starting in the fall of their junior year.

<i>December</i>	<i>February/March</i>	<i>March/April</i>	<i>May - July</i>	<i>September - November</i>	<i>December 1</i>
Begin preparing for DAT	Register for DAT	Take DAT	Apply to dental schools	Interviews	First letters of acceptance mailed out.

Prerequisites

Students wishing to enter dental school may select any major as long as the required courses are taken. A minimum of 90 hours is required by most schools (the Baylor College of Dentistry requires a minimum of 60 hours), but a majority of accepted applicants have a bachelor's degree. The required courses for Texas dental schools are as follows:

Courses	Hours
Biology (with labs)	
General	8
Advanced	8
Chemistry (with labs)	
General	8
Organic	8
Biochemistry	3
English	6
Physics (with labs)	8

Notes:

- Some dental schools require or suggest additional courses in business, psychology, or additional sciences.
- Students planning to apply after obtaining their prerequisites at Southwestern University should contact their chosen school for a Course Equivalency sheet to determine which courses are acceptable.
- Only those students applying to the University of Texas Dental Branch at Houston are required to complete one semester of biochemistry, although this course is highly recommended for all students.

Cost

Tuition for the three Texas schools is the same. For Texas residents, tuition is approximately \$5,400 per year. For out of state residents it is three times the Texas resident's tuition. The cost of books, instruments, and supplies are variable, but typically cost \$4,000-\$7,000 for the first two years and considerably less for the second two years.

Texas Dental Schools

University of Texas Health Science
Center at Houston Dental Branch
P.O. Box 20068
Houston, Texas 77225
(713) 500-4151
www.db.uth.tmc.edu/

Baylor College of Dentistry:
A Member of the Texas A&M
University Health Science Center
3302 Gaston Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75246
(214) 828-8230
www.tambcd.edu/

University of Texas Health Science
Center at San Antonio Dental School
7703 Floyd Curl Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78284
(210) 567-2667
www.dental.uthscsa.edu/

Other Pre-Dental Resources

- SU Pre-Dental Society
- Official DAT Website: www.ada.org/prof/ed/testing/dat.asp
- SU Career Services website: www.southwestern.edu/careers
- SU Academic Services website: www.southwestern.edu/academic/acser-gradinf.html