



COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY

Post Baccalaureate Programs in the Health Field

What is a Post-Baccalaureate program?

A “post-bac” is a program that students pursue after they graduate from their undergraduate university in order to enhance their academic record before applying to graduate schools in the health field. The duration is usually about 1-2 years. Some programs are targeted towards groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in medicine or others from disadvantaged backgrounds.

There are two major types of Post-Baccalaureate programs:

1. **Career-Changers:** This type of program is designed for students who have not completed the basic science requirements for medical school or other health related fields. Usually students who go into these programs were non-science majors during their undergraduate careers and decided to go into medicine later in life. The coursework can be done in a formal post-bac program or on your own at a local university.
2. **Academic Record-Enhancers:** This type of program is designed for students who have the science background necessary for medical school, but feel that they need to raise their GPA to be more competitive. This can be achieved through certificate post-bac programs or through special master’s programs where an MS in biomedical sciences or a related field is earned.

What are some pros and cons of Post-Baccalaureate programs?

Pros

- Programs tend to have a set schedule, so students finish in a certain length of time.
- Special advisors for the program may help with the medical school application process, finding volunteer opportunities, planning how to study for the MCAT, and more.
- Well-known programs have good reputations and have competitive medical school acceptance rates.
- Sometimes these programs have small class sizes, providing good opportunities to connect with professors.
- Some programs will write a committee letter of recommendation for medical school.
- Programs may have links with certain medical schools to facilitate the admissions process.

Cons

- The vast majority of post-bac programs are expensive and it may be less costly to complete required coursework at a local, state, and public school. Students may also have future medical school expenses to consider.
- Quality of teaching, advising, research, and clinical opportunities can vary greatly.
- Some students feel that these programs create an overly competitive atmosphere
- Linkage programs with medical schools (where some post-bac students can gain special admission to the linked medical school) may not be guaranteed and may be hard to be accepted to if you are not in the top of the class.

What are factors I should consider when looking into programs?

When thinking about applying to Post-Baccalaureate programs, you should consider your own goals and what you want to get out of the program. Ask yourself if this will enhance your medical school or graduate school application, and if it is worth the cost. In addition, look into the program structure that would best fit your learning style. Program schedule, class size, and school atmosphere are factors that you may want to take into account when making your choice. Another important aspect is the happiness of the current students and the success rate of the program. Do current students in the program seem satisfied with it, and do people get accepted to the medical school you are interested in from this program? All these are factors you should think about when deciding whether or not to pursue a Post-Baccalaureate.

Additional Resources:

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Post-Bac Programs:

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/postbacc/>

New York Times' article on Post-Bac Programs:

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/15/education/edlife/a-second-opinion-the-post-baccalaureate.html?_r=0