Post-bac Programs: What can I do to strengthen my application?

There are a variety of Post-Baccalaureate and Master’s Programs that provide an excellent opportunity for you to strengthen your application. If your science GPA is low, if you lack breadth in your science courses, if you do not have research experience or if you have a low MCAT score, a Post-bac Program is a great idea!

What is the difference between the post-baccalaureate programs?

- **In general, “career changer” programs** are geared toward students who did not complete premedical requirements as undergraduates and are designed to provide preparation in the basic premedical sciences and complementary coursework and experiences.

- The **academic “enhancement” programs** are designed for students who have completed the premedical sciences but need to “enhance” science courses to strengthen their science GPAs. The basic idea is to give students the opportunity to prove themselves by taking demanding science courses. These programs typically offer master’s degrees or certificates.

- **“Underrepresented in medicine”** means those racial and ethnic populations that are underrepresented in the medical profession relative to their numbers in the general population. These programs, which generally fall under the heading of enhancement programs, are designed to support underrepresented students and increase the numbers of them who apply successfully to medical school.

What is important to think about before I get started on researching these programs?

- **Standards**: It is important to know the various types of programs available to you. Do not assume that enrolling in a post-bac program that is associated with a particular medical school will automatically improve your chances of getting into that medical school. Unless you have an agreement with a school to matriculate into the medical program, you should pick a program based on its merit.

- **Class Size**: Most pre-meds complete the pre-requisite courses over four years; in a post-bac you are completing the work in one year. Large class size may make it difficult to receive proper instruction. Also, you will need a recommendation from your basic sciences instructors to apply to medical school, so you may want additional opportunities to interact with the faculty. Find a suitable program that caters to your individual needs.

- **Master's program vs. Post-Baccalaureate**: A master's program in the sciences (i.e. physiology and microbiology) may not offer pre-med counseling to help improve your complete application for medical school. Also a master's program may concentrate on a
particular science field which may not be appropriate for a future medical student. If you are intending to enhance your science GPA, you must be in post-baccalaureate or master's program with coursework that can count toward your BCPM GPA when applying through AMCAS.

- **Science Coursework:** If you need to strengthen your science GPA, you will need to enroll in a program where the majority of the courses are BCPM courses, specifically biomedical coursework. It should also be remembered that master’s and enrichment program coursework does not impact the undergraduate GPA. The courses are listed under a post-baccalaureate or master’s program entry on the AMCAS or AACOMAS application.

**What are some important questions to ask?**

1. *How long has the program been established?*
2. *Do I need a minimum GPA or MCAT score to be eligible?*
3. *Is the GRE acceptable if I am unable to take the MCAT by the time the application is due?*
4. *Is an MCAT preparatory component offered?*
5. *Does the program involve taking classes with the medical school class?*
6. *How will the program support my application to medical school? What advising is offered to students who are enrolled?*
7. *What percentage of the students matriculates into medical school? After one year? After two years?*
8. *Have you received a grade below “C” in any of your premedical requirements that might need to be repeated?*

**Do these programs guarantee your success?**

No. Whether or not an enrichment program is beneficial depends on the student's ability to earn strong grades in the program. So, the main questions really are, "Why didn't I do as well as I could have in my science courses when I was an undergraduate?" and "Am I able to perform better in a program that might be even more demanding than undergraduate work?" and, finally, "Am I willing to sacrifice considerable time (and tuition money) for the sake of getting into medical school when I know that the outcome is uncertain?"

**How To Apply?**

All post-baccalaureate programs have separate applications distinct from the common application to medical school (AMCAS). Applications are requested directly through the program’s website or by calling the program office. They typically ask for educational history, background and experiences relevant to a career in medicine, MCAT scores, response to essays, and letters of recommendation. Most ask for 2-3 recommendation letters.
Resources

- The National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions offers great advice and provides answers to commonly asked questions regarding post-bacs.
- The AAMC has a searchable database listing of post-baccalaureate premedical and masters programs at: http://services.aamc.org/postbac/
- The Health Professions Advisory Program at Syracuse University has a comprehensive listing of post-bac opportunities.

Below is a sampling of programs that are directly associated with at least one medical school (a more complete listing is available through referencing the AAMC searchable database):

- Boston University - M.A. in Medical Sciences
- Drexel University – Interdepartmental Medical Science Program (IMS)
- Drexel University – Master of Medical Science (MMS) Program
- Drexel University - Medical Masters Program (MMP)
- Georgetown University - Special Masters Program (SMP)
- Georgetown University – Experimental Medical Studies Program (GEMS)
- New York Medical College - Basic Medical Sciences
- Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine – Biomedical Sciences
- Rosalind Franklin University - Master of Science in Applied Physiology
- Temple University -- Post-Baccalaureate Program
- Tufts University – Biomedical Sciences
- University of Cincinnati – Special Masters Degree
- University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey – Biomedical Sciences
- University of Texas at Dallas - Post-Baccalaureate Program
- Johns Hopkins School of Public Health - MHS Programs