HPA 2018-19 Highlights

HPA enjoyed a year of stability with our full team of three advisers, an administrative assistant, a student assistant, and 20 HPA Peer Advisers. Thank you for everything to our graduating HPA PAs—Korlekuor Akiti, Connor Bridges, Julia Casazza, Megan Chung, Ruby Guo, Nergis Khan, Eva Parisi, Daniel Qian, Pav Ravindran, Rohan Tummala, and Colin Yost—and our student assistant, Joyce Lee. You will all be missed!

We expanded our Jock Doc peer network significantly this year, as well. Jock Docs were a great resource for younger student-athletes, and congratulations on your graduation to our seniors: Jake Adkins, Elias Berbari, Ben Jacobson, Claire Nussbaum, TC Schneider, Sebastian Silveira, Clay Travis, and Ali Whiting.

In addition to our peer leaders, we have been impressed this year by the ways that prehealth students supported each other—we have an extended network of older students who have volunteered to staff HPA events like Previews open houses, connected individually with others, led health-related student organizations, tutored, mentored, served on committees, and have otherwise tried to improve other students’ prehealth experiences.

Join us during Reunions!

We want to connect with alumni in all health professions. Drop by HPA during our annual Reunions Reception on Saturday, June 1—it’s an informal event where you can grab snacks and coffee, and meet advisers, current students, and alums. We hope to see you soon!

Career Spotlights

HPA educates students about the diversity of health careers. Here are this year’s Careers of the Month.
**Age Diversity of Princeton Med School Applicants**

While Princeton students often initially expect to move directly to medical school after graduation, many ultimately rethink their time-lines. The reasons for this are diverse: discovering a new passion, facing an unexpected setback, receiving a job or fellowship that’s too good to pass up, seeking more time to be sure they’re ready to make the lifelong commitment to the career.

To date, 105 Princeton applicants have been accepted to medical school this year. At one end of the age spectrum, eleven Princetonians were accepted through Sophomore Early Assurance Programs with Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai, Perelman School of Medicine at U Penn, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, and Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Jefferson University. At the other end of that spectrum, eleven alums completed postbaccalaureate “career changer” programs to take their premed requirements after concentrating in disciplines ranging from Comparative Literature to Politics to Math. Twelve alums took significant postbac coursework to enhance their academic credentials before applying; two who completed PhDs (one in Genetics, one in Chemistry) will now pursue a medical degree.

HPA is happy to advise alums who are hoping to pursue medicine no matter how long ago they graduated. Please don’t hesitate to be in touch!

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**Student Organization Highlights**

**The Black Pre-Medical Society of Princeton University**, led by Angelika Morris ’21, Amanda Haye ’19, Eden Efrem ’21, and Kerri Davidson ’19, seeks to empower the Black pre-medical community to tackle the unique issues that face underrepresented students in medicine, cultivate long-lasting connections between Black pre-med students, address community health challenges affecting the Black community, and provide the necessary support and resources catered to the specific needs of Black students as they ascend to medical school. Please contact blkmed@princeton.edu for more information.

**SVC Rescue Mission of Trenton**, led by Jennie Yang ’20, is a weekly service project at the Rescue Mission of Trenton, an emergency shelter that provides food and clothing to individuals in Trenton. Volunteers will assist with the meal service, which occurs twice daily, as well as with operation of the Courtesy Store where individuals can visit and receive clothing free of charge. Areas of service are flexible and based on the needs of the shelter’s residents and clients. Jennie was honored by the Rescue Mission for her contributions and featured by the Pace Center, describing her commitment to service. Please contact her (jlyang@princeton.edu) for more information about volunteering.

In addition, HPA wishes to champion the efforts of Tianyi Wang ’19 and Princeton’s Peer Health Advisers in launching the **Paint for a Cause** initiative, which aims to provide therapeutic painting sessions on campus for all students willing to donate their paintings to terminally ill patients in hospice care at Care One Hamilton, Morris Hall, and Princeton Care Center.
At the end of each application cycle, we invite successful applicants to share their advice with younger students through a series of Accepted Applicant Panels and these matriculant profiles. Many thanks to all of our alums who pay it forward to our aspiring health professionals!

**Dahlia Kaki ’18, Woodrow Wilson School with a GHP certificate**

**Pursuing an MD at UCSF School of Medicine**

**Significant college activities:** Executive Leadership in GlobeMed and HIPS, SHARE Peer, Wilson College PAA, HPA PA, Thesis Research/Study/Volunteer abroad

**Post-college activities:** Research assistant at a hepatology clinic; courses at community college; travel

**Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton:** My biggest piece of advice is to strike a balance between being premed and being everything else you want to be. It is no doubt that being premed is a challenging feat and I’ll be honest: it isn’t for everyone. But don’t let that eclipse your other interests (maybe you don’t want to be a science major, maybe you don’t want to spend all of your free time doing medicine-related things, maybe your entire identity isn’t being a health professional)—you are allowed to be more than just premed. Get the exposure you need to confirm your interest and to demonstrate competency as an applicant, but don’t overdo it if it’s not what you want to spend your precious four years at Princeton doing. On the application/interview trail I met people who were 5-10 years out of school and worked as pre-school teachers or sales associates, I met people who did postbacs in their 30s, I even met someone who majored in Circus Arts! Your path to medicine is YOUR path and don’t let anyone try to squeeze you into a lane or a box.

Secondly, and maybe more importantly, if there is a will there is a way. A bad grade in orgo? A low score on your MCAT? Non-American citizenship? Not enough hours shadowing a Nobel-prize winning physician or finding the cure to non-Hodgkins lymphoma? If you want that white coat, you’ll get it—my friends and I are living proof of that. Readjust your expectations (maybe Harvard won’t be in the stars—nor does it necessarily have to be) but don’t lose sight of the goal and don’t lose sight of your faith in yourself. Prereqs and MCAT are followed by med school apps, which are followed by board exams and residency apps and fellowship apps and grant applications—it’s a never-ending cycle and having determination and faith in yourself despite what others say is the only thing that will get you through it all.

**Clay Travis ’19, Chemistry**

**Pursuing a DMD at Rutgers School of Dental Medicine**

**Significant college activities:** Varsity Lightweight Rowing; Cloister Inn; PFA Bible Course; Aquinas Institute; Princeton in Dar es Salaam; Student Research Fellowship Program (Cardiology) at Mirro Center for Research and IU School of Medicine; Dental, Cardiology, and Orthopedic Surgery Shadowing; Thesis Research in Myneni Lab

**Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton:** Be realistic and even cautious about your commitments in each semester. I got caught up in making sure I had all of the prerequisite courses for my major and for schools I was considering before I started applying; in the process, I stretched myself too thin during a semester and paid the consequences. In later semesters, I found that I could easily have moved one or more of the courses I felt I had to take (for both my major and for my dental school applications) to a later time and would have been better off, with no negative effects in delaying the course. Be patient in completing courses, and evaluate for yourself whether you think that a semester is too strenuous for you. It is always better to take a course later and not have that grade on your application yet, than to take it and get a poor grade because you have committed to too many courses or activities in a semester. If you are cautious in your workload, your application—and your personal health—will thank you for it.
TigerDocs in Training: 2019 Matriculant Profiles

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Nathan Suek ‘17, Chemistry
Pursuing an MD at Vagelos College of Physicians & Surgeons at Columbia University

Significant college activities: Research in Avalos Lab; Old NasSoul; VP of 2017 class; peer support for Orgo & McGraw Center

Post-college activities: Research Associate, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center; MCAT Mentoring at Hunter College; volunteering at NY Presbyterian Hospital

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: If you are a research-oriented MD applicant or a MD/PhD applicant, realize that Princeton as an institution focuses on very basic research. From CBE to MOL to chemistry, faculty who do biology-related research tend to focus on mechanistic/basic questions. If what motivates you to do research is patient impact, it might be helpful to focus on translational experience, which is unfortunately harder to find at Princeton. As a result, I think that taking time off after Princeton to explore translational research was a really great choice for me. I spent some time in the lab of Jedd Wolchok (’87) at Memorial Sloan Kettering which I’d highly recommend; however, spending time in any lab that is a big academic medical center with a hospital would probably be a fantastic experience. Understanding mechanisms and concepts are fun. For me, though, seeing these ideas translate into therapies that benefit people is beyond fun. It’s joyful and rewarding.

Andrew Hersh ‘18, Economics
Pursuing an MD at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Significant college activities: HPA PA, PAA, McGraw Head Tutor in Macroeconomics, Treasurer of CJL, Social Chair of Yavneh, intramural broomball (Go Mighty Meese!), EMT in Jerusalem for a summer, senior thesis in health economics

Post-college activities: Worked as a medical assistant and gained clinical experience at the Retina Associates of New York and Retinal Ambulatory Surgery Center

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: Princeton is a phenomenal place to learn and grow; don’t be afraid to explore all of the unique opportunities it offers. I loved the premed curriculum but after taking macroeconomics and being fascinated with the subject, I decided to concentrate in economics. Although it seemed that the two fields were miles apart, the experience proved invaluable. As an economics major, I took courses in statistics and econometrics and gained experience analyzing data for my senior thesis—all necessary tools in medical research. My senior thesis offered me the chance to bridge both disciplines by exploring health economics, and it was a privilege working with my advisor on a project with direct implications for the treatment of patients. I definitely encourage students to explore different fields and engage in extra-curriculars beyond the medical field—it will be a rewarding experience that will serve you well!

The Princeton and premed curriculum is certainly challenging at times, but Princeton provides many resources to help you succeed. Definitely take advantage of them! Whether it’s going to office hours, attending a McGraw study session, or talking to a peer advisor, Princeton is committed to helping you do well. Professors are available and I value the close relationships I made with some of my favorite professors, which I still maintain. I also suggest working in groups to review problem sets, study for exams, and create review sheets!

Enjoy the Princeton experience, make the most of it, and cherish the friendships you’ll make for life!
TigerDocs in Training: 2019 Matriculant Profiles

Cassie Crifase ’17, Woodrow Wilson School
Pursuing an MD/MPH at University of Wisconsin School of Medicine & Public Health

Significant college activities: Scholars Institute Fellows Program Head Fellow, Peer Health Advisor (Sexpert Column Lead), President of TropicalClinics for Rural Health, Princeton Students for Reproductive Justice, TigerCall, Summer Intern Abroad (Hungary; Peru; South Africa), Kappa Alpha Theta, Tiger Inn

Post-college activities: Predoctoral Research Fellow and Clinical Research Coordinator at Mass General (Project 55), a la carte postbac classes + TAing at Harvard Extension, Yoga Teacher Training at CorePower Yoga, Annual Giving class agent, au pair in Western Australia

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: Making the decision to pursue medicine is momentous. It may have come to you after conquering Orgo or it may have come to you before stepping foot on Princeton’s campus. In any case, it’s the first step toward a long and arduous journey. My biggest piece of advice for premed students at Princeton is to enjoy every moment.

Researching med school programs and seeking advice from my role models, I often hear the same story of students who pushed themselves so hard to check the boxes that they forgot what compelled them to do it in the first place; they get to medical school (if they’re lucky) or graduate medical school and feel like they’ve missed out… on opportunities or experiences or, in the saddest cases, their youth. Becoming a physician requires sacrifices, undoubtedly, but the best applicants are not those who spent every Thursday night studying nor those have miserably grinding through courses but rather those who have pursued their greatest ambitions and reflected on how those experiences may enrich their career (as inspiration, clinical experience, emotional growth, or simply coping mechanisms), those who come to interviews as real, relatable people and can talk about what makes them excited, curious, and happy in and beyond medicine.

I encourage you to take advantage of every opportunity to do what you love and what brings you joy. Do the activities that make you happy; take the courses that pique your interest, those that you can’t take anywhere but at Princeton; explore why you want to go to medical school and what you would do with a medical degree. Princeton is a beautiful and magical place (those who know me know how much I love it); it can give you the opportunities to find a shared humanity in the most expansive metropolises as well as the most remote corners of the world, to inspire you when the times are toughest, and to shape what you individually can bring to the field of medicine. Soak it all up. This will not only keep you sane and serve as fuel to drive you forward, but it will also direct your goals, enable you to learn and grow from your challenges, and ensure you’re happy once you have the magical acceptance... and then the MD, and then the residency, and then the attendingship.

I wish you the best of luck, and don’t hesitate to reach out if I can be of any help. :)

Sam Chiacchia ’18, Molecular Biology with a GHP certificate
Pursuing an MD at Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai

Significant college activities: Varsity men’s swimming & diving, research in the Notterman lab, PVC community service

Post-college activities: Research fellow in the department of pediatric critical care, UCSF; HIV counselor at the UCSF Alliance Health Project; Gymnastics coach at 501(c) nonprofit

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: The best advice I can give is to remain curious and to try new, challenging things. Do your best to avoid making decisions based on what feels safe and prioritize your interests and passions. On a separate note, I highly recommend reaching out to older friends/former students with questions about classes, departments, MCAT, applications, etc. I found that the applicant experience ranges a lot from person to person, so it’s important to have a wide sample for input and advice!
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Dan Pan ‘18, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology
Pursuing an MD at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Significant college activities: Manna Christian Fellowship, Finding The Match, EcoReps

Post-college activities: ER Scribe, Be The Match On Campus, Green Team

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: In terms of being premed at Princeton, I’ve learned how important it is to have a student "mentor" of sorts, or really just someone you feel extremely comfortable reaching out to at any point in time to seek premed advice. Luckily, beyond the extremely crucial HPA and HPA Peer Advisers, at Princeton, there are so many students who have walked down your path previously or at least did something very similar. Even more fortunately, there are a ton of Princetonians who would love to give you advice on classes, extracurriculars, the MCAT, applications, balancing all of this, etc. Therefore, I definitely recommend reaching out to those in higher years.

When you find a student "mentor," treat them like a friend of yours, keep them up-to-date when things go well or don't go well because they're rooting for you, and let them know when you appreciate the help because they're probably just as overwhelmed with work just as you are. If you don't know anyone who you could reach out to, there are several groups that can pair you with a mentor. Some of those groups include the Princeton Undergraduate Mentoring Program, Princeton Pre-Medical Society, and many cultural groups. Most importantly, in the future, make sure to pass it on and help out those behind you on the premed path. If you can't find someone, are a bit nervous to ask an upperclassman, or just want to talk about anything from the above, feel free to hit me up at djpan@alumni.princeton.edu.

Sara Goodwin ‘18, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology

Significant college activities: Varsity Women’s Tennis, Princeton Faith and Action, Athletes in Action, Research in Ayroles Lab

Post-college activities: Clinical research assistant in department of Otolaryngology at University of Kansas Medical Center, volunteer at Hope Family Care Center, high school tennis coach, UMKC volunteer assistant tennis coach

Both pursuing MDs at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: To all pre-med students, we would encourage everyone to remember that numbers do NOT dictate your self worth. From pre-med course grades to clinical hours to MCAT score, it is easy to see your application from only a numbers lens. But while numbers are important, ultimately med schools are looking for humans who will become great doctors. Don’t do anything just because you feel like you need to inflate some number. Find activities related to service or medicine or research or honestly anything you are passionate about and devote your time to that. That will allow you to speak passionately in essays and interviews and allow your true character to shine through.

To couples seeking to walk through the med school application process together, know that it will take dedication and sacrifice. For us, valuing each other over any dream school or professional ambitions made sure that we were on the same page throughout each step. In terms of practical details of the application process, know that real people with spouses and family lives are on the other end of email chain. Don’t be afraid to share that you are together if you are both qualified!
HPA On Facebook

HPA maintains an active Facebook presence, curating articles that may be of interest to future health professionals. Here are a few of our most popular posts over the past year:

- Defying parents, a teen decides to get vaccinated (via NPR.org)
- Nurses can help doctors regain their patients’ trust (via STAT news)
- Failing Up: How one med student came back from a first-year setback (via WHYY.org)
- Medical students are puzzled when forced to use ancient technology like fax machines (via CNBC)
- How a Neurosurgeon and Physician Assistant navigate the brain together (via op-med)
- Eight ways to make your medical school application shine (via U Mich Med Blog)
- Don’t pick your doctors based on where they went to med school (via Reuters)

Pay It Forward: Seeking Alumni Support

We are happy to facilitate connections between alumni health professionals and current students. A few ways to get involved:

- Students are most likely to use TigerNet or LinkedIn to search for alums. Keep your profile updated to facilitate connections.
- Established professionals:
  - Host students for shadowing visits via Career Services’ Princeternships
  - Develop a Project 55 AlumniCorps Fellowship or a Princeton Internship in Civic Service
  - Advertise employment or internship opportunities through our HPA Vitals newsletter
  - Join us in Princeton or remotely for a “Doctor is In” conversation: discuss your career trajectory and offer advice to students
- Recent alums:
  - Donate your MCAT/test prep materials to our lending library
  - Host students who come to your school for interview days
  - Share your contact information with HPA so that we can share it with applicants to your school

Thank you to this year’s Doctor is In guests: Sophie Balzora ’02, Melanie Leong ’06, Jasmine Race ’15, Manny Sardinha ’12, Shetal Shah ’96, Mark Shrime ’96, and Christina Tan ’92
The Office of Health Professions Advising (HPA) provides support to Princeton students and alumni by many means as they consider careers in the health professions, and prepare for admission to medical, dental, veterinary, and other health professions schools.

HPA seeks to help students make informed decisions about the choice of a health professions career; to promote academic excellence by providing accurate guidelines for completing pre-health coursework, for understanding admission requirements, and for using all available resources; and to encourage student involvement in the health care community, primarily through clinical work, service, and research.

Aspiring Docs Conversation Group in its Fourth Year
Contributed by Randall Perez, HPA Adviser

Aspiring Docs is a dinner and conversation group for students who are first in their family to pursue a career in medicine. The group offers a comfortable space for students to get answers to questions and discuss topics related to preparing for health professions school. We often invite HPA peer advisers to attend and offer an experienced student voice that can give first-hand insight to students looking to follow a similar path. To further the community nature of the group, we hold the discussion groups in dining halls across campus. This provides students an opportunity to grab dinner and chat with one another and HPA staff in a familiar space.

The group is largely informal but I tend to develop a handful of topics that can serve as a starting point for discussion. We covered a number of topics this year, such as adjusting to campus culture, selecting courses, overcoming academic performance issues, corresponding with faculty, using campus resources (like McGraw center Study Halls) effectively and the importance of office hours. At one event we did a role play of office hours in an effort to make them seem less intimidating to first-year students.

Aspiring Docs is not a new event for HPA, but in the Fall of 2017, I took over as the main staff organizer. This is only my second year as an adviser at HPA and Aspiring Docs has provided me a great opportunity to get to know students outside formal office appointments and large info sessions. I have developed a close advising relationship with a number of Aspiring Docs regulars. My long term goal for the group is to develop a close-knit community of students who can support each other in their academic and personal life at Princeton and well into their careers after they graduate.

Question of the Week: Last Minute Advice by Class Year

Q: Hi HPA—anything else I should know in terms of my pre-health prep before I leave campus for the summer?
A: We will miss you all over the summer! While our appointment times are limited while we write committee letters, be in touch if you need us!

Seniors: Ask for letters of rec and store them at HPA. Be sure that we have your permanent contact information, especially if you’ll apply in the future: we will send you announcements as upcoming application cycle events unfold. You can share your contact info via this form: https://forms.gle/L7rE4CDxoTk1EwKY9

Juniors: Consider taking the MCAT if you might apply to med school in the next 2-3 years. Continue to gain clinical experience. Look into fellowships—some application deadlines are early!

Sophomores: Do some reflective journaling (use our Facebook Premed Pondering posts this summer for journaling prompts). Think about whether or not you might take a glide year (if not, you’ll take MCAT in the coming academic year, so you may want to familiarize yourself with the test).

First-Years: Reflect on what you did well and what you want to improve for next year. Preview our advice for sophomores for ideas on what’s to come. Shadow a doctor. Rest and recharge for next year.

Everyone: Follow us on Facebook for prompts for self-reflection, news articles, and other items of interest over the summer!