Greetings from Health Professions Advising!

As we put together this newsletter during the Reunions season, we reflect on the accomplishments of our seniors and applicants from the past year, while also preparing for the upcoming professional school application cycle. It’s a time of both looking back on achievements and looking forward to new beginnings, especially for those just starting to work on their personal statements and school lists.

In this newsletter, you will read about our alumni speaker series, programs that HPA hosted, the Careers of the Month spotlight, Facts and Figures, and a sampling of the many health-related organizations our students are involved in.

One of the highlights of our newsletter is sharing the success stories of our recent professional school applicants, who generously offer their insights and advice to our aspiring health professionals. Their words of advice serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for all of those on the prehealth journey. We are always excited to showcase the success of our alumni at their White Coat Celebrations!

As summer approaches, we extend our best wishes to our readers. We are excited for the year ahead and look forward to continuing to support you in your academic and professional endeavors.

The HPA team goes bowling at our Winter retreat!

We could not do our work without our dedicated student leaders. Thank you for guiding our first- and second-year students and for freely sharing your wisdom.

We wish our graduating HPA Peer Advisers - Waasae Ayyaz, Anika Buch, Rachel Chen, Samuel Lee, Claire Middleton and Rachel Tam and graduating Jock Docs - Josh Coan, Tristan Szapary and Tsion Yared, all the best.

Join us at Reunions!

Health Professions Advising
Reunions Reception
Friday, May 24
2:30pm - 5:00pm
at the HPA Office
Significant college activities: Thesis: Cristea Lab: Kidney Disease Screening and Awareness Program; Princeton Penn Med; First-Generation Low-Income Council; Scholars Institute Fellows Program; Big Sibs; Community Action; Scully Co-Op: Teaching assistant

Glide year activities: Business Analyst at McKinsey & Co.; Volunteer at Jamaica Hospital; appointed member of Queens Community Board 10; Princeton in Asia Fellow / Research & Administrative Assistant at the Center for Asia-Pacific Resilience & Innovation (Taiwan)

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: Looking back on my seven-year pre-med journey, here are a couple of things I’ve learned:

First off, do what makes you happy, even if it’s not directly related to medicine. It’s tempting to just check boxes for your med school application, but trust me, if you’re not into it, you won’t give it your all. When I started focusing on stuff I loved, that’s when I really started making a difference, and that’s what stands out in your apps.

And secondly, don’t be afraid to take a gap year or three. Originally, I only planned for one gap year to prep for the MCAT, but that year and more turned into something totally unexpected. I worked an intellectually stimulating – albeit arduous – job that had nothing to do with medicine, and it really got me thinking about what I valued in my life. Plus, I used one year to move to Asia – who knows when I’ll get that chance again? Some of the things I’ve learned about myself over the years include that I value time a lot more than I let on, that I like to work with my hands too much to do a desk job, and that I care that my job gives me meaning. So, take the time to explore something new and figure out what really matters to you, both in your career and your personal life.

Alums: Share your wisdom!

If you’re a Princeton alum health professional or you’re in professional school, we’d love to add you to our contact list!

Scan this QR code to fill out our Contact Form.

For other ways to get involved, see our website.
KEENAN DUGGAL ‘23
MOLECULAR BIOLOGY WITH A CERTIFICATE IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
PURSUING AN MD AT NYU GROSSMAN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Significant college / glide year activities: Research in Metcalf Lab (thesis + glide year), Research in Jonikas Lab, HMEI Summer Internships, Crisis Text Line, Tutor for Academic Success Today, Volunteer at PMC

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: That there is no singular formula for success as a premedical student at Princeton is both liberating and nerve-wracking. My advice for navigating this space would be:

1. Explore a breadth of interests, especially in your first or second year.
2. Once you find an academic discipline or even a specific issue that captivates you, dive into it from as many angles as you can (e.g., coursework, internships, research, volunteering). The discipline/issue by no means has to be related to medicine (the more unique / unrelated ones can be more interesting!), but it makes your life easier later on in the process if you can start thinking of ways to make and articulate connections to human health.
3. Your foot does not always have to be on the gas pedal. There are times when you will have to sacrifice some quality of life to achieve your goals (months leading up to the MCAT, final thesis push, etc.), but there are plenty of weeks where premedical stuff should not be taking up too much space in your brain.
4. I highly recommend taking one or more gap years, even if you are 100% certain that you would get into medical school without them. Not only does the extra time allow you to dive deeper into your interests, but it also allows you to better enjoy your time at Princeton and gain experience and life perspective outside of an educational setting.

CHINO EKE ‘22
NEUROSCIENCE WITH A GHP CERTIFICATE
PURSUING AN MD AT WARREN ALPERT MEDICAL SCHOOL AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

Significant college activities: Thesis and Junior Independent Research in the Gould Lab, Peer Health Advisor, Event Committee Chair for the Princeton Neuroscience Network, Summer Research in the Han Lab at University of Tennessee Health Science Center through Princeton’s Center for Health and Wellbeing, Writer/Editor for Princeton Public Health Review, Summer Research Associate in the Carey Lab at the Fundacao Champalimaud through IIP, and Breakout Princeton

Glide year activity: Postgraduate Research Associate at Yale School of Medicine

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: At the beginning of undergrad, I knew medicine was my calling, but I had no idea how to navigate the premedical courses and associated activities traditionally expected of premedical students. My first semester was a bit overwhelming, and I honestly struggled to strike a balance between the sheer volume of course work, extracurricular activities, and my social life. However, conversations with HPA and the occasional study breaks hosted by the Princeton Neuroscience Network really helped me plan out my course schedule and more importantly, helped me realize that dedicating time to physical health and wellness are necessary for long term academic success.

While blending premedical courses into the liberal arts focused curriculum of Princeton was challenging, the wide breadth of opportunities to truly explore topics I found interesting was the most rewarding part of Princeton for me, beyond the people. Reflecting on my undergraduate experience, the best advice I can share is: lean into your classmates because they are the ones who know what the 2:00 am group study sessions are like and will be present when you need them the most.

If you want to talk about finding balance at Princeton, applying to MD programs, or anything else don’t hesitate to reach out to me at ceke@alumni.princeton.edu!
Significant college activities: Princeton Varsity Swim Team, Organic Chemistry TA, Leach Summer Scholars Program in Chemistry, Internship in Global Health at Rutgers Cancer Institute of NJ

Glide year activities: Clinical Research Coordinator at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Arlington Street Church Soup Kitchen volunteer, reading mail to blind Boston residents

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: It can be frustrating to see how medical schools ask for you to have a solid GPA, an excellent MCAT, a few publications, hours of volunteer work, even more hours of clinical experience, hours of shadowing, college activities, and still have the gall to ask you if you have any hobbies (as though you have the time!). It’s a daunting task, but one that you can take one step at a time, one semester at a time, to work towards. What’s important is not that you just check the boxes that med schools provide, it’s that you make lasting memories during those activities and learn something during them. Your application isn’t going to be talking about how you did X hours of service, it’s going to be about the relationships you made during those hours, so it’s important to not take any of your activities for granted and simply go through the motions, but to take some time to reflect on your activities and why you’re doing them.

Princeton is tough and it’s very easy to keep yourself busy with any number of things. I fell into the trap of thinking that as long as I kept myself busy I would be a great candidate. Busy with school, busy with swimming, busy with research, busy with friends, I always had a full schedule in some way, but med schools aren’t looking for just “busy.” They’re looking to see that you’re actively working towards your goals. Your time in Princeton is not one to waste as there will never be a time again when you have so many opportunities just an email away. It sounds daunting with your busy schedules, but finding the time to put in a little of everything will go a long way to not only strengthening your resume, but also providing so many opportunities to learn and grow. That growth, again, is the true key, the secret sauce to an excellent application, because being able to illustrate how and why your activities have made you who you are and driven you to your goals is what makes an exceptionally compelling applicant.

Premed is no joke and can easily become a monotonous grind of working through a busy schedule. If you ever want to chat about your application or process feel free to reach me at rademakerquinn@gmail.com. I’m always happy to talk about the process, strategy, and/or applications, just shoot me a message. Good luck!
2024 MATRICULANT PROFILES

RACHEL KULCHAR ’24
CHEMISTRY WITH CERTIFICATES IN GHP & MATERIALS SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING
PURSUING A DDS/PHD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - LOS ANGELES

Significant college activities: National Suicide Hotline, Princeton Peer Nightline, Research (at Princeton, UPenn, UCLA, and Harvard), Princeton Institutional Review Board (consultant), Camp Kesem, Princeton Nursery School, Princeton Ivy League+ Pre-health Society (founder and president), AADOCR National Student Research Group, SHPEP DEI Ambassador, Princeton Persian Club, English tutor for refugees at Christ Church Refugee Ministry, Project HOME

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: My biggest piece of advice is to embrace new experiences! My own passion for research unexpectedly emerged when I began working at the bench at UPenn’s Dental School. While the Princeton lab courses provided a solid introduction to basic techniques, they did not fully capture what a lab environment is like. It was this new experience that not only uncovered a passion of mine, but also inspired me to pursue a dual degree. In fact, during my last ~1 year at Princeton, I chose to live in Philadelphia and work full-time in that lab where I felt supported. If I had not felt supported, I would not have decided to live in an entirely different state, commute for classes, etc... So, beyond trying new things, make sure to surround yourself with a supportive environment that will inevitably foster growth. It can be scary to try something new and connect with different people, but it was these experiences that helped me better understand myself and grow as a person.

Happy to chat more about the process of applying as a dual degree student/the pros and cons. Please feel free to reach out at rkulchar@alumni.princeton.edu

GRACE BARBARA, '22
ECOLOGY & EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY
PURSUING A DVM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Significant college activities: Varsity Women's Soccer, Reading with the Tigers, Study abroad in Kenya, Thesis with Professor Pacala, summer soccer camp counselor

Post-college activities: Professional soccer player, finish prerequisites at a local college, volunteer farmhand, veterinary technician at a small animal practice, volunteer at a wildlife center, dermatology intern

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: Take your time to gain clinical experience in the field. These experiences will set you apart, make your application more competitive, and turn you into a more confident and competent veterinary student.

Feel free to ask HPA for my contact info. I often felt alone since there weren't many pre-vet students at Princeton and I'm happy to be a resource.
Significant college activities: Varsity Women’s Basketball team; HPA Jock Doc; Reading with the Tigers; Senior thesis research

Words of wisdom about being a prehealth at Princeton: There isn’t one clear path to becoming a successful applicant for medical, dental, or PA school. Princeton prepares you in so many ways to be a competent healthcare professional. During my time at Princeton, I decided my sophomore year to pursue the pre-health route. I already felt that I was behind as most students start these courses their freshman year. I took a few prerequisites my sophomore year and was able to develop study habits that helped me throughout my four years. I also chose to concentrate in Psychology - which did not seem to align with the “normal” hard science route that my other pre-health peers were pursuing.

My advice to you is to focus on your own path and do not compare yourself to others. When applying to PA school I was complimented numerous times in interviews on the route that I took in undergrad and being a Division I athlete. Always make sure that you are doing things that truly interest you and not just what is going to look good on your resume. When applying and interviewing it is obvious when a person has just checked all the boxes and did not pursue anything that they were actually passionate about. This process is not easy - there are going to be a lot of ups and downs and hard days, but it is SO worth it. When you finally get the acceptance letter that you have been dreaming of, everything seems worth it.

Attack your undergrad with purpose and find what you are passionate about - concentrate in something that interests you and write your junior papers and senior thesis about something you love. This makes it so much easier to brag about in interviews and on applications! Finally, use all the resources available to you at Princeton. Go to HPA and ask for advice and lean on your mentors and professors. Everyone is here to help you, so don’t be afraid to accept it!

If you ever want to talk about Princeton courses, the prehealth process, or anything else - reach out to me at juliaec@alumni.princeton.edu - I am always happy to chat!

HPA RESOURCES BY THE NUMBERS

3 professional advisers

15 HPA Peer Advisers/Jock Docs trained to support prehealth students

50+ advising appointments available each week

120-150 medical school applicants annually with comprehensive application support for students and alums

100+ group info sessions, workshops, and events yearly on academic success, career exploration, the application process, and other topics
WHITE COAT CELEBRATIONS

Ares Alivisatos ’21
Tufts University

Kennedy Miller ’21
University of Michigan

Mansi Totwani ’22
Harvard University

Abby Kostolansky ’20
University of Illinois

Marisela Neff ’20
University of Miami

Korlekuor Akiti ’19
University of Pennsylvania

Levy Nathan ’20
Loyola University Chicago

David Eniola ’23
Rutgers University

Dominique Fahmy ’17
University of Michigan

Jack Kilgallon ’20
Hackensack Meridian

Mar Almeda ’22
MD/MS joint medical program through UCSF and UC Berkeley

Gabrielle Sudilovsky ’22
University of Chicago

Toyosi Oluwole ’21
University of California - San Francisco

Nardeen Khella ’21
Boston University

Wade O’Brien ’20
Dartmouth University

Jacob Shteingart ’20
Thomas Jefferson University

Neha Chauhan ’21
Rutgers University

Varun Devraj ’23
Icahn at Mount Sinai

Addie Darling-Mena ’12
Dartmouth University

Karen Zhang ’19
University of Miami

Parker Jones ’21 and Moses Awofolaju ’21
Northwestern University

Mayowa Oke ’22
Harvard University

Weston Carpenter ’23
University of Connecticut

Andrew Wu ’21
Wayne State University
STUDENT ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHTS

HPA supports health-related student organizations around campus in an effort to build a strong and connected pre-health community.

WOMEN IN MEDICINE

“Operating for our second year, the Women in Medicine club enjoyed hearing from Dr. Ankita Sagar and collaborating with other health-related student organizations to host a film screening and suturing workshop. Dr. Ankita Sagar, an internal medicine physician and the System Vice President at CommonSpirit health, shared wisdom about the importance of advocacy, perspective, and shared responsibility in medicine. Working alongside Scleroderma United, we held a screening of Run Greg Run to educate attendees about scleroderma, a rare incurable autoimmune disease.

The Women in Medicine club appreciates the mentorship we received from empowering leaders, and we look forward to continuing to expand our club’s reach through teamwork and additional hands-on skill building opportunities.”

NEW YORK COLLEGE OF PODIATRIC MEDICINE SUTURING WORKSHOP

“We welcomed Dr. Anthony Iorio from the New York College of Podiatric Medicine to campus in collaboration with the Princeton Premedical Society and Princeton Emergency Medicine. Students had the chance to learn about the unique aspects of podiatry as a medical specialty and begin developing suturing skills.”

PRINCETON FIRST AID AND RESCUE SQUAD

“Our Princeton students, either certified EMTs or in training, have been vital members of our squad, contributing significantly to patient care and emergency response. They attend respond to emergency calls, provide medical assistance, and support our team during various emergency situations, showcasing their commitment and capability in real-world medical scenarios.

Beyond their emergency response roles, these students have also been active in community engagement. They’ve participated in volunteer fairs and community outreach events, where they educate the public on basic first aid and the importance of emergency preparedness. These events serve as a platform for them to share their knowledge and skills while fostering a safer community environment.

These experiences not only enhance their practical skills but also embed a deep sense of community service and responsibility. Their dedication is a testament to the spirit of service that we cherish at PFARS.

We are proud of their hard work and enthusiasm in serving the community and advancing their expertise in emergency medical services.”

Contact: newmemcoord@pfars.org
STUDENT ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHTS

HPA supports health-related student organizations around campus in an effort to build a strong and connected prehealth community. Student leaders share some highlights from their groups.

**PRINCETON PREMEDICAL SOCIETY**

“The Princeton Premedical Society (PPMS) is a club that started this year under the leadership of Antea Garo ’24 (President), Amy Tao ’26 (Vice-President), and Elina San Blas ’26 (Treasurer). As a group, we wished to create a space where all pre-health students at Princeton felt supported and could get to know each other outside the context of their courses. Some of the key events we hosted this year were physician talks – with Dr. Rachel Rizal, Dr. Rishi Mediratta, and Dr. Tracy Flanders to name a few – and speed-friending events. We also started a tradition of providing pizza or cookies to students after each Organic Chemistry exam, known as the post-Orgo study break (which has proven to be a popular event!). In the future, we would love to create a Big-Little mentorship program among students as well as have more alumni involvement with the club.”

**PRINCETON BLOOD DRIVE**

“The Princeton Blood Drive is focused on raising awareness about the importance of donating blood to improve community and global health. Our highlight of the academic year was hosting seven blood drives with the American Red Cross, three of which were held in the fall semester and four of which were held in the spring. Through our drives, we were able to collect enough units of blood to save hundreds of lives.”

Meet Aspiring Doc and student leader

**Venezia Garza ’25**

“Founded two years ago, Princeton Alzheimer’s Buddies was born from my desire to translate my ten years of serving as a caregiver for my grandmother, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease, into meaningful action within the Princeton community.

Since then, Alzheimer’s Buddies has flourished. Alongside my co-director, we govern over a board of seven members to collectively lead our team of over 60 volunteers who regularly engage with residents at our partnered memory care facilities. Our volunteers dedicate themselves to weekly visits, where they facilitate diverse and engaging activities such as trivia, seated yoga, painting, strolls, and heartfelt conversations. We aim to alleviate the loneliness and social isolation that is often experienced by individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.

In addition to our weekly volunteering interactions, Alzheimer’s Buddies facilitates monthly reflection sessions to foster dialogue among volunteers about their experiences. At the end of the semester, we organized a letter-writing campaign to the families of the residents and were also honored with a volunteer luncheon by our partnering memory care facility.

As I embark on my third year as co-director, I am committed to further expanding the reach of Princeton Alzheimer’s Buddies by extending our services to more memory care facilities and increasing advocacy and awareness for Alzheimer’s Disease research and care by hosting panels with professionals specializing in the field Alzheimer’s disease.

I am also one of the student founders and Project Leaders for another health-oriented volunteer group called "Henry J. Austin Health Connections Program”. With two other co-leaders and a team of 18 volunteers, we partnered with a local community health clinic (Henry. J. Austin) in Trenton to serve as patient advocates for the past semester. We conduct social determinants of health screens on patients to identify their needs. connect them to community resources, and to help address their needs beyond the physical that may be impacting their health.”
HPA supports students interested in many healthcare careers and seeks to educate students about all of their options. Here are some of this year’s Careers of the Month. Find out more in the Careers of the Month Archive.
This year, HPA organized 100+ events, on a variety of topics including professional school admissions visits, Sophomore Early Assurance programs, guidance on selecting majors, application support, alum speakers, and the Aspiring Docs conversation group, among others.

Info session recordings can be found on the HPA website if you’d like to watch some over the summer!
2023-2024 ALUMNI SPEAKERS

Our many thanks to alumni who joined us for our Doctor Is In panel series this year. You’re a constant source of inspiration, motivation and mentorship to our current students.

Dr. Melanie Leong ’95
Dr. Shetal Shah ’96
Dr. Nick Avallone ’95
Dr. Maribel Abbate ’95

Dr. Rikki Racela ’03
Dr. Joshua Atkins ’96
Dr. Jack Berger ’14
Dr. Adjoa Mante ’17
Dr. Jonathan Lu ’18

Special thanks to Rachel Tam ’24, our HPA Alumni Relations intern, for facilitating our speaker series.

“The Doctor Is In series was a success this year! We were able to invite physicians and residents to talk about their journey in medicine from all specialties including neonatology, family medicine, psychiatry, and anesthesiology, just to name a few!

We covered a large range of topics from how Princeton has influenced their careers, non traditional paths in medicine, and preparing to apply for medical school and residency programs! Thank you to all the alumni who volunteered their time to speak with our students!”

If you would like to speak at a future Doctor Is In event, please contact hpa@princeton.edu.
ALUMS ADMITTED TO MEDICAL SCHOOL IN THE LAST 5 YEARS

527

43% from race/ethnicity underrepresented in medicine and/or "disadvantaged" backgrounds*

62% female
38% male
<1% trans/non-binary/genderqueer

from 43 home states
13 different countries

156 different med schools

81% of Princeton med school applicants were accepted vs. 42% nationally

Popular Schools

Rutgers
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Jefferson
Icahn SOM at Mt. Sinai
Harvard Medical School
Perelman SOM at the University of Pennsylvania
Weill Cornell Medicine
Case Western Reserve University SOM
Columbia U Vagelos College of Physicians & Surgeons
Northwestern University Feinberg SOM
Washington University SOM in St. Louis

*applicants may self-identify as socially, economically, or educationally disadvantaged on the professional school application

PRINCETON MED SCHOOL APPLICANTS: FACTS AND FIGURES

PREHEALTH ACADEMIC AND STUDENT LIFE

35 majors represented among accepted applicants

accepted applicants by area of study 2019-2023

30+ local civic engagement opportunities including volunteering with Penn Medicine Princeton Medical Center

Hundreds of internship, research, and study abroad opportunities
We’ll miss you, Sherise!

We bid a fond farewell to our Assistant Director Sherise Hicks who will be leaving us this summer.

Our students and our office have been lucky to have such a caring, thoughtful, hard-working professional on the HPA team for the past 3.5 years! Best of luck in the future.

Question of the Week: What Happens at HPA Over the Summer?

HPA remains open from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm throughout the summer, so stop by anytime if you’d like to borrow MCAT books or summer reading!

During June and July, Kate and Sherise focus on writing committee letters of recommendation and working with this year’s professional school applicants. Due to these tasks, time is limited for appointments; if you’re a junior or senior, reach out to us directly with your questions and availability. Jordan will continue meeting with first-years and sophomores, and he’ll facilitate a weekly summer seminar series for any local pre-health students. More details to come!

In August, we prepare for the incoming class and the new academic year. There will be more advising appointment availability after the rush of medical and dental school applications.

Although our Vitals newsletter goes on vacation in the summer, we’ll keep sharing updates through Instagram, Facebook, and our website!

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISING

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 prehealth 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.

36 University Place, Suite 230
Princeton, NJ 08544
609-258-3144
hpa@princeton.edu
hpa.princeton.edu