HPA Vitals Special Edition: Year in Review

The HPA Team
HPA grew by one full-time staff member this year. Randall Perez joined the team as a Health Professions Adviser who specializes in working with first-year and sophomore students. His background in learning support helps him counsel students as they make the transition to the academic demands at Princeton, and he will be working closely with student organizations to ensure that they are well-connected with the office.

Randall joins Kate Fukawa-Connelly, director, Jessica Matzko, assistant director, Jennifer Samarel, administrative assistant, and our crew of HPA Peer Advisers. HPA Peer Advisers staffed our Frist Late Meal table, hosted majors and MCAT panels, and provided individual support to students. A special thank you to our graduating HPA PAs: ChiChi Azoba, Mimi Chung, Andrew Hersh, Yash Huilgol, Gaby Joseph, Dahlia Kaki, Genevieve Medina, Maggie Pecsok, Liz Reznik, Julia Song, and Joe Wood.

2017-18 Alumni Speakers
Our thanks to alums who came to campus for our “Doctor is In” and “Doctor to be is In” alumni series this year:

- Alexis Tingan ’05
- Marisa Salazar ’17
- Jason Wang ’14
- Collin Weber ’67
- Sahana Jayaraman ’18
- Toks Famakinwa ’05

Join us during Reunions!
We want to connect with alumni in all health professions. Please drop by the office if you’re on campus during Reunions. We’ll host our annual brunch on Saturday, June 2—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!
Connect with Pre-Health Alums in a New Online Community

from Career Services. There’s already a community established for Princeton students and alumni involved in health professions that you can join today!

How does it work?

- Mentees:
  - Receive personalized recommendations of alumni you can connect with
  - Browse through potential mentors interested in offering their insight to students
  - Get advice through one-on-one conversations or by asking the entire community in the discussion boards

- Mentors:
  - Provide advice to individuals and the larger community
  - Network with others for your own professional growth

Why join?

- It’s quick and easy to get started
- You can learn from those who have been in your shoes: make connections and tap into the Princeton network

Click here to join!

If you have questions, feel free to contact Andria Mirabal, associate director, student/alumni engagement in Career Services at amirabal@princeton.edu.

Student Organization Highlights

The prehealth community has approximately three dozen health-related student organizations; four groups have been created, revived, or reconceived this year.

- The Princeton Pre-Veterinary Society is an organization focused on creating community for students interested in pursuing careers in veterinary medicine. If you are interested in learning more about resources and support for the veterinary school application process, reach out to Vienna Lunking (vlunking@princeton.edu).

- Princeton Music Outreach, which recently merged with the former Music is Medicine organization, brings musicians from Princeton to local nursing homes, assisted living homes, and hospice communities. If you are interested in empowering others to relax, love, and enjoy their lives through musical performances, reach out to Stephen Chen (sc39@princeton.edu).

- The Kidney Disease Screening and Awareness Program (KDSAP) is a Pace Center service organization providing free kidney health screenings and health education in the local community. If you are interested in volunteering or learning more, please contact Lillian Xu (lillianxu@princeton.edu).

- Princeton MediHack is the brainchild of Claire Lee ‘20, who attended a similar hackathon at Johns Hopkins this year. MediHack brings together individuals with interests in medicine, health, technology, policy and entrepreneurship—no coding background required! Contact Claire to get involved in next year’s event (clairelee@princeton.edu).
TigerDocs in Training: 2018 Matriculant Profiles

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!

Isabelle Byers ‘16, Woodrow Wilson School with a GHP certificate  
Pursuing an MD at Duke University School of Medicine

Significant college activities: Women’s Varsity Soccer, Co-President of Princeton’s Pre-Medical Society, Founder of the Moments of Mindfulness Initiative, HPA Peer Advisor, Peer Academic Advisor at Butler College

Post-college activities: Patient Advocate, Medical Assistant, and Diabetes Clinic Coordinator at the San Francisco Free Clinic; Volunteer at Glide and San Francisco Navigation Centers (focused on connecting homeless individuals with services across the city); Volunteer for the Nocturnists (a physician-led storytelling group)

Words of wisdom for prehealth students: My number one piece of advice would be to let your curiosity drive you. Although it may sound easy in theory, in practice it can be quite difficult. A number of external factors—even your own pre-conceived ideas or expectations—can have a significant bearing on how you decide to spend your time as an undergraduate and as a premed (e.g., what major to choose or extra-curricular to engage in). But I would urge you to take the time to take a step back, and think hard about what ideas and experiences genuinely intrigue you. And yes, it’s likely that there are too many ideas and experiences at Princeton for you to meaningfully engage with in four years, but that’s ok! Using curiosity as a compass can help you chart a path that is honest and sustainable. You may find yourself at seminars totally unrelated to the “passion” or “project” that first brought you to Princeton. You may find yourself in a class on a part of campus you’ve never seen before. You may find yourself in a student group whose members think, look, or sound differently than you. If you let your curiosity drive you, I guarantee you will do a good bit of wandering. But through intentional wandering, I also guarantee you will start to ask questions that inspire you and share in communities that resonate with you. Cheers to you and the wonderfully winding journey you have ahead!

Briana Christophers ‘17, Molecular Biology  
Pursuing an MD/PhD at the Tri-I Program at Weill Cornell/Rockefeller/Sloan Kettering

Significant college activities: Research in Burdine lab, Princeton Latinos y Amigos, Scholars Institute Fellows Program for First-Gen/Low-Income Students, Co-Founder of Project Welcome Mat: A Guide for First-Gen Princeton Students, American Sign Language club

Post-college activities: Research technician studying enteric nervous system development at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, volunteer at Puentes de Salud Immigrant Health Clinic in Philadelphia

Words of wisdom for prehealth students: Princeton didn’t always feel like the right fit for me as a woman of color in STEM. While there were challenging times that made me question whether I should continue in MOL or pursue a career as a physician scientist, there were two things that helped me stay the course: (1) channeling my frustrations and anxieties into doing positive things so that others wouldn’t feel isolated at Princeton, and (2) stepping back and remembering why I love what I do. Princeton pushes us each so much, especially as pre-health students, so take the time to reflect whenever you can on how you’re feeling and how you would like to be feeling. Find the things that will help you get to however you want to feel, be it finding a group of like-minded people, receiving support at CPS, serving your community, or any number of other ways. It’s okay to sometimes be selfish with your time and your emotions—you can’t help others if you don’t first take care of yourself!
**TigerDocs in Training: 2018 Matriculant Profiles**

**Kenny Hubbell ‘16, Chemical and Biological Engineering with certificates in Engineering Biology and Global Health and Health Policy**

Pursuing an MD through the Bassett Program at Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons

**Significant college activities:** Bridge Year Program in Peru; Outdoor Action leader (leader trainer, first aid instructor); IIP internship with Parinaam foundation in India; Research with Merck (bioprocess engineering) and Link lab (thesis work on engineered peptides); Studio manager at Wilson ceramics studio

**Post-college activities:** Bioprocess engineer at Merck (2016-2018); volunteer at Puentes de Salud clinic

**Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton:** I didn't decide to apply to medical school until after graduating. That timeline gave me the space to enjoy Princeton without the pressure of cultivating an "application-ready" list of interests. Instead, I wandered into the Wilson ceramics studio my freshman year and got really into pottery. I went on a ton of hiking trips with OA. I took courses on immunology and biochemistry, but I also took courses on science fiction and sculpture.

Those experiences shaped me in ways that will enrich my career in medicine. I became a better teacher in the pottery studio. A better listener in the woods. And often, in classes far afield from premed requirements, I discovered new ways to fortify myself against the difficult times in life—whether by falling in love with a new genre of books or by learning to see the beauty in the buildings and sculptures around me.

The health professions advising office will do a phenomenal job of preparing you for professional school applications. They will leave you with no mysteries about what classes to take and what standardized tests to study for. What they can't do—what only you can do—is to figure out how to dedicate your energies to things that are meaningful outside the medical sphere. And you should do a lot of that. If I could offer one piece of advice: be bold in exploring the opportunities at Princeton in breadth and depth. Seek out courses in unfamiliar topics from passionate professors. Try out a new hobby: after college it will become much harder (and more expensive) to take up ballroom dance or improv comedy or ceramics. Get involved with activities that excite you, regardless of their applicability to an application.

In short, don't ignore the very real requirements placed on you as a prehealth student. But don't just live these four years as preparation for the next four years either. Princeton will do so much more for you; it will develop in you a set of interests and values that will enrich the rest of your life. So enjoy your time here!

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**Gaby Joseph ‘18, Molecular Biology with an Engineering Biology certificate**

Pursuing an MD at Stanford Medical School

**Significant college activities:** Executive Leadership in PFA, Men's Varsity Soccer, Profound Ivy, Athletes in Action, Thesis Research in Shenk Lab, HPA PAA, Princeton Varsity Club Community Service

**Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton:** My biggest advice to those pursuing medicine at Princeton is to always be looking at what you can learn about yourself through a challenge, a success, or an otherwise mundane experience! This powerful skill of reflection and processing the things you have experienced will equip you with the skills necessary to articulate your ambition to pursue a career in medicine very well. Don’t just take the classes you’re interested in or that meet requirements—find a few that will test new interests, challenge strengths (or weaknesses) of yours, and don’t stress too much about the result. Find ways to discover something new about yourself that you didn’t know before and always remember that such reflection will help you to keep things in perspective, and remain passionate and excited.
Patricia Hernández ‘18, Molecular Biology
Pursuing an MD at Perelman School of Medicine at U Penn

Significant college activities: Princeton Latinos y Amigos, McGraw Learning Consultant, McGraw Physics & Organic Chemistry Tutor, SIFP Head Fellow, Summer research at Penn, Senior Thesis Research at the Wistar Institute, Princeton Faith and Action, Sigma Xi (National Science Honorary Society), French Summer Study Abroad (Aix-en-Provence)

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: Being a premed student at Princeton can be quite challenging. At times it may feel like you are just going from assignment to assignment and from one pre-requisite class to the next, all of which may seemingly have nothing to do with medicine. At one point, I remember physics being one of my least favorite courses and often questioned why physics was a pre-med requirement. I soon realized, however, that I had to change the way I was thinking about physics and think more positively. I began to see ways physics was involved with aspects of medicine: from the neuroscience behind how vision and eyes work, to the dynamics behind how atherosclerosis and how it affects blood pressure, to the physics behind ultrasound machines. After I started to learn more about the underlying physical principles for how the body works during class and weekly office hours, the weekly problem sets and textbook readings became more enjoyable. With so much going on at Princeton, we may forget the importance of taking some time to stop and periodically reflect on our motivations for wanting to pursue a career in medicine. Time at Princeton flies by pretty quickly, so my best advice is to spend time wisely crafting your own unique narrative that is reflective of your values. Spend time talking and asking questions to faculty and mentors (and not just people in the medical field). Some of the best lessons learned have come from people outside of the medical field who have shared amazing life perspectives and experiences. Perhaps most important, don’t be afraid to be challenged; there is no challenge in ease, and when you are not challenged, you are not aware of what you are truly capable of.

Kitan Akinosho ‘13, Operations Research & Financial Engineering
Pursuing an MD at Carle Illinois College of Medicine at the U of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Significant college activities: Residential College Advisor; Oranges Key Tour Guide; Youth Girls Basketball Coach; Intramurals (IM) Supervisor; Assistant Bible Course Leader/Member of PFA; Private Practice Shadowing; Global Health Internship in Ghana; Health Policy Research at Duke University Sanford School of Public Policy; Spring Break Service Trips: Ecuador, Mexico, Houston

Post-college activities: P55 Fellow in Education in DC (2013-14); some post-bac courses (2014-15); Board Member, District Bridges Non-profit in DC (2016-present); Volunteer at Sheppard’s Table Free Eye Clinic (2014-2015); FBI Lead Data Scientist (2015-present)

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: My piece of advice to current premeds would be to not rush the decision to go to medical school and to not be afraid of doing what you love on your way there. While at Princeton, I was under the false, self-inflicted idea that I had to take all my premed courses at Princeton, else I would look like a failure. After crushing myself under the weight of my extracurricular activities, a campus job, engineering courses, and premed courses for two years, I finally said enough is enough. This decision changed my Princeton experience for the better.

The reality is, there is no perfect path to medicine. I know students who went the traditional route and ended up disappointed in the application process. I also know students, like myself, who struggled to make it all fit at Princeton, took time after college to figure out who they were and why they were even pursuing medicine, and then moved forward with their own path towards achieving that goal with success. Medicine is generally a life commitment. There is nothing wrong with having other interests, and arguably, I think it makes you a stronger applicant and student when you are there. Spend time now making life long friendships, attending lectures from world-renowned scholars in varying fields, and do your best, without giving up to much of yourself along the way. There will be bumps in the road on this journey, and sometimes what seems like insurmountable road blocks. But it is during these times that you must ask yourself, why am I doing this?, and what is my end goal? And if you keep homing beacon calibrated correctly, I think you will find success at whichever medical school your journey takes you toward!
TigerDocs in Training: 2018 Matriculant Profiles

Manny Sardinha '12, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology

Pursuing a DO at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Significant college activities: Varsity Soccer; Varsity Volleyball; Student Athlete Wellness Leader; Camp Ronald McDonald counselor; Landweber lab thesis research; Semester in the Field: Panama; A-T Children’s Project Fundraiser Coordinator with Princeton Varsity Club

Post-college activities: Epigenetics Research at the Bing Ren Lab UCSD (2012); Postbac coursework at U Penn (2012-13); shadowing and sports concussion research at UCSD (2014-15); shadowing at an HIV/AIDS clinic (2015-16); Technical Lab Assistant (2016-18)

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: I think the best advice I can give premed students at Princeton comes from my story of resilience, patience, and persistence. Rewind to my freshman chemistry class: the professor displayed the grades of our first big midterm. There sat my grade, on the bottom left hand side of the curve. He pointed to that area and announced to the class that those students who saw their grade in this part of the graph and who were pursuing medical school should consider dropping out of the class. Fast-forward to today, I am completing my pre-matriculation list for medical school. Sure, it may have taken me a bit longer than my former classmates, best friends, and teammates (some of whom already finished medical school), but everyone goes at their own pace and it is important to know that it is okay! My road to earning acceptance wasn’t exactly what "freshman year Manny" had planned out for himself. Despite the list of setbacks, feelings of self-doubt, and countless self-affirmations that followed, the resilience this road instilled in me has become invaluable. As you go forward in this career, I think it is imperative to embrace the challenges that come your way and learn to be patient with however you plan to maneuver around the detours. My patience and perseverance to keep on going even though there was seemingly no light at the end of the tunnel is what got me to where I am today. I believed in my vision enough to take the MCAT three different times (yes, three!) and apply to med school twice. My list the second cycle was even shorter than my first cycle. I think as I got more invested into medical school applications, I knew more what I wanted for myself and my career. Going at my own pace required a lot of patience from me, but I knew it was going to be necessary in order to set myself up for success. My wish for you as you're going forward into your applications is to set some time aside, really think about what you want, be patient with your timeline, and then get after it! Undoubtedly, you will run into some detours, but that should never get in the way of your passion. I wish you the best of luck in your applications and know that you’ll be able to achieve anything that you whole-heartedly want!

HPA Summer Spotlights

This year, HPA introduced Summer Spotlight, a new website feature. Summer Spotlight explores unconventional and exciting summer opportunities of Princeton prehealth students. We shared stories from six of our students: Ruchita Balasubramanian ’19, Andrew Hersh ’18, Marina Latif ’19, Elisabeth Slighton ’20, Colin Yost ’19, and Vivian Yu ’19. From Marina’s six-week Global Seminar in Greece to Colin providing an extra hand for a coronary bypass surgery in New Hampshire, we highlighted some sensational summers. Andrew regaled us with stories of serving as a volunteer EMT with Magen David Adom in Israel and Vivian outlined her research work in Switzerland on cutting-edge bioelectronics. Ruchita administered ultrasounds in Germany and Elizabeth was in NYC as a research assistant in pediatrics. All of our featured students had similar advice for peers making summer plans: be creative in where you look for opportunities, and be open to new and different endeavors that might be available to you. There is no single path to a career in healthcare: explore options and don’t be afraid to try less conventional opportunities. We will continue to develop Summer Spotlights next year. If you’d like to share your summer story, email us at hpa@princeton.edu!
Marina Nogueira ‘16, Molecular Biology with a Neuroscience certificate

Pursuing an MD/PhD through the MSTP at Washington University in St. Louis

Significant college activities: Biochemistry thesis research in the Petry lab; summer research at Stanford, Princeton, and the NIH; DREAM Team leader; LGBT Peer Educator; Community Action Leader; TigerCall Supervisor

Post-college activities: Research Technician, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Broad Institute (2016-18)

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: Don’t ever be afraid to ask for help! I entered Princeton as an engineer and really floundered through my classes freshman year. I didn’t realize there were so many resources available to help me through the transition into college, and that there were also so many people on campus who were not only willing to help me, but also excited to help. It took me multiple years to realize this, but once I did, I performed better academically and enjoyed my final years at Princeton much more. Asking for help also opened up opportunities for new experiences and relationships with administrators and professors on campus. During the application process, I asked a lot of people for help. Despite not knowing any physicians or scientists in my family or the community I grew up in, I felt informed and prepared after talking with HPA and especially friends who had gone through the process.

My second piece of advice is to follow your interests and passions that don’t relate to medicine. I have been doing cancer research in a lab full of physician-scientists, and though I love doing research and interacting with other people who also love science and medicine, I do miss having the chance to learn about something completely different, like literature and history. This applies to choosing classes and extracurricular interests. I didn't do too many clinical activities in college, but I have never regretted it because instead I was involved in activities that I was passionate about, and probably won't have the chance to delve into them again. In regards to classes, I still remember during my senior fall, I was deciding between taking a Latin American history class and another science class because I needed to “boost my science GPA”. I chose the history class, and it turned out to be my favorite class and favorite professor during all four years at Princeton. Obviously there are times when you do need to take that science class, but sometimes being premed can feel like running on a treadmill that never stops, and sometimes it can be good to take a risk and jump off that treadmill to explore your other intellectual interests during undergrad!

Also, for MD/PhD applicants, I can't emphasize enough how important it is to seek out physician-scientists and current MD/PhD students and talk to them. The career path can be quite different than a traditional MD. It was very helpful for me these past two years to work alongside MD/PhDs to gain perspective, direction, and inspiration.

Please feel free to reach out to me, even if you’re just a freshman considering the idea!

Career Spotlights

HPA supports students interested in many health careers and seeks to educate students about all of their options.

Here are this year’s Careers of the Month.

Allopathic Medicine
Epidemiology
Forensic Science
Genetic Counseling
Physical Therapy
Physician Scientist
Psychiatry
Veterinary Medicine
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.

About Health Professions Advising

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HPA Post-grad Job Board

Seniors: Looking for jobs?
 Use our Job Board as a tool in your search!

Alums: Looking to recruit?
 Contact us and we’ll list your position

HPA.Princeton.edu/Post-Grad-Job-Board

Notices will also be featured in HPA Vitals for four weeks.

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 plan to apply to health professions schools: we will send you announcements as upcoming application cycle events unfold. You can share your contact info via this form: goo.gl/forms/tgTjiwdBP1KezzD73

Juniors: Start working on your autobiography and activities list if you’re applying next year. Consider taking the MCAT if you might apply to med school in the next 2-3 years. Look into fellowships—some application deadlines are early!

Sophomores: Consider your “why medicine” answer. 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 do a little bit of review this summer).

First-Years: Read past HPA Questions of the Week for insight on what your peers have wondered about in regards to pre-health preparation. Preview our advice for sophomores for ideas on what’s to come. Get some clinical experience.

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

This is a special edition of our weekly Vitals newsletter sent to interested pre-health students, alumni, and campus collaborators. The newsletter includes campus events, internship/job postings, the Question of the Week, and important news items. This special edition is shared more widely with alumni. Any alums who would like to receive the regular newsletter may subscribe by emailing hpa@princeton.edu