

Glide Year Opportunities Q&A

Q: Why do you call it a “Glide Year”?

A: Glide year, gap year, opportunity year, bridge year – they’re all different terms that indicate the same thing in terms of premed/pre-health: time taken between graduation and matriculation into health professions school. We prefer “glide year” because it evokes the idea of a smooth transition from one phase of life to another, during which you pursue activities that may assist in that transition, whereas “gap” sounds like a break or a hole. Whatever term you’re most comfortable with is fine – they’re used interchangeably.

Q: How many Princeton students take a glide year?

A: Over the past four years, 69% of our applicants took one or more glide years.

Q: Why do so many Princeton students take a glide year?

A: There are aspects of the Princeton experience that lend themselves to applying at the end of senior year and taking a glide year. Your senior thesis is a significant aspect of your time here; having it on the application, along with a letter from the thesis adviser, can be meaningful. The transition to Princeton can be a steep climb for many students, so allowing more time to demonstrate academic ability by way of all four years of grades on the application may be in the student’s best interest. Taking the MCAT and applying take a significant amount of time that may be better spread over the additional year. A student may not have had as much time to leave the “Princeton bubble” and gain real-world experience as they would like, so the year can be a chance to mature and grow away from an academic environment (it’s hard to describe how meaningful this is until you have done it, but if you ask students who have taken a year or two off, this is one of the first things they say about the benefit of doing so). Plus, Princeton is tough, emotionally and intellectually, and it is fine to take some time to refresh before jumping into the rigors of medical school. We have even more reasons outlined in our website, some specific to Princeton, but many more universal.

Q: Do premeds who aren’t at Princeton take glide years at the same rate?

A: According to the Matriculating Student Questionnaire administered by the Association of American Medical College, about 60% of first-year medical students nationally took one or more years between graduation and medical school matriculation.

Q: What do students do in their glide years?

A: Some sample activities are included on the back of this handout: often they fall into general categories of academic fellowships, service fellowships, bench research, clinical research, and academic record enhancement, or some combination of those.

Q: Will I be at a disadvantage if I don’t take time off?

A: Each applicant brings different strengths and distinguishing qualities to their application, and plenty of our juniors who apply for direct entry do just fine in the application process – we’re happy to talk with you about your candidacy and give you feedback about your readiness in consideration of your goals.

Q: Will HPA still support me after I graduate?

A: Definitely! If you take one glide year, you’ll do all of your application prep while you’re a senior and submit your application right around graduation, and after that we’ll be available by phone and skype, and all application resources are posted online. As long as you meet your committee letter eligibility, which includes taking classes within seven years of applying, we’ll be able to support you with our letter – if you don’t meet our criteria, we’ll still support you with advising and guidance!

Sample Glide Year Opportunities

See the “Pre-Health After Princeton” section of the HPA website for more.

Academic Fellowships

- Gates Cambridge Scholarship, studying for a one year MPhil in Music Studies, specializing in music and science
- Fulbright Fellowship to pursue research on Type 1 Diabetes in the Netherlands

Service-Oriented Fellowships

- Princeton P55 Fellowships, multiple locations
- AmeriCorps Member then Team Leader at City Year Seattle/King County
- Sachs Fellowship working at K-RITH in Durban South Africa
- Teaching chemistry at STEM-focused school in the Dominican Republic through Princeton in Latin America
- Working with Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative in Maseru, Lesotho through Princeton in Africa
- AmeriCorps Fellow in Norwalk and Stamford Community Health Centers working on patient education projects
- Fulbright ETA - teaching English in South Korea
- Sachs Scholarship working at K-RITH in Durban, South Africa
- Reach Out Fellowship working with women in Nicaragua

Clinical Research

- Clinical Research Assistant in Orthopedic Surgery at the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles
- Clinical research assistant studying Traumatic Brain Injury at USF Morsani School of Medicine
- Clinical Research Assistant studying Sturge-Weber disease at Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore
- Clinical research Coordinator at MD Anderson, on study investigating cancer treatments

Bench Research

- Staying at Princeton as a Research Assistant in thesis adviser's lab
- Post-baccalaureate Intramural Research Training Award (IRTA) at National Institutes of Health
- Post-baccalaureate Research Education Program at Yale
- Research Assistant at U Penn: basic science, clinical, and translational projects in cardiovascular surgery
- Research assistant, focusing on epigenetic profiles that cause immune system dysregulation, in the Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases at the University of Michigan
- Research Assistant, Seattle Children's, studying translational therapies for immunological disorders
- Research technician, focusing on RNA and protein expression profiles, as well as new molecular targets for therapy in neuroblastoma tumor cells, at Baylor College of Medicine
- HHMI Research Associate at NYU Langone medical center, focusing on epigenetics

Direct Clinical Experience

- Senior Patient Coordinator, administrative work and patient interaction at Weill Cornell Imaging
- ER Scribe with ScribeAmerica at Union Hospital in Maryland; with CityMD in NYC;
- Medical assistant for dermatologic surgery practice
- Community Residence Counselor McClean Hospital
- EMT and tutor

Academic Record Enhancement

- Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Master of Biomedical Science
- Tufts University, MS in Biomedical Science Program
- Boston University, MA in Medical Sciences
- Georgetown, SMP in Physiology
- U Penn, Specialized Studies Program

Other

- Consulting with BCG, Bain, InfoSys, Epic, Core Access Group, IBM Global Business Services, Keystone Strategy, Simon Kucher & Partners
- Playing professional sports
- Health and Science writer with the Daily Beast

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