Appropriate Extracurricular Activities for Pre-Health Students

When evaluating applicants, professional schools look for candidates with integrity who are highly motivated, naturally curious, and good at solving complex problems. They look to the candidate’s academic record for evidence of a strong work ethic and the ability to master specific sets of knowledge, and to the record of extracurricular activities for evidence that s/he is compassionate and caring, s/he has excellent interpersonal skills and can relate well to many different types of people, s/he is an effective communicator in both written and oral formats, s/he is an effective leader and team member, and that s/he has taken the appropriate steps to prepare him/herself for a career in health care.

Pre-health students must maintain a balance between extracurricular activities and academic progress, so should participate in extracurricular activities that help them develop their pre-professional competencies, but that do not distract them from academic excellence. Note that genuine commitment to a few activities will result in a more positive outcome than maintaining a large number of short term commitments to a large number of activities.

Students should keep a record of all extracurricular activities. Keep a journal and make notes about your experiences in addition to tracking dates and number of hours. Think about what skills you used or developed when participating in an activity.

**Campus Organizations.** Involvement in group organizations can help students develop their organizational, communication, teamwork, and leadership skills, and is also an avenue for the formation of satisfying and supportive friendships. Students will benefit from involvement in almost any organization (health-related, non- health-related special interest, religious, Greek, etc.). A complete list of campus organizations at S&T can be found here: <https://involvement.mst.edu/>

Our student pre-health organization is Scrubs, and we also have a Love Your Melon campus crew.

**Community Service.** Pre-health students should bear in mind their status as citizens of their communities and should strive to participate in service projects regularly. Besides demonstrating a commitment to one’s community, such experience allows students the opportunities to develop their interpersonal, communication, and leadership skills. Students are encouraged to read the articles about volunteering at <https://explorehealthcareers.org/volunteer-work-helps-college-application/> and <http://www.medicaljobs.org/articles/value-of-volunteering.php>

Students can maximize the benefits of their service by selecting projects or causes that they truly care about and by sustaining their efforts towards those projects over time. Students should also note that projects that might take them outside of their “comfort zones” (e.g., working with the homeless, visiting the disabled or elderly, or tutoring children from disadvantaged backgrounds) offer excellent opportunities for self-reflection and personal growth.

While all service projects are worthwhile, students who limit their involvement to projects required as part of a service-learning course or to only those that involve fun, one-time activities with friends, are probably missing the opportunity to learn something deeper about themselves and their motivations for pursuing a life in health care.

S&T culture is very focused on service. Information about campus involvement, service activities, and leadership can be found on the Web site of the Office of Student Involvement. There are monthly Saturdays of Service as well as an Annual Days of Service during St. Pat’s and on Martin Luther King Jr. day and Alternative Spring Break Trips. <https://involvement.mst.edu/volunteer/>

Combining personal skills or hobbies with volunteerism is a great way for students to get involved. For example, a student who swam competitively in high school might help patients with multiple sclerosis learn to swim (Multiple Sclerosis Association of America’s swim program <http://mymsaa.org/> ), or a student who speaks another language fluently might volunteer as a translator for a hospital or clinic. Students may use services such as Volunteer Match (<http://www.volunteermatch.org> ) to find opportunities.