

CHAPTER 2

APPLYING TO DENTAL SCHOOL

As you prepare to apply to dental school, you will find it helpful to become acquainted with the usual educational curriculum, typical admissions requirements, and the application process. This chapter offers essential information about these topics, organized into four sections: **THE DENTAL SCHOOL PROGRAM** provides an overview of the basic educational curriculum at most schools, recognizing that each dental school has its own mission and distinguishing features; **Qualifying for Dental School** reviews the typical numbers of students involved in applying to and attending dental schools and summarizes general admission requirements; **The Application Process** describes the steps of applying to dental school; and **Special Admissions Topics** addresses the special topics of advanced standing and transferring, combined degree programs, and admissions for international students.

THE DENTAL SCHOOL PROGRAM

A common goal of all dental school programs is to produce graduates who are:

- Competently educated in the basic biological and clinical sciences
- Capable of providing quality dental care to all segments of the population
- Committed to high moral and professional standards in their service to the public

The traditional dental school program requires four academic years of study, often organized as described below. Since there is variation in the focus and organization of the curricula of dental schools, the schools' descriptions in Part II of this guide show the specifics of courses of study that won't be covered here.

■ Years One and Two

Students generally spend the major part of the first two years studying the biological sciences to learn about the structure and function of the human body and its diseases. Students receive instruction about basic sciences, such as human anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, microbiology, and pharmacology and dentally oriented biological sciences, such as oral anatomy, oral pathology, and oral histology. In many dental schools, first- and second-year students learn about providing health care to diverse populations. They also learn the basic principles of oral diagnosis and treatment and begin mastery of dental treatment procedures through practice on models of the mouth and teeth. While completing courses in the basic and clinical sciences, at many schools, students begin interacting with patients and providing basic oral health care.

■ Years Three and Four

The focus of the final two years of dental school generally concentrates on clinical study. Clinical training, which is broad in scope, is designed to provide competence in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of oral diseases and disorders. Students apply basic principles and techniques involved in oral diagnosis, treatment planning, restorative dentistry, periodontics, oral surgery, orthodontics, pediatric dentistry, prosthodontics, endodontics, and other types of treatment through direct patient care. They learn to

attend to chronically ill, disabled, special care, and geriatric patients and children. In addition, dental schools provide instruction in practice management and in working effectively with allied dental personnel to provide dental care.

During these two years, students may rotate through various clinics of the dental school to treat patients under the supervision of clinical instructors. They often have an opportunity to acquire additional clinical experience in hospitals and other off-campus, community settings. These experiences give students an appreciation for the team approach to health care delivery through their association with other health professionals and health professions students.

Because dental school curricula are designed to meet the anticipated needs of the public, every school continues to modify its curriculum to achieve a better correlation between the basic and clinical sciences. In clinical training, there is increased emphasis on providing comprehensive patient care—a method of training that permits a student to meet all the patient’s needs within the student’s existing levels of competence. Many schools also offer opportunities for participation in community service and in research activities.

The D.M.D. and the D.D.S. are equivalent degrees that are awarded to dental students upon completion of the same types of programs.

QUALIFYING FOR DENTAL SCHOOL

At least 61 U.S. and 10 Canadian dental schools will be accepting applications to the first year of their Doctor of Dental Medicine (D.M.D.) or Doctor of Dental Surgery (D.D.S.) programs in 2013–14. The D.M.D. and the D.D.S. are equivalent degrees that are awarded to dental students upon completion of the same types of programs.

Numbers of Applicants and Enrollees

A total of 4,947 first-time, first-year students were enrolled in D.M.D. and D.D.S. programs in the United States in 2010–11. Of the 12,001 individuals who applied for admission, 41.2% were enrolled. Women comprised 46.3% of the applicants and 45.7% of the enrollees in 2010. Black or African Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, American Indian or Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders comprised 13.4% of the applicants and 12.9% of the enrollees in 2010. These underrepresented minority figures are expected to increase in the future. See **Table 2-1** for a comparison of the number of dental school applicants to the number enrolled for the 2010–11 academic year.

General Admission Requirements

Dental schools consider many factors when deciding which applicants to accept into their programs. Using “whole” application review, admissions committees assess biographical and academic information provided by the applicant and by the undergraduate and graduate schools the applicant attended. These committees generally also assess the applicant’s results from the Dental Admission Test (DAT), grade point average (GPA), additional information provided in the application, letters of evaluation, and interviews.

All U.S. dental schools require students to take the DAT (all Canadian dental schools require students to take the Canadian Dental Aptitude Test), but other admission requirements vary from school to school. For example, differences may exist in the areas of undergraduate courses required, interview policies, and state residency requirements. Part II of this guide specifies each school’s requirements.

Although most schools state that they require a minimum of at least two years (60 semester hours) or three years (90 semester hours) of undergraduate education (also called “predental education”), the

TABLE 2-1. TOTAL U.S. DENTAL SCHOOL APPLICANTS AND FIRST-YEAR ENROLLEES, FOR CLASS ENTERING FALL 2010

	Total*	Men/Women	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	American Indian or Alaska Native	Two or More Races	Do Not Wish to Report/Unknown
Applicant	12,001	6,448/5,551	3,234	694	859	12	6,447	38	323	394
Enrollee	4,947	2,686/2,260	1,139	267	356	4	2,887	12	121	161

*The sum of applicants and enrollees by gender does not equal the total number of applicants and enrollees because a small number did not provide this information.

Source: American Dental Education Association, U.S. Dental School Applicants and Enrollees, 2010 Entering Class

majority of students admitted to dental school will have earned a bachelor's degree prior to the start of dental school. Of all U.S. students entering dental schools, nearly 94.5% have completed four or more years of college and about 6.2% have graduate training.

Individuals pursuing dental careers should take certain science courses. However, you do not have to be a science major to gain admission to a dental school and successfully complete the program. As shown in **Table 2-2**, most dental students are science majors as undergraduates, but many major in fields not related to science.

■ ADEA Admissions Guidelines

As the primary dental education association in North America, the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) has developed guidelines addressing dental school admission. Although adhering to the guidelines is voluntary, member institutions (which include all U.S. and Canadian dental schools) are encouraged to follow these guidelines as they consider and accept applicants to their schools. The guidelines are as follows:

- ADEA encourages dental schools to accept students from all walks of life who, on the basis of past and predicted performance, appear qualified to become competent dental professionals.
- ADEA further encourages dental schools to use, whenever possible as part of the admissions process, a consistently applied assessment of an applicant's nonacademic attributes.
- ADEA urges dental schools to grant final acceptance only to students who have completed at least two years of postsecondary education and have taken the DAT.
- ADEA further suggests that dental schools encourage applicants to earn their baccalaureate degrees before entering dental school.

The recommendation for at least two years of postsecondary education may be waived for students accepted at a dental school under an early selection program. Under these programs, a dental school and an undergraduate institution have a formal, published agreement that gives a student, at some time before the completion of the pre-dental curriculum, guaranteed admission to the dental school. Admission depends upon successful completion of the dental school's entrance requirements and normal application procedures.

- ADEA recommends that dental schools notify applicants, either orally or in writing, of provisional or final acceptance on or after December 1 of the academic year prior to the academic year of matriculation.
- ADEA further recommends that:
 - Applicants accepted on or after December 1 be given at least 30 days to reply to the offer
 - For applicants who have been accepted on or after February 1, the response period should be 15 days
 - For applicants accepted on or after May 15, the response period may be lifted

- Response periods are subject to change. Be sure to consult schools' websites for any updates.

TABLE 2-2. UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS OF DENTAL SCHOOL APPLICANTS AND ENROLLEES, 2010–11

Pre dental Major	Percent of Applicants	Percent of First-Time Enrollees	Percent Rate of Enrollment
Biological Science	51.1	52.2	45.4
Chemistry/Physical Science	17.4	18.8	39.8
Engineering	2.6	2.9	37.5
Math/Computer Science	1.4	1.3	38.9
Social Sciences	8.1	7.6	44.7
Business	4.5	4.1	42.1
Education	0.5	0.5	42.9
Language/Humanities/Arts	4.1	4.0	42.5
Pre dentistry	5.2	3.9	30.9
Other Major	4.3	3.8	36.5
No Major	1.1	0.8	28.1

Source: American Dental Education Association, U.S. Dental School Applicants and Enrollees, 2010 Entering Class

- Finally, ADEA recommends that dental schools encourage a close working relationship between their admissions and financial aid staff in order to counsel dental students early and effectively on their financial obligations.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The dental school application process involves a number of procedures but is easily followed once you learn what is needed. This section explains how the application process works in general, recognizing that specific details may vary somewhat from school to school. Once you have a basic framework, you will find it easier to adapt to these variations.

The application process has three main steps:

- Take the Dental Admission Test (DAT) (for Canadian schools, the Canadian Dental Aptitude Test).
- In the vast majority of cases, to submit an online application through ADEA's Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (ADEA AADSAS).
- Acquire and submit institution-specific materials.

Following is a brief description of each step and whom you should contact for more information. This section concludes with advice on how to effectively manage the timing of the application process. The application process for an individual school may vary from this general information; Part II of this guide contains specific application requirements by school.

Not sure what to write about in your essay? Consider these ideas.

The ADEA AADSAS application requires a personal essay on why you wish to pursue a dental education. Where do you start? Put yourself in the shoes of the admissions committees that read application essays. They are looking for individuals who are motivated, academically prepared, articulate, socially conscious, and knowledgeable about the profession. What can you tell admissions committees about yourself that will make you stand out?

Here are some possible topics for your essay:

- How did you become interested in studying dentistry? Be honest. If you knew you wanted to be a dentist from the age of six, that's fine, but if you didn't, that's all right, too. Explain how you discovered dentistry as a career possibility and what you have done to research the career. Admissions committees are looking for how well thought-out your career plans are.
- What have you done to demonstrate your interest in dentistry? Have you observed or worked in dental offices? Have you talked to practicing dentists? How good of an understanding do you have of general dental practice? How do you envision yourself using your dental degree?
- What have you done to demonstrate your commitment to helping others?
- Do you have any special talents or leadership skills that could be transferable to the practice of dentistry?
- Have you benefited from any special experiences such as participating in research or internships?
- Did you have to work to pay for your education? How has that made you a stronger applicant?
- Have you had to overcome hardships or obstacles to get where you are today? How has this influenced your motivation for advanced education?

Take the DAT

All U.S. dental schools require applicants to take the DAT, which is designed to measure general academic ability, comprehension of scientific information, and perceptual ability. This half-day, multiple-choice exam is conducted by the American Dental Association (ADA). A computer-based test, the exam is given at Prometric Testing Centers in various sites around the country on almost any day of the year.

Candidates for the DAT should have completed prerequisite courses in biology, general chemistry, and organic chemistry. Advanced-level biology and physics are not required. Most applicants complete two or more years of college before taking the exam. ADEA strongly encourages applicants to prepare for the DAT by reviewing the content of the examination and basic principles of biology and chemistry and by taking practice tests. The DAT Candidate's Guide, the online tutorial, and the application and preparation materials are available in the DAT section of the ADA website at www.ada.org/dat.aspx.

The ADA suggests that applicants take the DAT well in advance of their intended

dental school enrollment and at least one year prior to when they hope to enter dental school. See **Table 3-3** in this guide for an overview of individual schools' requirements

regarding the DAT, including the average scores of enrollees and timelines that will help you schedule the DAT. The DAT can be taken a maximum of three times. Applicants who wish to take the DAT more than three times must apply for special permission to take the test again. For details, see the DAT section of the ADA website.

The DAT consists of multiple-choice test items presented in the English language and requires four hours and 15 minutes for administration. The four separate parts of the exam cover:

- Natural sciences (biology, general chemistry, and organic chemistry)
- Perceptual ability (two- and three-dimensional problem solving)
- Reading comprehension (dental and basic sciences)
- Quantitative reasoning (mathematical problems in algebra, numerical calculations, conversions, etc.)

Most dental schools view the DAT as one of many factors in evaluating candidates for admission. As a result, the emphasis that schools place on different parts of the test varies.

Candidates applying to take the DAT must submit application information to the DAT testing program from the DAT section of the ADA website. The fee is \$360. After the application and fee payment are processed, the ADA notifies Prometric that the candidate is eligible for DAT testing. At the same time, the candidate receives notification from the ADA including instructions on how to register with the Prometric Candidate Contact Center to arrange the day, time, and place to take the DAT at a Prometric Testing Center. A current listing of testing centers is at www.prometric.com/ADA. The candidate is eligible to take the test, upon approval, once per 12-month period. If the candidate does not call, register, and take the exam during this period, he or she will have to submit another application and fee in order to take the exam later. Candidates must submit a new application and fee for each re-examination, and the re-examination must be taken at least 90 days after the previous exam. Individuals with disabilities or special needs may request special arrangements for taking the DAT. For details, visit the Special Accommodations section of the Prometric website at www.prometric.com/TestTakers/FAQs.

The Canadian Dental Association (CDA) and the Association of Canadian Faculties of Dentistry have developed the Dental Aptitude Test for applicants to Canadian dental schools. All Canadian dental schools require the test.

For more information, contact the Dental Aptitude Test Program of the Canadian Dental Association (L'Association Dentaire Canadienne), 1815 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1G 3Y6; fax 613-523-7736; dat@cda-adc.ca, www.cda-adc.ca.

■ Submitting an ADEA AADSAS Application

ADEA's AADSAS (pronounced "add-sass," the acronym for the Associated American Dental Schools Application Service) is a centralized application service sponsored and administered by ADEA.

The Application

The ADEA AADSAS application is available online at www.adea.org. The online AADSAS application requires you to submit the following information:

- Biographical information
- Your DENTPIN®—you may have obtained this unique identification number when you registered for the DAT. If not, you will be prompted to register for one when you create your ADEA AADSAS application.
- Colleges/universities attended
- Coursework completed and planned prior to enrollment in dental school

Since many schools have a rolling admissions process and begin to admit highly qualified applicants as early as December 1, applicants are encouraged to submit their applications early.

- DAT scores are imported from the ADA Testing Service Center
- Personal statement (essay)—a one-page essay in which you present yourself and your reasons for wanting to attend dental school
- Background information—information about your personal background, including experiences related to the dental profession; extracurricular, volunteer, and community-service experiences; honors, awards, and scholarships; and work and research experiences
- Release for criminal background check for individuals who have received admissions offers from participating dental schools. They will be contacted by Certiphi® Screening Inc. for a background check. Nonparticipating dental schools may have a separate background check process.
- Dental school designations—the section where you select the dental schools that you want to receive your application
- Official transcripts—submission of an official transcript from each college or university you have attended to the AADSAS Verification Department
- Letters of evaluation—also called “letters of recommendation.” AADSAS also accepts and distributes letters of evaluation with your AADSAS application

Submission Deadlines

ADEA AADSAS applications become available online on or around June 1, and applicants may complete and submit the application any time after the application is available. Each school has a specific application deadline date, which is noted in the online AADSAS application and in the individual school entries in Part II of this guide. These dates are subject to change; consult each dental school’s website for the most up-to-date information on deadline dates. Your completed application, transcripts, payment, and other required documents must be received by AADSAS no later than the stated deadline of the schools to which you are applying. Since many schools have a rolling admissions process and begin to admit highly qualified applicants as early as December 1, applicants are encouraged to submit their applications early.

Application Fees

Check the AADSAS website for complete information about application fees. Payment may be made by check, money order, or credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express). All fees must be paid in U.S. currency drawn on a U.S. bank or the U.S. Postal Service. AADSAS offers a Fee Assistance Program (FAP) for applicants with demonstrated financial hardship. Details may be obtained on the AADSAS website.

ADEA AADSAS Schools

The schools that use AADSAS are listed by state in **Table 2-3**. If you are applying only to the schools that do not participate in AADSAS, you should apply directly to those schools. Texas residents applying to Texas dental schools must use the Texas Medical & Dental Application Schools Application Service (TMDSAS), www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas. Graduates of non-ADA accredited dental schools (i.e., international dental school graduates) may be eligible for admission into advanced placement programs offered by many dental schools. International dental graduates may want to refer to the ADEA Centralized Application for Advanced Placement for International Dentists (ADEA CAAPID), located on the ADEA website (www.adea.org) for information about these programs and the application process.

AADSAS serves as an information clearinghouse only. It does not influence any school’s evaluation or selection of applicants, nor does ADEA recommend applicants to dental schools or vice versa.

Submitting your ADEA AADSAS Application: Words of Advice

Before you begin the application process:

- Meet with your health professions advisor to discuss the application process, including the timing of application submission and the DAT, services that may be provided by your advisor such as a Pre-Dental Committee Report or other application assistance, and potential dental schools to which you plan to apply.
- Consider the timing of the Dental Admissions Test (DAT). You may submit an ADEA AADSAS application before taking the DAT, but you should know that many schools consider you for admission only after they have received your DAT scores. However, you should also be aware that delaying the submission of an ADEA AADSAS application prior to taking the DAT can result in a late application and can reduce your chances of being accepted for admission.
- Collect copies of all transcripts and have them available for reference.
- Begin to line up individuals who will be providing letters of evaluation early. Plan around school vacations when faculty advisors may not be available.
- ADEA AADSAS staff strongly recommend that you submit your application well in advance of the deadlines of the schools to which you apply.
- Your application will ask you to indicate the names of individuals

who will be providing letters of evaluation on your behalf. While ADEA AADSAS accepts letters in print format, it strongly recommends that letters be electronically submitted. Refer to the instructions for details about submitting letters of evaluation.

- The ADEA AADSAS application becomes available on or around June 1. Watch the ADEA website (www.adea.org) for the start date of the application cycle.

While completing the application:

- When you set up your ADEA AADSAS account, identify a user name and password. Keep these in a safe yet accessible place.
- Read all application instructions before you start to fill out the application.
- Any time after you set up your account, you can go back into the application (using your user name and password) to add or change information up until the time you submit it for processing.
- Print the Transcript Matching Form from your application. Request that an official transcript—including transferred coursework posted to later transcripts—from each college and university you have attended be sent to ADEA AADSAS. The Transcript Matching Form must be attached by each college's registrar to the official transcript and mailed by the registrar to ADEA AADSAS. Applications are not processed until all official transcripts are received.
- Remember that ADEA AADSAS accepts only official transcripts sent directly from the registrar. ADEA AADSAS does not accept student-issued transcripts.

After submitting the application:

- Check with the schools to which you are applying (and their individual entries in this guide) to find out what supplemental materials or fees are required. These must be submitted directly to the school, not to ADEA AADSAS.
- Log on to your ADEA AADSAS account to monitor the status of your application while it is being processed and after it has been sent to the dental schools.
- Update any changes of address or other contact information in your application at any time in the application process, even after your application has been sent to your designated schools.
- ADEA AADSAS does not retain application information from year to year. Individuals reapplying for admission to dental school must complete a new application each year, including providing new transcripts and letters of evaluation. For further information, visit the ADEA website at www.adea.org, and select the ADEA AADSAS link. Processing the application, including transcript verification, generally takes about one month. Remember that your ADEA AADSAS application is not considered complete until ADEA AADSAS receives your online application, fee payment, and official transcripts from every college and university attended.

■ Submit Any Required Supplemental Application Materials

Each school has its own policy regarding the payment of a separate application fee and the submission of additional application materials. These materials may include an institution-specific supplemental (or secondary) application form, documentation of dentistry shadowing experience, and official academic transcripts. Part II of this guide briefly reviews each dental school's application requirements. In addition, the ADEA AADSAS application website (<https://portal.aadsasweb.org>) includes a chart that identifies the supplemental requirements for the participating schools. This information is subject to change; consult dental schools' websites for the most up-to-date requirements.

After you have submitted all of your materials, the dental schools that wish to consider you for a place in the entering class will contact you for a visit to the campus. This visit will likely include an interview with the admissions committee, a tour of the campus and

TABLE 2-3. DENTAL SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN ADEA AADSAS (AS OF JANUARY 1, 2012)

Alabama	University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Dentistry	Nebraska	Creighton University School of Dentistry University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Dentistry
Arizona	Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health Midwestern University College of Dental Medicine-Arizona	Nevada	University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Dental Medicine
California	Loma Linda University School of Dentistry University of California, Los Angeles School of Dentistry University of California, San Francisco School of Dentistry University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry University of Southern California Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry Western University of Health Sciences College of Dental Medicine	New Jersey	University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey New Jersey Dental School
Colorado	The University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine	New York	Columbia University College of Dental Medicine New York University College of Dentistry Stony Brook University School of Dental Medicine University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine
Connecticut	University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine	North Carolina	East Carolina University School of Dental Medicine University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Dentistry
District of Columbia	Howard University College of Dentistry	Ohio	Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine The Ohio State University College of Dentistry
Florida	Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine Nova Southeastern University College of Dental Medicine University of Florida College of Dentistry	Oklahoma	University of Oklahoma College of Dentistry
Georgia	Georgia Health Sciences University College of Dental Medicine	Oregon	Oregon Health & Science University School of Dentistry
Illinois	Midwestern University College of Dental Medicine-Illinois Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine University of Illinois at Chicago College of Dentistry	Pennsylvania	University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine The Maurice H. Kornberg School of Dentistry, Temple University
Indiana	Indiana University School of Dentistry	Puerto Rico	University of Puerto Rico School of Dental Medicine
Iowa	University of Iowa College of Dentistry	South Carolina	Medical University of South Carolina James B. Edwards College of Dental Medicine
Kentucky	University of Kentucky College of Dentistry University of Louisville School of Dentistry	Tennessee	Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Dentistry
Louisiana	Louisiana State University School of Dentistry	Texas	The Texas A&M University System Health Science Center Baylor College of Dentistry The University of Texas School of Dentistry at Houston University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio Dental School
Maryland	University of Maryland School of Dentistry	Utah	Roseman University of Health Sciences College of Dental Medicine
Massachusetts	Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine Harvard School of Dental Medicine Tufts University School of Dental Medicine	Virginia	Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry
Michigan	University of Detroit Mercy School of Dentistry University of Michigan School of Dentistry	Washington	University of Washington School of Dentistry
Minnesota	University of Minnesota School of Dentistry	West Virginia	West Virginia University School of Dentistry
Missouri	Missouri School of Dentistry & Oral Health University of Missouri - Kansas City School of Dentistry	Wisconsin	Marquette University School of Dentistry
		Nova Scotia	Dalhousie University Faculty of Dentistry

Visit <https://portal.aadsasweb.org> for an up-to-date list of ADEA AADSAS participating dental schools.

facilities, meetings with faculty and students, and other meetings and activities. When you visit a dental school, the admissions committee is evaluating you as a prospective student; at the same time, you will have the opportunity to evaluate the dental school program and environment to determine if you think it would be a good fit for you and your goals.

■ Manage the Timing of the Application Process

The trick to managing the timing of the application process is summed up in two words: Don't procrastinate! Most dental schools will fill a large percentage of their 2013 entering classes by December 2012. This means that, even though schools have deadlines for completing all the application requirements that range from October 2012 to February 2013, it is not wise to wait until the last minute to take the DAT, submit the AADSAS application, or complete any supplemental materials requested by the schools to which you are applying.

The individual dental school information in Part II of this guide includes an admissions timetable for each school's entering class. It is essential that you become familiar with the timetables for the schools to which you are applying and that you plan to complete the admission application requirements on time.

SPECIAL ADMISSIONS TOPICS

For those of you interested in advanced standing and transferring, combined degree programs, and admission for international students, this section briefly addresses those areas. Part II of this guide provides some additional information on these topics for each dental school, but you should contact the dental schools you are considering for more details.

■ Advanced Standing and Transferring

Advanced standing means that a student is exempted from certain courses or is accepted as a second- or third-year student. Advanced standing is offered at the time of admission to students who have mastered some aspects of the dental school curriculum because of previous training. An individual who has a Ph.D. in one of the basic sciences, such as physiology, for example, may be exempted from taking the physiology course in dental school. Some schools may also grant advanced standing to students who have transferred from other U.S. or Canadian dental schools or who have graduated from international

STUDENT PROFILE



LISA BEGAY

SECOND-YEAR DENTAL STUDENT
ARIZONA SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY AND ORAL HEALTH
HOMETOWN: WINDOW ROCK, ARIZONA

Why dentistry?

Growing up on the Navajo reservation, I found it very difficult to get a dental appointment at the local Indian Health Service (IHS) due to lack of dental providers. The dental disparity is felt by many American Indian families, and often they don't understand the importance of oral hygiene because of the lack of regular dental visits. My personal experience was the initial force that led me to become a dental hygienist. As a dental hygienist, I had a chance to learn more about dentistry and meet other American Indian dentists. I was truly inspired by the leadership and career accomplishments of the first American Indian dentist and my mentor, Dr. George Blue Spruce. I felt confident that as a dentist I could make a difference, give back to my community, and provide valuable mentorship to other American Indian students.

What are you doing now?

I am in my second year at the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health (ASDOH) taking preclinical courses, such as fixed prosthodontics and operative dentistry in the simulation lab. ASDOH offers a public health certificate and a Master of Public Health. I am taking online classes for my public health certificate. I also serve as president of the Society of American Indian Dentists student chapter, mentor American Indian students interested in dentistry, and serve as a board committee member for the nonprofit organization Pathways Into Health, which focuses on improving health care and higher education for American Indians across the country.

What did you do as an applicant to prepare for dental school?

Prior to dental school, I assisted with the planning and implementation of a national IHS periodontal course designed for dental assistants. The course taught expanded functions to dental assistants for procedures such as hand scaling and oral hygiene education and techniques. I also volunteered for deployment on a U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) humanitarian mission on the USNS Comfort (a Navy medical ship) to Latin America and the Caribbean. It was an amazing experience that enlightened me about international dentistry. In my spare time, I shadowed multiple dentists in different specialties and received valuable advice from each of them about their dental school experience.

What drew you to the IHS?

The lack of dental providers on the reservation, the unmet dental needs in the community, and the huge deficiency in American Indian dental providers drew me into the IHS. In addition, I have been a lifelong patient of the IHS, and I believe in the mission of IHS to "raise the health status of American Indian and Alaska Native people to the highest possible level."

What advice would you give applications who might be interested in either IHS or public health?

I would recommend doing online research; go to the IHS or USPHS website to find out more about the different

branches of dental public health. They should also visit dental sites and speak to dentists already working in public health clinics.

What advice would you give applicants or those considering dental school?

My advice is to find a mentor who recently applied to dental school and who can guide you through the process. Be honest and be yourself in the interview; this is your chance to show the dental school who you are.

What did you do before applying to work on your manual dexterity?

I was a dental hygienist for six years before applying to dental school. My experience working with hand instruments has been a tremendous help with my hand-eye coordination.

Did you do any shadowing before applying to dental schools?

I had a chance to shadow dentists between my hygiene patients, and I was always fascinated by the dental procedures because every treatment plan was so diverse. The valuable experience allowed me to see what dentists did on a daily basis, from treatment planning to problem solving to interpersonal relationships with patients. The experience solidified my decision to pursue dental school.

Are you taking advantage of any scholarship, loans, or loan repayment programs?

I am fortunate enough to receive the IHS Scholarship, which has been a tremendous help and motivation to achieve my career goals without the stress of accruing debt while in school. I also received the VA Post-9/11 GI bill that helps offset any additional fees. I would highly encourage dental applicants to apply to as many scholarships as they can to reduce their overall debt. If you have to take out student loans, live within your means and try not to take out the full amount of the loan.

Are you married/partnered/single?

I am engaged to a wonderful dentist and we have two goofy pound pups, Buckley and Lucia.



The American Dental Education Association (ADEA), Division of Educational Pathways, is excited to announce the launch of GoDentalSM, a new career building and social networking site. GoDentalSM is the official web resource for up-to-date information for people on the pathway to dental education and exciting oral health careers. It offers an interactive experience for networking, community development, and engagement.

GoDentalSM is a dynamic web tool that guides students through the amazing experience of becoming a dentist and provides information directly from dental professionals. While other websites use information from third parties and volunteers, GoDentalSM is the “go-to” source. GoDentalSM is sponsored by the American Dental Education Association (ADEA). It was designed to promote collaboration, community, and connection between prehealth and current oral health professionals. Here’s your chance to become involved:

GoDentalSM Highlights

Get answers to your questions on applying to dental school and advanced dental education programs

DentNetworksSM—View exciting updates on forum discussions and interact with other students and dental professionals

BlogistrySM—Engage in dialogue with our guest bloggers

DenTubeSM—Submit videos of yourself or a group of students posing questions

Follow GoDentalSM on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn

Share us with your local prehealth society

Find out about GoDentalSM upcoming events

GoDentalSM offers these features and much more. Visit GoDentalSM now at www.godental.org and sign-up; it’s free. Take part in the forum discussions; submit questions to GoDentalSM staff for BlogistrySM topics; watch, share, and comment on the DenTubeSM channel; explore the GoDentalSM community. Spread the word...the Pathway starts here. For more information about posting information to GoDentalSM and general inquiries contact godental@adea.org.

dental schools. In these cases, applicants may be allowed to enter as second- or third year-students.

Each dental school has its own policy on advanced standing and transferring students; see the individual school entries in Part II of this guide. Most students do not obtain advanced standing and very few students transfer from one school to another.

■ Combined Degree Programs

Many dental schools in the United States and Canada offer combined degree programs that give students the opportunity to obtain other degrees along with their D.D.S. or D.M.D., such as the following:

- A baccalaureate degree (B.A. or B.S.)
- A master’s degree (M.A., M.S., M.B.A., or M.P.H.)
- A doctoral degree (Ph.D., M.D., or D.O.)

Numerous dental schools have formal combined baccalaureate and dental degree programs. Combined degree programs expand career options, especially for those interested in careers in dental education, administration, and research. Where specific agreements have been made between the dental school and its parent institution, they may also shorten the length of training. The undergraduate and dental school portions of some combined degree programs take place at the same university, while other combined programs are the result of arrangements made between a dental school and other undergraduate institutions. Sometimes colleges independently grant baccalaureate degrees to students who attended as undergraduates and did not finish their undergraduate education but did successfully complete some portion of their dental training.

Many dental schools also sponsor combined graduate and dental degree programs. These programs, which usually take six to seven years to complete, are offered at the master's or doctoral level in subjects that include the basic sciences (biology, physiology, chemistry), public policy, medicine, and other areas. See **Table 3-6** in Chapter 3 of this guide for a list of dental schools with combined degree programs. For more information about combined degree programs, contact the schools directly.

■ Admissions for International Students

The term “international student” refers to an individual who is a native of a foreign country and who plans to study in the United States or Canada on a student visa. Students who have permanent residency status in the United States are not considered international students; they have the same rights, responsibilities, and options as U.S. citizens applying for admission to dental school.

Applicants who have completed coursework outside the United States or Canada (except through study abroad) should supply a copy of their transcripts, translated into English, plus a course-by-course evaluation of all transcripts. Application details for international applicants are contained in the ADEA AADSAS application.

International applicants who are not graduates of international dental schools are considered for admission to most U.S. and Canadian dental schools. Each dental school has its own policies on admission requirements for international students. However, most dental schools require international students to complete all the application materials mandated for U.S. citizens and permanent residents. In addition, international students may be asked to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or demonstrate English language proficiency. International students should expect to finance the entire cost of their dental education.

■ International Dental Graduates

Graduates of international (non-ADA accredited) dental schools may be eligible for admission into an advanced placement program. These programs provide an opportunity for dentists educated outside the United States and Canada to obtain an accredited degree that is recognized by state and provincial licensing officials. The ADEA CAAPID provides an online portal for applicants to submit materials one time and direct them to multiple institutions. Information about these programs, their admission requirements, and the application process can be found at www.adea.org.

A Guide to Preparing for Dental School

Maybe you already know that you have a strong interest in dentistry but don't know where to start. It's never too early to begin preparing. Below are a few guidelines to help you plan your course work and get in touch with mentors and other professionals who can help you along the way.

This guide offers a general timeline for preparation. Many successful dental students have been nonscientific majors or pursued other careers before deciding dentistry was right for them. In fact, the guide can be used at any point in your academic or professional career. If you are not completely sure that dentistry is where you want to focus your energy, the guide can help you decide if attending dental school is a commitment you want to make.

FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- Take science and math classes, including chemistry, biology, and algebra. If available, take Advanced Placement (AP) coursework.
- Talk to people in the field. Call local dentists or contact the dental society in your city or town to find people who can help answer your questions. You can locate your local dental society through the American Dental Association (ADA) website at www.ada.org/localorganizations.aspx. Information on the ADA's mentoring program can also be found at www.ada.org/3469.aspx.
- Check out ExploreHealthCareers.org (EHC) and go the "Dentist" page at www.explorehealthcareers.org/en/Career.1.aspx.

COLLEGE YEAR 1

Fall semester

- Meet with prehealth advisor and plan coursework.
- If your school doesn't have a prehealth advisor, look into obtaining a copy of the *ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools* to review the dental schools' requirements. Although most schools require a minimum of one year of biology, general and inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics, specific requirements vary from school to school.
- Complete required predental coursework.

Spring semester

- Think about summer volunteer or employment opportunities in dentistry, such as shadowing a dentist or volunteering in a community health clinic.
- Complete required course work and register for the fall semester.
- Research prehealth enrichment programs at ExploreHealthCareers.org: www.explorehealthcareers.org. Also, look into the Association of American Medical Colleges/ADEA Summer Medical Colleges/ADEA Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (AAMC/ADEA SMDEP) for college freshmen and sophomores at www.smdep.org. Prehealth enrichment programs can help you decide if a career in dentistry is a good fit and help you prepare for the application process.

Summer

- Complete an internship or volunteer program.
- Attend summer school if necessary.

COLLEGE YEAR 2**Fall semester**

- Schedule a time to meet with your prehealth advisor.
- Attend prehealth activities.
- Join your school's pre dental society if one is available.
- Complete required course work.
- Explore community service opportunities through your school (they don't necessarily need to be health-related). If possible, continue activities throughout undergraduate career.

Spring semester

- Look into paid or volunteer dental-related research opportunities.
- Complete second semester course work and register for the fall.

Summer

- Complete a summer research or volunteer dental-related program.
- Attend summer school if necessary.
- Prepare for the Dental Admission Test (DAT).

COLLEGE YEAR 3**Fall semester**

- Meet with your prehealth advisor to make sure course work completion is on schedule.
- Discuss dental schools.
- Complete course work and register for spring semester.
- Visit ADEA's website at www.adea.org to learn about applying to dental schools.
- Place your order for the *ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools*.
- Research schools.

Spring semester

- Review each dental school's required documents early in the semester.
- Identify individuals to write letters of recommendation.
- Take the DAT during late spring or early summer.
- Prepare to submit the ADEA Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (ADEA AADSAS) application. Applications become available on or around June 1
- Complete course work and register for the fall semester.
- Schedule a volunteer or paid dental-related activity.

Summer

- Take the DAT if you have not done so already.
- Prepare for school interviews in the fall.
- Budget time and finances appropriately to attend interviews.
- Participate in a volunteer or paid opportunity.
- Attend summer school if necessary.

COLLEGE YEAR 4**Fall semester**

- Meet with your prehealth advisor and complete course work.
- Attend interviews with schools.
- Notification of acceptances begins December 1.

Spring semester

- Apply for federal financial aid.

Summer

- Relax and get ready for the first semester of dental school!
- Attend school's open houses or other events.
- Prepare to relocate if necessary.