#3: Apply

Application Process
Can sometimes be lengthy and complicated. The Pre-Health Advisor can give you information on dates and deadlines, a “to-do” checklist, links to relevant sources of information, and links to the various professional schools.

Admission Tests
These are often a significant challenge for many students. Required exams vary from profession to profession. The most common are the MCAT, PCAT, DAT, OAT, and GRE. Students often begin studying 4-6 months prior to taking the exam and may need a variety of learning strategies to perform well. The Pre-Health Advisor can refer you to study resources.

Personal Statement
Typically a one-page essay where you explain your reason for wanting to pursue healthcare. Admission officers have read it all: “I want to help people,” “I want to make a difference,” etc. They would prefer to read a much more personal story of learning and growth, regardless of the topic. Consider reflecting on your academics and extracurricular preparations and how those experiences have shaped your decision to pursue healthcare.

Letters of Recommendation
Almost all professional schools require letters of recommendation. However, letters of recommendation have varying influence depending upon the depth of insight into the candidate the letters provide. Many letters are superficial and are only frustrating to the admissions committee. The most meaningful letters are from professionals who know you well as a student or preparing professional.

Admissions Interview
Allows the school to see the person behind the application and how you handle interpersonal situations. It’s a last chance to sell your qualifications.

Pre-Health Resources

Exploring Healthcare Careers
[www.explorehealthcareers.org](http://www.explorehealthcareers.org)
[www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/home.htm)

Pre-Health Advising Tutorials
[www.vimeo.com/nmsuprehealth](http://www.vimeo.com/nmsuprehealth)

Jeremy Taulbee, Pre-Health Professions Advisor
Provides academic and transfer advising on the formal application process and admissions requirements for students planning to apply to health school.

*Students are still required to see their major advisor for degree questions and concerns.*

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#1: Explore

Healthcare not only involves a physician or M.D., but contributions from a variety of professionals in diverse specialties that work together as a team. As a pre-health student, it is your job to explore the careers that are available to you, and find the one that is the best fit with your strengths, goals, and interests.

Why do you want to pursue the health profession you are considering?

You should be able to answer this question with concrete reasons. Reflect on this question at length and with careful thought. It’s not enough to simply say, “I want to be a doctor, because I want to help people.” There are various professions within and outside healthcare that are considered ‘helping’ professions. It’s vital for you to demonstrate that you have explored personal interests, strengths, and healthcare professions through your academic and your non-academic pursuits.

#2: Prepare

Researching Schools
Start early looking at your top 5 school choices and research admissions requirements, graduation statistics, location, cost, mission statements, etc.

Pre-Requisite Courses
Most professional Health Schools require certain courses to be taken as a part of their overall application to their school. Since some courses require multiple pre-requisites, it is better to find out early what courses you should take and take them as soon as you can.

Community Service
It is common for health profession schools to require applicants to have significant experience with community service as a part of their application. Schools want to see applicants with compassion and an orientation to serve.

Job Shadowing
Essential in helping students confirm their desire to pursue a particular health profession is first-hand experience. Most schools expect student to document their experience in a variety of fields and in multiple settings.

Clinical Experience
Your Pre-health experience will be more meaningful when you have direct patient interaction. You want to have opportunities to understand the nature of a doctor-patient relationship and see how you act around those who will depend on you for their well-being. Health professions schools will look for demonstrated exploration of healthcare through involvement in patient contact related opportunities.

Research
In most cases, research is not an admissions requirement, although it demonstrates intellectual curiosity, critical thinking skills, and team work. However, if a student is planning to pursue a dual health and PHD degree, having research experience is a requirement for admission.

Leadership Experiences
While at NMSU you will want to explore your interests and strengths through on and off campus activities and experiences. We encourage getting involved to increase your leadership skills and demonstrate initiative. You can gain leadership experience in a variety of ways including employment, collegiate or intramural athletics, being a camp counselor or teaching assistant, mentoring /tutoring or participating in student organizations.

Student Organizations
Joining a student organization, especially one focused on Health Professions, is a good opportunity to hear about healthcare careers from local practitioners and health school admissions representatives. You also get the chance to hang out, learn from and serve the community alongside like-minded Pre-Health students.

Financial Planning
Paying the high costs of attending a professional school is essential, but is frequently overlooked by applicants. The predominance of loans as opposed to grants or scholarships that do not have to be repaid makes this step important. Student also need to consider the cost associated with primary and secondary applications and health school interviews (travel, lodging, etc.)