What should I major in?

Although the majority of Dental Schools do not require a specific undergraduate major, due to the academic preparation required for the DAT and Dental School application, the most common Pre-Dental majors at NMSU are:

Biology, Microbiology, Biochemistry, Chemistry

NMSU Courses Required*

General Biology (BIOL 111/111L and 211/211L)
General Microbiology (BIOL 311/311L)
General Chemistry (CHEM 111/112 or CHEM 115/116)
Organic Chemistry (CHEM 313, 314 and 315)
Biochemistry (BCHE 395)
Physics (PHYS 211/211L and 212/212L)
Trigonometry and Pre-Calculus (MATH 190G)
Statistics (STAT 251 or A ST 311G)
English Composition (ENGL 111 and ENGL 211)

Highly Recommended Courses*

Calculus I, Human Anatomy, Physiology, Genetics, Communication

*Although coursework listed is recommended by most Dental Schools, admissions requirements may vary from school to school. Please check specific dental school admission websites for detailed prerequisite requirements.

Salary and Job Outlook

Median Salary: $149,310 per year/$71.79 per hour
Projected 16% growth from 2012 to 2022

Resources

American Dental Education Association
American Dental Association
American Student Dental Association

Pre-Health Advising provides academic and transfer advising on the formal application process and admissions requirements for students planning to apply to chiropractic school.

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

prehealth.nmsu.edu
Schedule an appointment: Call CAASS at 575-646-2941 or stop by Garcia Center Room 129
Dentists diagnose and treat problems with a patient’s teeth, gums, and related parts of the mouth. They provide advice and instruction on taking care of teeth and gums and on diet choices that affect oral health.

**What does a Dentist do?**

Dentists typically do the following:

- Remove decay from teeth and fill cavities
- Repair cracked or fractured teeth and remove teeth
- Straighten teeth to correct bite issues
- Place sealants or whitening agents on teeth
- Administer anesthetics to keep patients from feeling pain during procedures
- Write prescriptions for antibiotics or other medications
- Examine x rays of teeth, gums, the jaw, and nearby areas for problems
- Make models and measurements for dental appliances, such as dentures, to fit patients
- Teach patients about diet, flossing, use of fluoride, and other aspects of dental care

**Career Opportunities**

*General practitioners* handle a variety of dental needs. Other dentists practice in one of nine specialty areas: *Dental public health specialists* promote dental health and prevention of dental diseases in communities. *Endodontists* perform root-canal therapy, removing the nerves and blood supply from injured or infected teeth. *Oral and maxillofacial radiologists* diagnose diseases in the head and neck through use of imaging technologies. *Oral and maxillofacial surgeons* operate on the mouth, jaws, teeth, gums, neck, and head, *Oral pathologists* diagnose conditions in the mouth, such as bumps or ulcers, and oral diseases, such as cancer. *Orthodontists* straighten teeth by applying pressure to the teeth with braces or other appliances. *Pediatric dentists* focus on dentistry for children and special-needs patients. *Periodontists* treat the gums and bone supporting the teeth. *Prosthodontists* replace missing teeth with permanent fixtures, such as crowns and bridges, or with removable fixtures such as dentures.

**Local Dentistry Programs**

**AT Still University—School of Dentistry**

*Mesa, Arizona*

Seats: 76

- Average GPA (Science): 3.23
- Average GPA (Overall): 3.34
- Average DAT Score: 18.63

**Midwestern University—College of Dental Medicine**

*Glendale, Arizona*

Seats: 140

- Average GPA (Science): 3.48
- Average GPA (Overall): 3.57
- Average DAT Score: 19

**University of Colorado—School of Dental Medicine**

*Denver, Colorado*

Seats: n/a

- Average GPA (Science): 3.70
- Average GPA (Overall): 3.70
- Average DAT Score: 19.13

**University of Missouri—Kansas City School of Dentistry**

*Kansas City, Missouri*

Seats: 109

- Average GPA (Science): 3.70
- Average GPA (Overall): 3.70
- Average DAT Score: 19.13

**Steps to Dental Practice**

**Pre-Dental Education**
- Complete a Bachelor of Science degree. Check with the dental schools you might be interested in to make sure you are taking the courses they require.

**Take the DAT**
- Most dental schools require that you take the Dental Acceptance Test (DAT). This test includes the following sections: Natural Sciences, Reading Comprehension, Perceptual Ability, and Quantitative Reasoning.

**Earn a DDS/DMD degree**
- To earn a DDS/DMD degree, you must complete a professional dental program (typically four years) that is approved by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).

**Complete a residency program and/or fellowship**
- Dental school graduates, unlike medical school graduates, are not required to complete residencies. It is common for individuals to complete optional residencies after they graduate from dental school; this provides them with an opportunity to get actual experience before joining the dental workforce.

**Immediate Practice Options**
- You can plan to open your own dental office right after you graduate from dental school. This is not necessarily the easiest choice, particularly if you want to launch your dental career in a major city.
- Take a position in the office of a more experienced dentist. This option allows you to join the workforce right away, but also to receive guidance from someone who has dealt with all sorts of situations. It is quite common for new dentists to work in established offices for a few years after dental school before they begin their own practices.

**Earn a Dental license**
- All states require dentists to be licensed; requirements vary by state. Most states require a dentist to have a degree from an accredited dental school and to pass a written and practical exam.
- A dentist who wants to practice in one of the nine specialties must have a license in that specialty. This usually requires 2 to 4 years of additional education after dental school and, in some cases, the completion of a special state exam. A postgraduate residency term also may be required, usually lasting up to 2 years.