

Frequently Asked Questions: Extracurricular Experiences

Q. What opportunities are available on campus?

A. Please see the Extracurricular Experiences section of the website.

Q. When should I start extracurricular experiences?

A. Since academics are the main priority for all pre-health students, the “best” time will vary for each student. Typically, students should begin considering extracurricular experiences after they have a good handle on academics (earning grades in science courses well-above a C) and feel comfortable with the university’s schedule, which will help to ensure that participation in extracurricular experiences will not have a negative impact on academic success. Our advice for first-year and new transfer students is to utilize time during breaks and the summer to begin seeking out shadowing, volunteering, clinical, and other types of experiences.

Q. Are there some experiences that are better than others?

A. All students, regardless of their pre-health track, should begin searching for clinical experiences as soon as possible after they have decided to begin exploring careers in the health professions and feel ready. For many first-year students, this happens during breaks and/or the summer between first and second year. Once decided, students should begin seeking out clinical, volunteer, and research experiences. The timing of these experiences may vary for each student, so please discuss with a pre-health advisor.

Q. Where should I look to find clinical experience?

A. A good place to start looking for volunteer clinical experiences is on the websites of local hospitals and clinics. Many of these places have volunteer programs and information on how to apply to volunteer. Additionally, utilize your personal network, such as your family physician, dentist, optometrist, or other healthcare professional you or a member of your family may have seen growing up or are currently seeing as a patient. If you do not have a connection within your personal network to a healthcare provider, try to connect with students in the various pre-health student organizations on campus to obtain contact information for professionals they have shadowed, review the list of clinical experiences on our website, or last but not least, execute a quick online search of healthcare professionals in the area and begin reaching out to their offices, clinics, or human resource managers to inquire about opportunities. See a pre-health advisor for more information.

Q. What is the difference between a clinical experience and a shadowing experience?

A. Shadowing experiences can be very difficult to come by due to privacy and liability issues, but some students are able to gain shadowing experiences through personal connections and/or their extended network. Shadowing is strict observation of what is happening around you in the clinical setting (focus is broad). Clinical experiences are those in which you are performing specific assigned tasks (focus is narrow).

Q. What is the best path toward gaining research experience?

A. There are many avenues to gaining research experience at UCSB. A great resource to begin with is through the Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (URCA <http://www.duels.ucsb.edu/research/urca>) Grant and the Faculty Research Assistance Program (FRAP).

Q. Do I have to volunteer in a hospital or clinical setting?

A. Volunteering in a hospital or clinical setting can provide students with important “in the trenches”, initial insights into healthcare. There is also much to be gained by also

volunteering in one's community in non-medical/non-clinical settings. We encourage students to seek out volunteer and service opportunities that are meaningful to them and that allow them to work directly with populations from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds.