

Cornell College

Health Professions Committee (HPC)

Application Guide

In taking the required prerequisites and maintaining a record that makes you a competitive applicant, the process of applying to graduate schools in the health professions has already begun. You have acquired practical experience in healthcare, have shown a commitment to service through volunteer work, and have developed good relationships with your professors and mentors who will be providing you with strong recommendations. The time has finally arrived for you to put this all together into an application that shows you in the best possible light.

This packet contains procedures and policies meant to help you understand the process of applying to medical school and prepare the best possible application. Unfortunately, even the most qualified student can compromise an application by not paying attention to “the process.” Because you will be just one of over 30,000 other similarly qualified applicants, it is imperative that all procedures be followed *to the letter*, to ensure that the professional schools you choose see you at your best.

The Process

Applying to medical school is a fairly long process with several deadlines. **First**, you must complete courses to prepare you to take the MCAT in the spring of your junior year. **Second**, during the summer following your junior year, you submit your primary application to a centralized application service called the American Medical College Application Service) or AMCAS. Applicants provide AMCAS with all of their application materials including transcripts, extracurricular activities, MCAT scores, and a personal statement. AMCAS charges \$160 to use the service and to designate one school to receive your application materials. Each designation thereafter costs an additional \$30.

Third, once you submit your primary application through AMCAS, schools will ask you for secondary applications. The secondary application includes additional and often more specific essays, additional information regarding your academic background and extracurricular activities, and recommendation letters. Be mindful that some schools ask all applicants for a secondary application, and other schools ask only a limited number of applicants for secondary applications. The Dimensions Resource Center has information regarding which schools narrow down the applicant pool at this point in the process. Each secondary application carries an additional fee of \$30-\$100. The process of completing secondary applications also includes requesting letters of recommendation and having the HPC provide a committee letter to support your application. Keep in mind that many schools have a very short (2-4 weeks) turn around time for secondary applications.

Health Professions Committee

The Health Professions Committee (HPC) serves in an advisory capacity to students planning to pursue a career in the healthcare professions and is responsible for the preparation of a committee letter of recommendation to support your application to professional school. The committee is comprised of the following individuals:

<i>Dr. Barbara Christie-Pope</i> Professor Department of Biology	<i>Dr. Craig Tepper</i> Professor Department of Biology	<i>Julie Barnes</i> Dimensions Program Coordinator	Required: An additional Cornell faculty member or administrator of your choice.
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The Committee Letter

Almost all medical schools and many professional schools **require** a committee letter of recommendation to support your application to their school. This is a very important part of your application.

The committee letter is created using a combination of the individual letters of evaluation you ask to be written on your behalf, your transcripts, your personal statement, test scores, your resume, and any personal interactions and knowledge the members of the committee have had with you. The committee letter is *in addition* to your 3 individual letters from your evaluators. By signing the attached waiver, the HPC may also discuss your academic achievements with faculty members and administrators outside the Committee with respect to your academic and personal life here at the College and include this information in your committee letter.

In order for the HPC to write your committee letter, submit it in a timely fashion, and follow the guidelines proscribed by medical schools, you need to provide the following information to the HPC by **July 1**:

- √ your resume
- √ your polished personal statement
- √ your transcript
- √ your MCAT scores
- √ request for committee letter and waiver form
- √ your AMCAS/MCAT/AACOMAS ID number*
- √ the full name of each school to which you are applying
- √ the name and contact information for a fourth member of your HPC
- √ list of your three individual letter writers including their contact information
- √ 3 letters of recommendation (directly from the evaluators to Dimensions Program Coordinator by mail or e-mail)
- √ a print out of your completed AMCAS application

* When you take the MCAT or begin the AMCAS application, you will be assigned an ID number. We are required to put this ID on your Committee letter.

Letters of Recommendation

Requesting letters of recommendation and the writing of letters should take place in late spring or early summer as you are completing the primary AMCAS application. Letters are not needed for the primary application, but any school that requests a secondary application from you will also request letters of recommendation. These letters of recommendation, including your committee letter, are uploaded into a system called VirtualEvals that each medical school you applied to accesses to download your letters.

Contact each of your evaluators regarding the writing of a recommendation letter on your behalf. Your evaluators should know you well enough to provide an in-depth evaluation of your suitability for your chosen career. At least 2 letters should come from College faculty. The third letter can be another faculty member, or from a person with whom you have conducted research, participated in an internship, or worked with in another professional setting. Relatives and family friends are not appropriate unless you have worked with them in a professional setting and even then, another choice would be preferable. We highly suggest a faculty member from one of your prerequisite science courses, and another from your double major/minor. You should request these letters as soon as possible in order to allow your evaluators sufficient time to write and return the letters to the Dimensions Program Coordinator before the **July 1 deadline**.

To assist them in writing you the best possible letter, provide your evaluators with:

- ▶ Your resume, transcript, and personal statement.
- ▶ Request for letter of recommendation form with signed waiver.
- ▶ If your evaluator is able to include an electronic signature on his/her recommendation letter, letters can be e-mailed to the Dimensions Program Coordinator at jbarnes@cornellcollege.edu. It is best if letters can be made into a PDF file prior to e-mailing, but it is not required.
- ▶ *Or*, if your evaluator cannot provide a letter with an electronic signature, send the letter to:

**Julie Barnes,
Dimensions Program Coordinator
600 First Street SW**

**Cornell College
Mount Vernon, IA 52314**

Letters are sent to the Dimensions Resource Center at Cornell College for the purpose of creating your committee letter and to upload your letters into a centralized service called VirtualEvals. VirtualEvals is used by nearly all allopathic schools and most osteopathic medical schools and optometry schools. A similar service is used for dental and veterinary schools. Your file will include your three supporting letters and your committee letter. Only the Dimensions Program Coordinator and the schools you indicate will have access to this file. Schools that request a secondary application from you will then download the letters. When your letters are uploaded, you will receive an e-mail from VirtualEvals letting you know which schools are tied to your account on VirtualEvals. At Cornell, letters will be kept strictly confidential within your HPC file and will be kept under lock and key at the Dimensions Resource Center for three years following your graduation from Cornell.

The HPC will be under no obligation to accommodate students who fail to adhere to the policies and deadlines stated in this manual. If you do not follow this process, faculty members at Cornell might not agree to write letters on your behalf, and the committee could be delayed in providing your committee letter of recommendation.

Timeline

- ▶ APRIL/MAY/JUNE: Take MCAT.
- ▶ MAY: AMCAS opens to students.
- ▶ ~JUNE 1: AMCAS begins accepting applications.
- ▶ JULY 1: Resume, personal statement, waiver, list of evaluators, and letters of recommendation due to the Dimensions Program Coordinator.
- ▶ JULY/AUGUST: HPC meets, writes your committee letter, and uploads the letter to Virtual Evals. As soon as you submit everything, we hold a meeting.
- ▶ JULY/AUGUST: Finalize and submit primary AMCAS application. **Do not finalize until you receive feedback from the committee!**
- ▶ JULY/AUGUST: Start receiving and completing secondary applications.
- ▶ FALL: Set up a mock interview through the Dimensions program.

Useful Links

- ▶ AMCAS: <http://www.aamc.org/audienceamcas.htm>
- ▶ MCAT: <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm>
- ▶ VirtualEvals: <http://www.virtualevals.org/>
- ▶ Dimensions: <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/dimensions>
- ▶ Student Doctor: <http://www.studentdoctor.net>
- ▶ AAMC: <http://www.aamc.org>

Contact Information

If you have any questions during this process, now, or during the summer months when you are off campus please contact:

**Julie Barnes,
Dimensions Program Coordinator
jbarnes@cornellcollege.edu
319-895-4350**

Helpful Hints

Résumé: Deadline – July 1

You are required to prepare a résumé to help HPC and your evaluators prepare their letters. This should include titles and dates of pertinent activities such as internships, research, volunteer work, extracurricular activities, leadership positions, hobbies and interests. Include any scholarships and awards you received from Cornell or elsewhere as we like to explain these in the Committee letter.

Make sure to include your contact information and College e-mail address. The Career Services office can assist you with preparing and refining your résumé. Hopefully, everything in your résumé will appear on your AMCAS application.

Personal Statement: Deadline – July 1

Don't underestimate the power of the personal statement. This can give your application the edge that results in an interview. It should be prepared with great care, revised and reworked until every word counts and communicates to the reader your character and personality. The statement you submit to the HPC may not be the final one you use in your application, but it should serve the same purpose. We will use it to ask any additional questions we may have of you and to write your HPC letter.

Your personal statement should be one single-spaced page in length (for AMCAS it cannot exceed 5300 characters; AACOMAS, 3000 characters; AADSAS, one page) and may contain the following information, keeping the intent of the statement in mind:

- ▶ Motivation for a career in medicine or healthcare
- ▶ Volunteer work
- ▶ Experience in healthcare and human services
- ▶ Athletics or other activities that required a significant time commitment
- ▶ International study experiences
- ▶ Personal or life experiences that influenced you significantly

The HPC strongly recommends you seek out the services of the Career Services office, the Writing Studio, and/or other faculty members to help you with revisions. The Dimensions Resource Center also has several writing and essay guides to assist you. The HPC will not be expected to act as an editor of your statement. If the HPC feels your statement is lacking, we will return it to you and delay the meeting of your HPC and your committee letter.

AMCAS Application: Deadline to HPC – July 1, Deadline to AMCAS – rolling

The primary application is seen by each medical school you choose to apply to. It is how each school sees your grades, extracurricular activities, personal statement, research experiences, internships, job shadowing, awards, and other academic achievements. Make sure to shine through on your application – don't undersell yourself! Use complete sentences and paragraphs in describing what you did. Be sure to explain how the experience personally benefited you and helped you decide to apply to medical school. Don't just say "I shadowed Dr. Smith". Instead, say, "Through my shadowing experience with Dr. Smith, I learned how many health professionals it takes to successfully run a family practice in a rural community". Do not submit your AMCAS application before the HPC meets.

Your Email Address

We recommend using your College email address for your applications and that you check it daily. Provide this address to the HPC, your evaluators, and make sure it is on your résumé. The application services/schools sometimes send out important mass e-mails to all applicants and these are sometimes filtered out as spam. We will also use your College email address as our primary means of communication with you.

The Dimensions Web Site

www.cornellcollege.edu/dimensions

Visit the Dimensions web site for links to testing services, application services and other valuable information. You may also download this manual and all forms.

Regular Admissions Process: Deadline – rolling

Submit your application to AMCAS by August to ensure full consideration; most schools admit using a rolling admissions policy. A rolling admissions process means that schools begin accepting students during the summer, and continue accepting until the class is full. If you wait to turn in your AMCAS primary application in October, receive secondary applications in November, turn in your secondary applications in December, and interview in January, it is likely that half the class has already been chosen. **Do not compromise your application by unnecessary delays!**

Early Decision Programs: Deadline – August 1

Early Decision Programs (EDP) allow you to apply early and seek admission to just one school. If you are an outstanding applicant and are set on attending one certain school, this may be the choice for you. Guidelines for EDPs require that your application and transcripts be submitted to AMCAS by mid-June and **must** be submitted by August 1. You cannot apply to other programs if you are applying to an EDP until you have received confirmation that you were not admitted under the EDP which occurs on or before October 1st. If this is the case, you can then enter the general rolling admissions process at any school. If you are thinking about applying through an EDP, please discuss this with the HPC prior to applying as many schools require your undergraduate advisor to contact the school prior to receiving or accepting your application.

Waivers

A waiver for you to sign is provided for each letter of evaluation that you request, including your committee letter from the HPC. By signing the waiver, you waive your right to read or review the letter of evaluation. The positive aspect of signing the waiver is that your evaluators can be as honest and open as possible regarding your suitability for professional school. Also, many evaluators refuse to write letters without a signed waiver. A drawback of signing the waiver is that you cannot read or access the letter after it is written; however, you should be confident in your choices of evaluators prior to asking them to write you a letter.

Request for Individual Letter of Recommendation

Instructions:

- ▶ Applicants: Fill out this form, sign, and provide to evaluators.
- ▶ Evaluators: If you can provide a **signed, pdf version of the letter on letterhead**, return this form with your completed letter of evaluation (see attached guidelines) by July 1 to: jbarnes@cornellcollege.edu

Alternatively, you may mail the letter to:

**Julie Barnes,
Dimensions Program Coordinator
Cornell College
600 First Street SW
Mount Vernon, IA 52314**

Date of Request: _____

Applicant's Name: _____

Year of Graduation: _____

Major(s): _____

Evaluator's Name and Address: _____

Applicant is applying to:

_____ Medical School (allopathic or osteopathic)

_____ Dental School

_____ Veterinary School

_____ Other (specify) _____

Check One:

_____ I waive my right to read or review this letter of recommendation.

_____ I do not waive my right to read or review this letter of recommendation.

Applicant's Signature

Date

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_____ Other (specify) _____

Check One:

_____ I waive my right to read or review this letter of recommendation.

_____ I do not waive my right to read or review this letter of recommendation.

Applicant's Signature

Date

Request for Committee Letter of Recommendation

Instructions: Fill out this form, sign, and provide to the HPC by July 1 by mailing to:

**Julie Barnes,
Dimensions Program Coordinator
Box 2218
Cornell College
600 First Street SW
Mount Vernon, IA 52314**

Date of Request: _____

Applicant's Name: _____

Year of Graduation: _____ Major(s): _____

Applicant is applying to:

Medical School (allopathic or osteopathic) Dental School
 Veterinary School Other (specify) _____

I request the Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPC) to prepare a committee letter of recommendation for me. The purpose of this letter is to support my admission to an educational institution in the health professions. The committee will only release the letter to specific educational institutions provided by me.

Initial Here: _____

I authorize the HPC to release information and provide an evaluation about any and all information from my academic records at Cornell College, including information pertaining to other institutions that appear on my academic record. The HPC is authorized to solicit opinions from any instructor listed on my transcript, as well as additional individuals at Cornell as listed in an attachment to this form. I further authorize the HPC to seek confidential information from the Dean of Student Affairs concerning issues of my personal conduct while a student at Cornell College.

Initial Here: _____

Check One:

I waive my right to read or review this letter of recommendation.

I do not waive my right to read or review this letter of recommendation.

Applicant's Signature

Date

Cornell College Health Professions Advisory Committee

Guidelines for Letter Writers

Thank you for providing a letter of recommendation for a health science applicant from Cornell College. The Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPC) at Cornell suggests referencing the following guidelines when writing a letter or recommendation. These guidelines were adapted from several professional schools' recommendation forms.

Please address the letter to the Cornell Health Professions Committee and return the letter to the Dimensions Program Coordinator, as indicated on the waiver form. Your letter will be provided to Cornell's HPC for purposes of constructing a committee letter of recommendation for this candidate. The Committee includes two biology faculty, the Dimensions Program Coordinator, and a fourth Cornell faculty or administrative member of the student's choice. As preferred by most professional schools, your letter will be submitted in a packet format to the professional schools indicated by the candidate. The candidate will not have access to your letter unless he/she has not waived their right to review it.

Characteristics listed below are those that are commonly suggested by professional schools when evaluating candidates. In narrative form, please address those areas in which you can honestly evaluate the candidate, providing details or examples of interactions you have had with the candidate that exemplify these characteristics. It is also helpful to state the capacity in which you know the candidate, and any distinctive characteristics that may set the candidate apart.

Motivation for the profession

- ▶ Genuine motivation and enjoyment for the healthcare field, depth of commitment, stamina and endurance for the profession, providing service and assistance to others, knowledge of the specific functions and activities of healthcare delivery.

Interpersonal skills

- ▶ Rapport with peers and supervisors, cooperation with others, ability to motivate and inspire, leadership skills, empathetic and sensitive to needs of others. Communication skills as witnessed in written and verbal clarity of expression. Knows limits and seeks assistance when needed.

Personality

- ▶ Maturity and mood stability, performance under pressure, shows ethical and moral integrity and honesty, assuredness, independent but also a team player, works autonomously, reliable, self-confidence in abilities.

Intellectual ability and academic performance

- ▶ Ability to grasp, analyze, integrate, and retain a large quantity of information. Original and imaginative, resourceful in collecting and using information. Intellectual curiosity, seeks out information above and beyond the classroom.

Additional information

- ▶ Personal interactions with applicant, distinctive or unique qualities of applicant, thoughts on success of applicant in a professional academic program in the health sciences, and on their future success as a clinician, researcher, or healthcare professional.

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