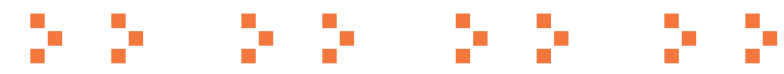




# navigating THE admissions process



ence. Admissions directors say this makes a big difference!

Most retail chains such as Walgreens, Wal-Mart and Eckerd offer summer internship programs where students can get paid while learning the business. Although you can't fill prescriptions, you can perform pharmacy technicians' duties such as checkouts or taking prescriptions from patients. There is a pharmacist shortage in America today, and pharmacies need as much help as possible.

Large pharmaceutical companies and hospitals also offer internships. Call human resources departments for information. Not only can internships help get you into college, they also open doors for employment. "We look for experience during the summer or even while at school," says Alan Levin, chairman of Happy Harry's Drug in Newark, Del. "We find these students make great employees."

**step three:** Select at least three colleges of choice. How can you narrow them down? Sue Bierman, Ph.D. and assistant professor at the College of Pharmacy and Health Services at Butler University, recommends looking at the Web sites of universities of interest. "Review the pharmacy information, as well as the university academic mission. Does this fit your interest? Some colleges specialize in training for one aspect of pharmacy over another. Think hard about what field you want to enter and match your application with college strengths."

**step four:** Start applying at least a year before entry. While it can be time-consuming and expensive to complete multiple admissions, pharmacy is a competitive field and you need to have choices. "Apply early because deadlines vary in terms of scholarship consideration," Bierman says. Most colleges have scholarships available for potential pharmacy students. Many industry leaders, such as James Harrison, who founded Harco Drug in Tuscaloosa, Ala., have made large endowments to further

pharmacy careers. Scholarship information is available by calling pharmacy colleges or checking Web sites. Grants also are available for students. Pharmacy school can be expensive, but there are a number of financial aid options available.

By the year 2004, a new admissions avenue will be available. Half of all U.S. colleges of pharmacy are participating together in a centralized application pool, known as the Pharmacy College Application Service (PharmCAS). Students can use the single PharmCAS application form to apply to several colleges. PharmCAS will make it easier for you to navigate the pharmacy admissions process. PharmCAS will also make it easier for schools to tap into the pool of applicants more effectively.

Online applications are becoming very popular. However, because the world of cyberspace is not perfect, follow up online applications with e-mails or phone calls to confirm receipt. To learn more about PharmCAS, go to [www.pharmcas.org](http://www.pharmcas.org).

Almost half of all colleges now require that you take the Pharmacy College Admissions Test (PCAT) as pre-pharmacy student. A minimum grade point average also is requested at most schools. Letters of recommendation and essays are crucial to the application process as well. Good sources are local pharmacists, physicians, teachers or health care professionals who know you.

**step five:** If possible, arrange for personal meetings with prospective school advisers or counselors. Practice for personal interviews with parents or friends. Pharmacy is a career where your personal appearance and verbal skills are important. Neatness and clarity count! How hard is it to get in? Although pharmacy schools have very high expectations, the fact is that there is a swelling demand for pharmacists. A strong background and good grades should ensure your acceptance into a pre-pharmacy program. Good luck.

**step one:** Make sure you have taken or plan to take all prerequisite math and science courses. A check of college Web sites or a visit to your guidance counselor can help determine what you need. You can request university handbooks or obtain standards for applications on Web sites.

Admissions policies vary from school to school, so check each site carefully. Know as much as you can about the school and its programs. The Internet has become an incredibly useful tool for learning about pharmacy and pharmacy schools. Visit association sites, such as the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy at

[www.aacp.org](http://www.aacp.org) and [www.pharmcas.org](http://www.pharmcas.org) or the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy at [www.nabp.net](http://www.nabp.net). The National Association of Chain Drug Stores at [www.nacds.org](http://www.nacds.org) is another key resource. There also are trade publications, such as *Drug Store News*, which deal with pharmacy issues.

**step two:** Find a way to get some experience. Shadow your local pharmacist. You can volunteer at a hospital or participate in community service. By working with a pharmacist, you can truly understand what the job entails while getting valuable experi-