

# U.VA.'S POST-BAC PRE-MED PROGRAM GETS HIGH MARKS

*Over 90% of the program's first cohort is accepted to medical school.*

Not everyone who becomes a doctor knows they want to go to medical school when they arrive at college. Quite often, students don't decide on a career in medicine until their third or fourth year, when it is often too late to find room in their schedules for prerequisite science courses. The people who come to medicine even later in life are in a similar bind.

Until recently, U.Va. offered no option for these late bloomers and career changers. "When I was director of admissions at the U.Va. School of Medicine, I could only recommend that people in this situation apply to post-baccalaureate pre-medical programs at institutions like Bryn Mawr or Johns Hopkins," notes Beth Bailey.

Today as director of the University of Virginia's Post-Baccalaureate Pre-Medical Program, Bailey now has the satisfaction of offering a U.Va. alternative. "Not only are we providing a great alternative for aspiring physicians who live in central Virginia," Bailey notes, "but we're also drawing students from across the country who understand that the caliber of instruction they receive at U.Va. will be excellent preparation for medical school."

The program, now accepting applications for its fourth cohort through the School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS), began in 2006 with graduates of such schools as Duke, Dartmouth, and Bates as well as U.Va. The program now accepts approximately 30 students each year. Students follow different routes to the program. Lee Cunningham, a cognitive science major at U.Va., and a member of the first cohort, decided to go into medicine in his last year at college, but chose to delay taking science courses until after graduation. Theresa Cooper, an English major from the College of William and Mary, and George "Will" Stone, a religious studies major at the University, both came to the program from the Peace Corps. "We've had an aerospace engineer, a professional pilot, a midwife, and a score of other professions," Bailey notes. "But despite these differences, they have in common the decision to sacrifice time and money for the chance to be admitted to medical school."

The intensive, full-time course of study begins during summer session. Students sit for the MCATs the following spring and typically complete the program at the end of that semester. During the "glide" year that follows, they apply to medical school, using the time to add value to their applications by working in a hospital and volunteering at a community clinic or rescue squad.

In addition to meeting their science requirements, students take a course taught by the program's medical director, Dr. Robert Powers, on the structure and financing of the U.S. health care system. Dr. Powers, an emergency room physician, also helps students find internships and opportunities to shadow physicians the U.Va. Medical Center. Students in the program also attend a series of seminars on such issues as biomedical ethics, financing medical school, and taking the MCATs. They meet with the program's administrators several times during the course of the semester, and confer on academic matters with Robert Burnett, the program's academic director and professor of chemistry.

The effectiveness of this program can best be judged by its success. This year, 11 of the 12 graduates of the first cohort began medical school at universities like Emory, Pittsburgh, North Carolina, and Wake Forest—and they have found that U.Va.'s Post-Baccalaureate Pre-Medical Program was great preparation. "You get rigorous classes and access to extremely knowledgeable people," says Cunningham, who is now in his first year of medical school at U.Va. "You get a quality education. I would recommend it highly."



## Highly Selective Admissions Process Yields Diverse Third-Year Cohort

This summer, the School of Continuing and Professional Studies welcomed the third cohort of students to the Post-Bac Pre-Med Program. Thirty-three students, 19 women and 14 men, range in age from 21 to 51 years. They represent the states of:

- California
- Colorado
- Florida
- Georgia
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Virginia

The average GPA of this cohort is 3.58. Their undergraduate institutions include:

- Amherst College
- Boston College
- Clemson University
- College of William & Mary
- Columbia University
- Dartmouth College
- Duquesne University
- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
- Georgetown University
- Harvard University
- Notre Dame University
- Penn State University
- Pepperdine University
- Stanford University
- University of Florida
- University of Georgia
- University of Maryland
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- University of Southern California
- University of Virginia
- Vanderbilt University
- Washington University
- Wellesley College