

Guidelines and Suggestions for TCNJ Students Interested in Applying to Dental School

1. **MCAC** (Medical Careers Advisory Committee) at TCNJ works with current students and alumni who are applying to selected graduate health professional programs. We advise you on the process and your preparation, and we can supply a Committee Letter of Recommendation if required. Ways we can help you:
 - a. Our Website: mcac.tcnj.edu
 - b. Our Canvas advising courses (MCAC 101 and MCAC 201, both by invitation)
 - c. Our MCAC Newsletter, obtained by requesting the MCAC to tag you as interested in the Health Profession Student Group ("HEPR") within PAWS
 - d. Information Sessions held in person every semester
 - e. And we have People who can help! Dr. Nayak, Ms. Kull, and many others...
2. **LOTS of great websites with essential information specific to dental education**
 - a. [ADEA](http://adea.org) (American Dental Education Association)
 - b. [ADEA AADSAS](http://adea-aadsas.org) (Associated American Dental Schools Application Service)
 - c. [ASDA](http://asda.org) (American Student Dental Association)
3. **Dental careers** – courtesy of the ADEA website, www.adea.org
 - a. ~ 80% US dentists are in gen'l practice; 20% in specialties; 38 % female
 - b. Earn a good salary
 - c. Candidates display an aptitude for science, visual perception, manual dexterity
 - d. Career offers clinical, research and academic opportunities
 - e. Generally able to practice directly upon graduation from dental school
 - f. Predictable and self-determined life style for private practice dentists
 - g. Less affected by managed care and federal funding reductions
 - h. **No difference** between **DDS** (Doctor of Dental Surgery) and **DMD** degrees (Doctor of Medicine in Dentistry) – equivalent degrees with same training and education. Degree granted depends on the school issuing the degree.
4. **Preparation:**
 - a. **Requirements vary by school:** need a solid foundation in science; some upper level bio
 - i. All: 8u = 2 Bio w lab | 2 Gen Chem w lab | 2 Orgo w lab | 2 Phys w lab;

- ii. Most: English/math/social sciences; biochem, micro, anat/phys, and/or genetics
- b. Courses at TCNJ:
 - i. **Bio major** Curriculum (Bio Inquiry, Cell, Ecology, Genetics and Bio Sem, plus Bio options and correlate courses) meets the requirements for dental schools
 - ii. **Bio-T** curriculum also works (3 Bio options instead; everything else above)
 - iii. **Non-Bio majors** need the basic Bio Inq; second Bio lab course (Cell or Micro, or both!) and the correlates of Chem and Physics
- 5. **Research:** Independent research is NOT required of pre-dental students. Done only to further your own education, and to engage deeply in an area you are interested. It is true that grad schools do look favorably on those students who further their education and engage in new areas of discovery. But, it is NOT required, and makes no difference in admission rates.
- 6. **Other Opportunities:** Confirm your passion/Research schools and profession
 - a. Shadow a dental practice or practitioner – or work at one
 - b. [Gateway to Dentistry Program](#) – Rutgers Dental 2-wk immersion program introduces 2nd, 3rd, and 4th yr undergrads, and qualified recent grads, to dentistry possibilities. Held twice a year, in Newark, in January and June. Online application. <https://sdm.rutgers.edu/admissions/pathway-programs/college-gateway-dentistry>
 - c. [Summer Medical & Dental Education Program](#) at Rutgers & 11 other program sites
- 7. **Questions to ask yourself about practicing dentistry: (see website) (from ADEA)**
 - a. Comfortable with close, personal contact?
 - b. Caring and considerate of how others feel?
 - c. Comfortable making decisions on your own?
 - d. Detail oriented? Problem solver? Good communicator? Like accuracy in your work?
 - e. Perceptive of aesthetics? Excited to be diagnosing health conditions?
 - f. Enjoy working in small spaces? Working with your hands?
 - g. Enjoy experiencing new challenges each day, and seeing immediate results?

8. Steps to Take:

- a. Do well in your courses – keep up that gpa! A GPA of 3.5 or better is goal
- b. Establish good relationships with faculty members – get to know one well each semester
- c. Set up appointment with Chair of MCAC – freshman or sophomore year, but definitely by Jr year
- d. Get involved in clinical volunteer work – test your interest in field
- e. Demonstrate leadership and interest/involvement in community service (health professions are service professions!)
- f. [Request Letters of Recommendation](#) – form also on website or from Bio Office
 - i. Who should write one - faculty and/or mentors who know you well - 1 or 2 science faculty, 1 non-science, 1 clinical/professional. NO family/relatives!
 - ii. Request form and letter should be sent directly by writer to mcac@tcnj.edu
 - iii. General target date is by June 30 (or soon thereafter)
- g. Register and prepare for DAT :
 - i. Old metrics: 1-30 score range; 20 is goal; 18 is nat'l median; \$415; 4 hrs
 - ii. **MARCH 1, 2025: DAT now scored on a 3-digit, 200-600 score range.** Test content is not changing at all. No national median established yet, but likely around 400. Exam will still take 4 hours. Old 2-digit scores will be converted to 3-digit scores by the ADEA. [See information here.](#)
- h. Attend meetings of student organizations (dental@tcnj.edu)
- i. Establish “dental/med file” with **MCAC** ~ 18 months PRIOR to your anticipated start at dental school by:
 - i. completing the **MCAC Self-Assessment Form** prior to (ii)...
 - ii. meeting with Dr. Nayak
 - iii. and then completing the **Applicant Intake Form** after your meeting to enter yourself into out application cycle database
- j. You will then, over time, submit the following to fill your file:
 - i. All transcripts (unofficial from TCNJ ok) from schools you’ve attended;
 - ii. your DAT score;
 - iii. resume, with activities, involvements, etc; *begin early and update regularly*

- iv. list of schools you're applying to;
- v. list of recommenders (3 or 4), and eventually the letters themselves; (1 or 2 science, 1 non-science, 1 professional)
- vi. A copy of your completed AADSAS application
- vii. AADSAS Letter of Evaluation Matching Form – electronic link
- k. Your file will then be used by the MCAC to determine the degree of support to be provided to your application via a committee letter
 - i. Committee Letter together with the individual letters of recommendation will be uploaded to the AADSAS letter portal for dental schools to review
 - ii. Letters of recommendation will be sent to AADSAS as a Letter Packet even if no Committee Letter is prepared.
 - iii. Submission of Letters of Recommendation by the MCAC always follows the submission of your application materials.
- l. The earlier an application is complete, the better your chances. Aim to complete and submit your application materials by the end of summer.

9. **Application:**

- a. AADSAS – application opens mid-May (5/13 in 2025). Applications can begin to be submitted on June 3 or after.
- b. Fees (2025) - \$264 for first school; \$115 each additional one (may not be current)
- c. **Applications are given an Holistic review –**
 - i. Attributes - skills, abilities, personal and professional characteristics;
 - ii. Experiences - education, clinical, leadership, employment, research; and
 - iii. Metrics - GPA and DAT score
- d. Typically TCNJ has 3-6 dental applicants/cycle, with 75%+ acceptance rate

10. **Resources:**

[ADEA website](#) for applicants

[AADSAS website](#)

Dental schools' websites

[TCNJ Med Careers](#) website

Newsletter from MCAC with opportunities and events: via HEPR group in PAWS

Faculty members (and staff)