# I. Philosophical careers and philosophical investigations

Philosophy majors press into the very deepest questions about human life, and in the process students acquire practical skills that are instrumental to success in fields that require problem-solving skills, interpersonal communication and listening skills, and careful analytical thinking and writing. Our majors and double-majors have achieved success in many different careers: lawyer, judge, medical doctor, dentist, editor, translator, editor, small-business owner, newscaster, counselor, engineer, distributor, law-enforcement officer, firefighter, librarian, military officer, investigator, talent development manager, K-12 teacher, K-12 principal, writer, government official, lab technician, and university professor, among others. Philosophy majors earn among the very highest average career salaries of all humanities and social science majors.

Philosophy majors also do extremely well on the entrance exams for professional school: they earn among the very highest scores on the law school admission test (LSAT), the business school admission test (GMAT), the medical school admission test (MCAT), and the graduate school entrance exam (GRE).

Philosophical training develops problem-solving skills, and it also develops the skill of *locating* problems – that is, noticing problems that might not be apparent at first sight, so that it is possible to get ahead of them and address them before they become too unwieldy. Philosophical training also develops the skill of recognizing a very broad range of possibilities that are relevant to a situation. This is extremely useful for mediating and helping resolve disputes in interpersonal interactions, for locating legal arguments and counter-arguments in law and diagnoses in medicine, and for anticipating problems and solutions in business.

Philosophy can be pursued as a major or minor, or as part of a double major.

# Salary Increase By Major

Your parents might have worried when you chose Philosophy or International Relations as a major. But a year-long survey of 1.2 million people with only a bachelor's degree by PayScale Inc. shows that graduates in these subjects earned 103.5% and 97.8% more, respectively, about 10 years post-commencement. Majors that didn't show as much salary growth include Nursing and Information Technology.

**More data:** Salaries for Colleges by Type | Salaries for Colleges by Region | Degrees That Pay You Back || **Related article:** Ivy Leaguers' Big Edge: Starting Pay

| Undergraduate Major | Starting Median Salary | Mid-Career Median Salary | Percent change from Starting to Mid-Career Salary | Mid-Career 10th Percentile Salary | Mid-Career 25th Percentile Salary | Mid-Career 75th Percentile Salary | Mid-Career 90th Percentile Salary |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accounting | $46,000.00 | $77,100.00 | 67.6 | $42,200.00 | $56,100.00 | $108,000.00 | $152,000.00 |
| Aerospace Engineering | $57,700.00 | $101,000.00 | 75.0 | $64,300.00 | $82,100.00 | $127,000.00 | $161,000.00 |
| Agriculture | $42,600.00 | $71,900.00 | 68.8 | $36,300.00 | $52,100.00 | $96,300.00 | $150,000.00 |
| Anthropology | $36,800.00 | $61,500.00 | 67.1 | $33,800.00 | $45,500.00 | $89,300.00 | $138,000.00 |
| Architecture | $41,600.00 | $76,800.00 | 84.6 | $50,600.00 | $62,200.00 | $97,000.00 | $136,000.00 |
| Art History | $35,800.00 | $64,900.00 | 81.3 | $28,800.00 | $42,200.00 | $87,400.00 | $125,000.00 |
| Biology | $38,800.00 | $64,800.00 | 67.0 | $36,900.00 | $47,400.00 | $94,500.00 | $135,000.00 |
| Business Management | $43,000.00 | $72,100.00 | 67.7 | $38,800.00 | $51,500.00 | $102,000.00 | $147,000.00 |
| Chemical Engineering | $63,200.00 | $107,000.00 | 69.3 | $71,900.00 | $87,300.00 | $143,000.00 | $194,000.00 |
| Chemistry | $42,600.00 | $79,900.00 | 87.6 | $45,300.00 | $60,700.00 | $108,000.00 | $148,000.00 |
| Civil Engineering | $53,900.00 | $90,500.00 | 67.9 | $63,400.00 | $75,100.00 | $115,000.00 | $148,000.00 |
| Communications | $38,100.00 | $70,000.00 | 83.7 | $37,500.00 | $49,700.00 | $98,800.00 | $143,000.00 |
| Computer Engineering | $61,400.00 | $105,000.00 | 71.0 | $66,100.00 | $84,100.00 | $135,000.00 | $162,000.00 |
| Computer Science | $55,900.00 | $95,500.00 | 70.8 | $56,000.00 | $74,900.00 | $122,000.00 | $154,000.00 |
| Construction | $53,700.00 | $88,900.00 | 65.5 | $56,300.00 | $68,100.00 | $118,000.00 | $171,000.00 |
| Criminal Justice | $35,000.00 | $56,300.00 | 60.9 | $32,200.00 | $41,600.00 | $80,700.00 | $107,000.00 |
| Drama | $35,900.00 | $56,900.00 | 58.5 | $36,700.00 | $41,300.00 | $79,100.00 | $153,000.00 |
| Economics | $50,100.00 | $98,600.00 | 96.8 | $50,600.00 | $70,600.00 | $145,000.00 | $210,000.00 |
| Education | $34,900.00 | $52,000.00 | 49.0 | $29,300.00 | $37,900.00 | $73,400.00 | $102,000.00 |
| Electrical Engineering | $60,900.00 | $103,000.00 | 69.1 | $69,300.00 | $83,800.00 | $130,000.00 | $168,000.00 |
| English | $38,000.00 | $64,700.00 | 70.3 | $33,400.00 | $44,800.00 | $93,200.00 | $133,000.00 |
| Film | $37,900.00 | $68,500.00 | 80.7 | $33,900.00 | $45,500.00 | $100,000.00 | $136,000.00 |
| Finance | $47,900.00 | $88,300.00 | 84.3 | $47,200.00 | $62,100.00 | $128,000.00 | $195,000.00 |
| Forestry | $39,100.00 | $62,600.00 | 60.1 | $41,000.00 | $49,300.00 | $78,200.00 | $111,000.00 |
| Geography | $41,200.00 | $65,500.00 | 59.0 | $40,000.00 | $50,000.00 | $90,800.00 | $132,000.00 |
| Geology | $43,500.00 | $79,500.00 | 82.8 | $45,000.00 | $59,600.00 | $101,000.00 | $156,000.00 |
| Graphic Design | $35,700.00 | $59,800.00 | 67.5 | $36,000.00 | $45,500.00 | $80,800.00 | $112,000.00 |
| Health Care Administration | $38,800.00 | $60,600.00 | 56.2 | $34,600.00 | $45,600.00 | $78,800.00 | $101,000.00 |
| History | $39,200.00 | $71,000.00 | 81.1 | $37,000.00 | $49,200.00 | $103,000.00 | $149,000.00 |
| Hospitality & Tourism | $37,800.00 | $57,500.00 | 52.1 | $35,500.00 | $43,600.00 | $81,900.00 | $124,000.00 |
| Industrial Engineering | $57,700.00 | $94,700.00 | 64.1 | $57,100.00 | $72,300.00 | $132,000.00 | $173,000.00 |
| Information Technology (IT) | $49,100.00 | $74,800.00 | 52.3 | $44,500.00 | $56,700.00 | $96,700.00 | $129,000.00 |
| Interior Design | $36,100.00 | $53,200.00 | 47.4 | $35,700.00 | $42,600.00 | $72,500.00 | $107,000.00 |
| International Relations | $40,900.00 | $80,900.00 | 97.8 | $38,200.00 | $56,000.00 | $111,000.00 | $157,000.00 |
| Journalism | $35,600.00 | $66,700.00 | 87.4 | $38,400.00 | $48,300.00 | $97,700.00 | $145,000.00 |
| Management Information Systems (MIS) | $49,200.00 | $82,300.00 | 67.3 | $45,300.00 | $60,500.00 | $108,000.00 | $146,000.00 |
| Marketing | $40,800.00 | $79,600.00 | 95.1 | $42,100.00 | $55,600.00 | $119,000.00 | $175,000.00 |
| Math | $45,400.00 | $92,400.00 | 103.5 | $45,200.00 | $64,200.00 | $128,000.00 | $183,000.00 |
| Mechanical Engineering | $57,900.00 | $93,600.00 | 61.7 | $63,700.00 | $76,200.00 | $120,000.00 | $163,000.00 |
| Music | $35,900.00 | $55,000.00 | 53.2 | $26,700.00 | $40,200.00 | $88,000.00 | $134,000.00 |
| Nursing | $54,200.00 | $67,000.00 | 23.6 | $47,600.00 | $56,400.00 | $80,900.00 | $98,300.00 |
| Nutrition | $39,900.00 | $55,300.00 | 38.6 | $33,900.00 | $44,500.00 | $70,500.00 | $99,200.00 |
| Philosophy | $39,900.00 | $81,200.00 | 103.5 | $35,500.00 | $52,800.00 | $127,000.00 | $168,000.00 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physician Assistant | $74,300.00 | $91,700.00 | 23.4 | $66,400.00 | $75,200.00 | $108,000.00 | $124,000.00 |
| Physics | $50,300.00 | $97,300.00 | 93.4 | $56,000.00 | $74,200.00 | $132,000.00 | $178,000.00 |
| Political Science | $40,800.00 | $78,200.00 | 91.7 | $41,200.00 | $55,300.00 | $114,000.00 | $168,000.00 |
| Psychology | $35,900.00 | $60,400.00 | 68.2 | $31,600.00 | $42,100.00 | $87,500.00 | $127,000.00 |
| Religion | $34,100.00 | $52,000.00 | 52.5 | $29,700.00 | $36,500.00 | $70,900.00 | $96,400.00 |
| Sociology | $36,500.00 | $58,200.00 | 59.5 | $30,700.00 | $40,400.00 | $81,200.00 | $118,000.00 |
| Spanish | $34,000.00 | $53,100.00 | 56.2 | $31,000.00 | $40,000.00 | $76,800.00 | $96,400.00 |

*Source: PayScale Inc.*

**Write to** the Online Journal's editors at newseditors@wsj.com

Return To Top

*Some of the questions that philosophers investigate and tackle:*

- What do we owe each other? Should we help those who are less fortunate – either by social circumstance or genetic endowment or both – or is it more appropriate to leave people to help themselves?

- What is the most meaningful life for a human being? What kind of society or government is best for fostering meaningful lives?

- Is life worth living only if we continue to exist after we die?

- What is knowledge? Is there anything that we can really know with certainty?

- Is knowledge the *same* as certainty? That is – just because a human mind is totally certain of something, does that tell us that it is true?

- Are ethical properties like goodness and badness out in the world objectively? If so, what kinds of things are they, and how do we detect or encounter them?

- Are ethical properties merely a subjective matter? If so, can we still take morality seriously? For example, how can we say that genocide is bad if morality just depends on what each society believes?

- Are minds part of the material world, or are they something else? If minds are material like everything else in the physical universe, can our thoughts and decisions be free? If minds are not material, how can they interact with our bodies?

- If minds are not material, and our thoughts and decisions are not caused by neuron firings, what *does* cause them?

- What is thinking? What is intelligence? Is thinking always conscious? If not, how do we tell the difference between unconscious activity that counts as thinking and intelligent, and unconscious activity that does not?

- Do animals have minds?

- Has the physical universe always existed? If so, why would it exist? Will it always exist? If it did not always exist, did it come from nothing? How could that be?

- If the universe is not eternal, did it come from nothing? What caused it? What caused *that*?

- Can we have an idea of a perfect infinite being? Can we speak of such a being? How could we know anything about a perfect infinite being?

- Does God exist? How can we know? What is the relation between God and morality? That is, are things good because God loves them, or is morality separate and independent from God, and God loves things because they are good?

- What are human rights and how are they different from ordinary moral or legal rights? Why should we care about protecting human rights?

- What is a law? How is an ordinary rule different from a legal rule? What (if anything) obligates us to obey laws?

- How are morality and law related? Should laws enforce morality?

- When is war justified? Are humanitarian interventions ever permissible? Are they sometimes obligatory?

- Is it ever justified to kill civilians unintentionally – but foreseeably – in war? Is torture ever justified?

- Which social inequalities are unfair, and which are acceptable?

- Do the concepts of race or gender track anything outside of our thought? If so, what? If not, are there any reasons to retain these concepts?

- What does it mean to govern your own life? Are we in control of choosing what we desire, or value, or what interests us?

- How is individual identity shaped by culture? If cultures partially constitute who we are, can we critique and modify our culture without losing ourselves?

- What is a number? Is it anything over and above the conventional sign that we use to refer to it, for example “four” or “4” or “cuatro”?

- In addition to what actually exists, do there exist *possible* ways that things could be – for example, alternative ways that a given event could unfold but doesn’t?

- What's the difference between an object’s undergoing radical change, and the object’s ceasing to be? Does anything every go out of existence?

- What makes someone the same person across time if over time they are composed of almost entirely different cells and molecules?

- What is the nature of space? What is the nature of time? Is time travel possible?

- What sort of knowledge does science provide? Is all knowledge ultimately scientific, or are there things we can know in an unscientific manner? What is a law of nature? Is it anything over and above the bodies that act in accord with it?

# II. Philosophy and pre-law

An important part of philosophical training consists in constructing and assessing arguments. Philosophy students consider a variety of positions and viewpoints and the different arguments that can be offered in favor of these. The in-class practice at seeing how arguments fit together, and the trial-and-error practice at coming up with arguments and counter-arguments on the spot – these are essential for a career in law.

On average, philosophy majors earn the highest scores on the law school admission test (LSAT).

A number of prominent attorneys have degrees in philosophy, including current and recent U.S. Supreme Court Justices Steven Breyer, Elena Kagan, and David Souter. UI Philosophy students have gone on to law school at a number of outstanding institutions including Yale University, the University of Virginia, the University of Michigan, the University of Iowa, Columbia University, Vanderbilt, George Washington University, among many others.

Philosophy majors have a higher rate of admission to law school (82%) than any other major.

American Philosophical Association

University of Delaware
31 Amstel Avenue, Newark, DE 19716
(302) 831-1112 | apaonline.org

# Philosophy Student Performance on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)

Philosophy majors consistently perform best or near best on graduate school admission exams, year after year and across various sections compared to other majors. As is clear from the following data, the success of philosophy graduates on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) is persistent, and despite changes in the content and scoring, students of philosophy regularly outperform their peers.

On the LSAT, philosophy majors rank significantly better than any other humanities degree, with an average score tied with economics for the highest of any field with more than 2,000 students taking the exam for the 2007-2008 year.

## Average LSAT Scores by Major

| Major | Average Score | Number of Students |
|---|---|---|
| Economics | 157.4 | 3,047 |
| Philosophy | 157.4 | 2,184 |
| Engineering | 156.2 | 2,197 |
| History | 155.9 | 4,166 |
| English | 154.7 | 5,120 |
| Finance | 153.4 | 2,267 |
| Political Science | 153.0 | 14,964 |
| Psychology | 152.5 | 4,355 |
| Communications | 150.5 | 2,230 |
| Criminal Justice | 145.5 | 3,306 |

*Data source: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1430654*

Prior data also show philosophy students scoring very high: they ranked second overall (first among majors with large numbers of students testing) in 1991-1992, 1994-1995, and 2003-2004.

Some data also indicate that philosophy students may be accepted to law schools at higher rates compared to other popular fields. The following data are from the 1997-1998 law school admissions cycle.

| Major | # of Applicants | Average LSAT score | Rate of Law School Admission |
|---|---|---|---|
| Philosophy | 1,570 | 156.9 | 82.4% |
| History | 4,988 | 154.1 | 80.1% |
| English | 4,854 | 153.8 | 78.4% |
| Psychology | 4,062 | 151.8 | 73.8% |
| Political Science | 12,737 | 151.4 | 73.5% |
| Criminal Justice | 3,283 | 145.0 | 56.7% |

*Data source: http://www2.gsu.edu/~phlkkk/foryou.html*

# III. Philosophy and pre-business

The problem-solving and problem-finding skills of the philosophy major are extremely useful toward a career in business. On average, philosophy majors earn among the very highest scores on the business school entrance exam (GMAT), and philosophy majors over the course of their careers earn among the very highest salaries of all humanities and social science majors.

The U Iowa resource for internships is at careers.uiowa.edu/employers/internships.

The annual U Iowa career is held in both fall and spring. More information is available here: careers.uiowa.edu/events/career-fair.

A number of extremely successful businesspeople were philosophy majors, including:

Christy Haubegger – Film Producer and Founder of *Latina* magazine

Carl Icahn – former CEO, Trans World Airlines

Gerald Levin – CEO, Time-Warner, Inc.

Carly Fiorina – former CEO, Hewlett Packard

Phil Jackson – President, New York Knicks

Michael McCaskey – Owner, Chicago Bears

Mark Hulbert – editor, *The Hulbert Financial Digest*; Financial Columnist, FORBES Magazine

George Soros – Financier and Money Manager

Patrick Byrne – CEO, overstock.com

Peter Thiel – Co-Founder and Former CEO, PayPal

Herbert Allison, Jr. – Former CEO, Fannie Mae

Stewart Butterfield – Co-Founder, Flickr

Herbert Simon – Economist and Nobel Laureate

# Mean GMAT Score by Intended Major (2009-10) *

| | Intended Major | Score | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Mathematics | 608 | 2,273 |
| 2 | Physics | 604 | 924 |
| 3 | Engineering | 593 | 28,563 |
| 4 | Philosophy | 587 | 696 |
| 5 | Economics | 583 | 19,733 |
| 6 | Computer Science | 581 | 8,564 |
| 7 | Operations Management/Production | 578 | 2,026 |
| 7 | Government | 578 | 658 |
| 9 | Actuarial Science | 577 | 548 |
| 10 | History | 574 | 2,358 |
| 11 | Art History | 571 | 331 |
| 12 | Anthropology | 569 | 399 |
| 13 | Chemistry | 567 | 1,350 |
| 14 | Biological Sciences | 563 | 3,784 |
| 14 | Statistics | 563 | 433 |
| 16 | English | 560 | 3,084 |
| 17 | Political Science | 556 | 4,795 |
| 18 | Finance | 555 | 28,299 |
| 18 | Languages | 555 | 2,173 |
| 20 | Architecture | 545 | 986 |
| 21 | Law | 541 | 1,924 |
| 22 | Information Systems Technology | 536 | 6,424 |
| 23 | Psychology | 533 | 3,547 |
| 24 | International Business | 528 | 6,816 |
| 24 | Medicine/Nursing | 528 | 1,164 |
| 26 | Journalism | 522 | 1,578 |
| 27 | Accounting | 520 | 29,465 |
| 27 | Business Education | 520 | 6,848 |
| 29 | Sociology | 519 | 1,466 |
| 30 | Fine Arts | 504 | 981 |
| 31 | Management | 503 | 18,284 |
| 32 | Hotel Administration | 500 | 1,605 |
| 33 | Agriculture | 495 | 490 |
| 34 | Marketing | 493 | 13,341 |
| 35 | Education | 482 | 656 |

*Data from *The 2010 Profile of Graduate Management Admission Test Candidates* by the Graduate Management Admissions Council. Standard deviations not available.

# IV. Philosophy and pre-med

A science degree is not required for entry to medical school. Humanities and social science majors are very common as medical-school applicants, and the data show that the analytical and problem-solving skills that come with the philosophy major provide medical students with a distinct advantage. Philosophy majors do extremely well on the medical school admission test (MCAT), and their rates of admission to medical school are among the highest of any major.

A student can be pre-med with any undergraduate major. The standard coursework pre-requisites for medical school are as follows:

- two semesters of biology
- two semesters of inorganic chemistry
- two semesters of organic chemistry
- two semesters of physics.

Another route that humanities majors take to medical school – if they have not taken the requisite science courses as part of their undergraduate degree – is a 1-year pre-med bridge program. There are numerous such programs at universities all over the country: for example at Cal State Los Angeles, Creighton University, Florida State University, Harvard, the University of Indiana, Johns Hopkins, and Tufts, to name just a few.

# Major Anxiety

## IF YOU THINK BIOCHEMISTRY IS YOUR TICKET INTO MEDICAL SCHOOL, THINK AGAIN.

*The New Physician* September 2000

by Paul Jung, M.D. Volume 49, Issue 6

Premedical students, welcome to "PremedRx"—a new column that will discuss issues that affect your life, such as the medical school application process, the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), extracurricular activities, career options and much more. In this first installment, let's start with a simple concept—one that will serve as a recurring theme throughout the column—and that's promoting your unique individuality. This may sound like some hokey, new-age mantra, but it's a serious idea that most premeds ignore to their ultimate disadvantage.



Dare to Be You. Don't make the mistake of attempting to conform to some idealized version of the standard premed. You're probably familiar with the stereotype: a biology major with a 4.0 grade-point average (GPA), 11 or greater on the MCAT, volunteer time at the local hospital and research experience over summer vacation. Although this applicant may be standard, keep in mind that synonyms for standard include ordinary, typical, common, plain, average, unexciting, uninteresting, unremarkable, unexceptional and boring.

A successful medical school application endorses your unique individuality, separating you from the rest of the pack. Don't waste your time demonstrating your ability to emulate other standard premed attributes. Instead, spend your valuable time cultivating your own abilities. In 1998, there were nearly 56,000 medical-school applicants for approximately 16,000 first-year seats. Do you really think the accepted applicants all fit the standard stereotype? Of course not. But first things first. Let's start at the beginning: your college major.

Blinded With Science? Your college major is probably the most obvious and outright opportunity for you to distance yourself from the standard premed stereotype. Surprisingly, countless premeds enter college and insist that a science major should not only prepare them well for medical school but also boost their chances for admission. Ironically, as scientists, if they were to seek out the facts, they would easily dismantle their misguided assumption. Take, for example, the 1998 statistics from the Association of American Medical Colleges—the organization that runs the American Medical College Application Service—showing applicants' acceptance rates, broken down by major:

All majors 37%

Biology 35%

Chemistry 39%

Physics 42%

Biochemistry 43%

English 46%

History 49%

Philosophy 50%

As you can see, humanities majors have higher acceptance rates than science majors. This is a simple fact that many premeds simply ignore, as presumptions are handed down from one ill-informed class to the next. But the numbers are powerful—a 50 percent chance of admission means that a philosophy major can fill out a med school application, then flip a coin to determine whether or not to send it in: heads, they're accepted; tails, they're not. The rest have to take their chances with even more unreliable probabilities.

Granted, there are far more science majors applying to med school than humanities majors, on the order of 14:1. And science majors do get into medical school in total higher numbers. But percentages are more important in this case because percentages determine chances.

Think of it this way. Imagine you are a med school admissions dean with 5,000 applications sitting in front of you. As you go

through them, one by one, a pattern develops—one that paints a picture of the standard premed applicant, over and over and over again. An admissions dean usually asks two questions when considering each applicant: Is this person qualified for acceptance? Will this person add something interesting to the class?

Lest any of you really think that an admissions dean looks forward to admitting a class of 125 biology majors with 4.0 GPAs, think again. A medical school class is determined to be diverse and vibrant, made up of students with assorted experiences, interests and skills. By presenting the standard application—one that says, "I'm average and usual! Pick me!"—you effectively hamper the school's efforts to select a diverse class.

Now imagine running across an applicant with a major in history or philosophy. Most likely, you will immediately transfer that applicant's name to memory and take a decidedly curious interest in that application. This is what happens with admissions deans, and this explains why humanities majors have a higher chance of admission.

On another note, with regards to the idea that studying the sciences may help prepare you for the medical school curriculum, there is no added value to maximizing your science intake as an undergraduate. If it were the case, medical schools would probably encourage you to bone up as much as possible before starting school so that you don't fail out. They should also offer advanced placement credit for those advanced-level science courses that some undergraduates crave. But they don't, and the reason is that medical schools want you to be a well-developed student with a well-rounded education.

The courses in medical school are far more difficult than any undergraduate-level offering. Take one look at any medical school class preparing for final exams and you will see students with honors degrees in biochemistry struggling alongside the history majors.

So, no point in fortifying your science knowledge at the expense of your other vast collegiate opportunities. In fact, studies have shown that students of science and humanities majors do equally well in medical school and beyond. The basic minimum requirements for medical school admission is one year of biology, one year of chemistry, one year of organic chemistry and one year of physics. That's it, and that's all you need. Some medical schools may require a year of mathematics or English, but those are typically required in any undergraduate curriculum such that you'd be hard pressed to graduate without them.

So what does this mean to you? If you're at all interested in the humanities, then study them in college. Select one as your major, and do well in those classes. Take the minimum science requirements and apply to medical school. There is no compelling reason for you to jettison your personal interests for four years in science. Some may say that you'll have very little time and few opportunities to enjoy the humanities later as a physician, so make the most of it in college. These are wise words.

Conversely, if you are truly interested in the sciences, if running gels, titrating solutions and examining shark innards are your cat's meow, then by all means you should major in the sciences. The point is that you should study what you enjoy and do well in those courses. Whether it's philosophy, biology, mathematics, economics, music, art history, physics, or biochemistry, study what you like. No major provides better preparation for medical education or medicine than any other, and you should never select
a science major because of the assumption that it will give you an extra advantage in medical school or medical school admissions. The facts are clear.

Enjoy What You Do. The principle of unique individuality can also easily be applied to extracurricular activities. Revisiting the standard application, the most sought-after extracurricular activities among premeds include volunteering in a hospital or laboratory—no doubt to prove their empathy for patients and scientific acumen. Although these activities may be ubiquitous among premeds, there is no rule that these activities are required or necessary for admission to medical school. And there are definitely no facts to support their status as superior activities designed to amplify anyone's chances of admission. So why does every premed aspire to the bedpan and autoclave?

Again, it's a standard presumption passed from generation to generation. But there are plenty of medical students who have never held bedpans in a medical ward or run gels at the National Institutes of Health. And there are plenty of medical students who have performed these acts in a mistakenly painful attempt to fortify their medical school application. Again, the advice is to do what you enjoy, and do it well.

Obviously, if you enjoy volunteering in a clinic or working in a lab, do it. But how do you distinguish yourself from those standard premeds who feature identical activities in more flowery language on their own applications? Consider obtaining a qualifying mark such as "Volunteer of the Year" or prize such as a scientific publication or poster presentation at a conference. These not only prove that your activities are legitimate, but that you excel at them.

Remember, unique individuality is the key to medical school admissions. Consider your own application and what it may look like. Are you forcing yourself to conform to someone else's idea of the standard premed applicant? Or, are you really performing well at what you enjoy?

New Physician contributing editor Paul Jung is the author of Getting In: How NOT to Apply to Medical School (Sage Publications, 1999), available at MedBookstore.com. E-mail Dr. Jung with your questions and stories at GettingIn@hotmail.com.

Tags: codeMED, PrecodeMED

Gap Medics
Launching medical careers

http://www.gapmedics.com/blog/2014/01/13/non-science-majors-and-medical-school-admissions-standing-out-among-the-applicant-pool

# Non-Science Majors and Medical School Admissions: Standing Out Among The Applicant Pool

14 Jan 18:00 Veronica Reina

In a sea of medical school applications—which number over 40,000 per year—differentiating yours from the crowd of other hopeful applicants is crucial. One way to stand out is to select an undergraduate major that will challenge you, inspire you, and allow you to reach your intellectual potential. Even if your sights are set on medical school, this doesn't mean that your undergraduate major must be science-related. In fact, your love of philosophy, literature, psychology, and even art will work to your advantage as an undergraduate major applying to medical school. The traditional path to acceptance has changed. Consider these facts when choosing your undergraduate major:

1. The American Medical Student Association (AMSA) tracks data on the majors of undergraduates accepted to medical school. Interestingly, science (biology, chemistry, physics, etc.) and non-science majors (English, psychology, philosophy, etc.) are equally represented among accepted candidates. However, because there are fewer non-science majors applying to medical school, more of them get accepted. In fact, philosophy majors boast a higher rate of acceptance to medical school than biology majors.

2. Choosing a non-science major that ignites your curiosity and pushes you to think creatively and analytically is going to yield a higher GPA through your deep commitment to your undergraduate studies. Paired with the appropriate series of pre-medical courses, including biology, organic and inorganic chemistry, biochemistry, and physics, you'll stand out as a well-rounded applicant who will add diversity to any school's incoming class. Your passion for the humanities, when paired with superb academic performance in the foundational pre-medical courses required for medical school admission, demonstrates that you are a multi-talented, multi-faceted student.

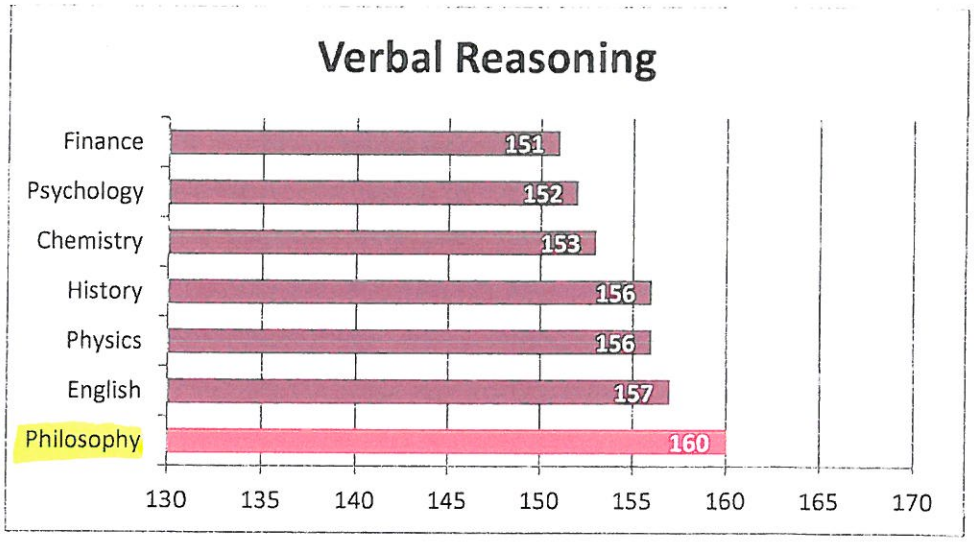
3. Your non-science major is more likely to help you get a higher MCAT score. Surprisingly, students who major in the humanities, especially philosophy and English, earn higher MCAT scores than those students who pursue a traditional science major—up to a whole point higher! In a competitive admissions pool, that one additional point on your MCAT score may be the deciding factor in your acceptance.

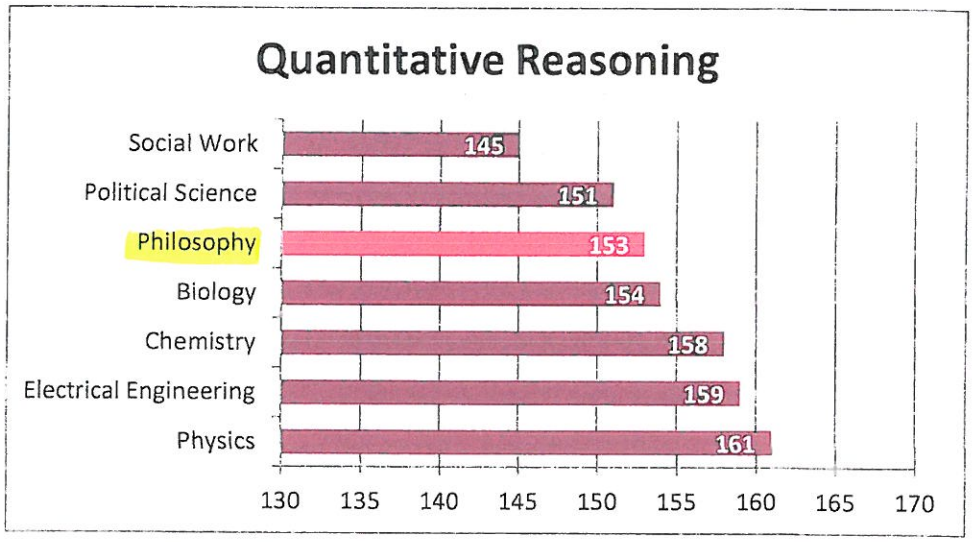
4. If you've reached your senior year of your undergraduate studies and decided that medical school is your next step, there are post-baccalaureate programs that specifically cater to your pursuits. Entering college at 18, you'll likely change your major several times before you find your niche, and even then, many people are late bloomers. Their talents and potential may not reveal themselves until late in the undergraduate game. Post-baccalaureate programs allow non-science majors to "try out" medical school before making the full-time commitment to pursing a medical degree through an intensive, year-long focus on the core sciences that medical schools require for admission.
Gone are the days when biology and chemistry majors dominate first-year medical school classes. You're just as likely to find yourself working side-by-side with a psychology or English major as you are a biochemistry or physics major. Combining a high GPA and strong MCAT score with a compelling personal statement and stellar letters of recommendation…these are your keys to medical school admission. So ponder some philosophy and drink in some poetry—your medical school application will thank you for it!

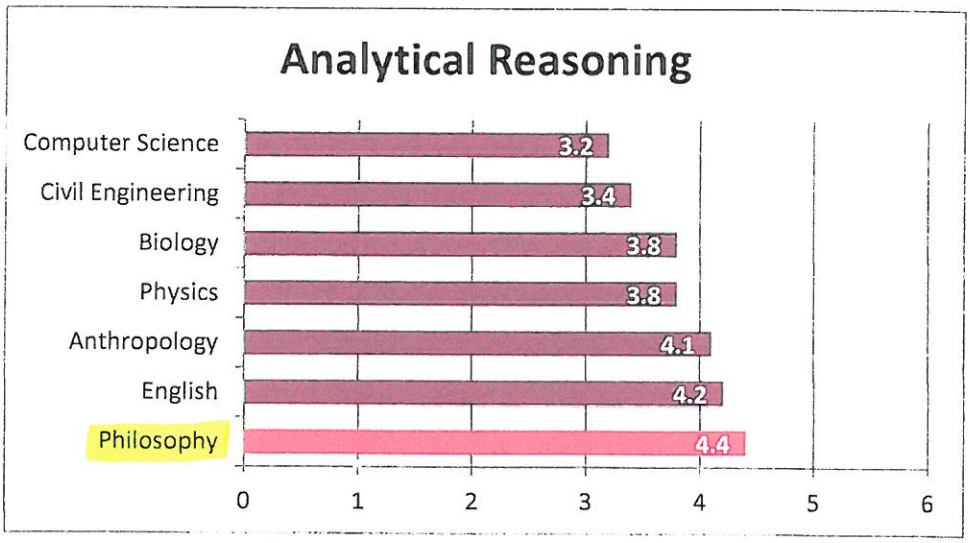
## V. Philosophy and the graduate school entrance exam

The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is the entrance exam for graduate study in all fields. Philosophy students earn the highest average score of all majors on the GRE.

UI philosophy majors and double-majors have gone on to first-tier Ph.D. programs in Biology, Chemistry, Comparative Literature, Computer Science, Economics, English, Philosophy, Sociology, and many other fields.




*Data for tests taken August 2011 to April 2014, from ETS.*

*Charts based on Physics Central blog post "Best Majors for GRE Scores: Still Physics and Philosophy," August 20, 2012.*