

DENTAL (D.D.S.)

ACADEMIC AND CAREER INFORMATION

NATURE OF THE WORK, EARNINGS, AND OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK

Dentistry is a branch of the healing arts and sciences devoted to maintaining the health of the teeth, gums, and other hard and soft tissues of the oral cavity and adjacent structures. The United States Department of Labor Statistics reports that in 2014 dentists held about 151,500 active jobs in the United States. Dentistry requires diagnostic ability and manual skills. Dentists should have good visual memory, excellent judgment of space and shape, a high degree of manual dexterity, and scientific ability. Good business sense, self-discipline, and communication skills are helpful for success in private practice.

Though earnings vary according to number of years in practice, location, hours worked, and specialty, the ADA reports that in 2014 the average net income for an independent private practitioner who owned all or part of his or her practice was \$202,760, while dental specialists earned an average net income of \$303,790. The overall median pay for a dentist was \$159,770. Employment of dentists is expected to grow faster than average for all occupations through 2022. Although employment growth will provide some job opportunities, most jobs will result from the need to replace the large number of dentists expected to retire. Job prospects should be good as new dentists take over established practices or start their own (OOH, 2016).

DENTAL EDUCATION

Currently there are 66 dental schools in the United States and 10 Canadian dental schools. Most dental schools award the degree of Doctor of Dental Surgery (D.D.S.). The rest award an equivalent degree, Doctor of Dental Medicine (D.M.D.). Dental school usually lasts 4 academic years. Studies begin with classroom instruction and laboratory work in basic sciences including anatomy, microbiology, biochemistry, and physiology. Beginning courses in clinical sciences, including laboratory techniques, are also provided at this time. During the last 2 years, students treat patients, usually in dental clinics, under the supervision of licensed dentists. All 50 States and the District of Columbia require dentists to be licensed. In most states, a candidate must graduate from a dental school accredited by the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation, and pass written and practical examinations to qualify for a license. A degree in dentistry can lead to dental careers in a variety of settings including, academic dentistry, general dentistry (private or group practice), dental specialties, dental research, public policy, international health, and government/military.

CLINICAL FIELDS / SPECIALTIES IN DENTISTRY

1. **General Dentistry:** use their oral diagnostic, preventive, surgical, and rehabilitative skills to restore damaged or missing tooth structure and treat diseases of the bone and soft tissue in the mouth and adjacent structure
2. **Dental Public Health:** treats the community rather than the individual patient
3. **Endodontics:** deals with diseases of the pulp and other dental tissues
4. **Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology:** study and research of the causes, processes, and effects of diseases with oral manifestations
5. **Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology:** taking and interpretation of conventional, digital, CT, MRI, and allied imaging modalities of oral-facial structures and disease

6. **Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery:** concerned with diseases, injuries, and defects of the neck, head, jaw, and associated structures
7. **Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics:** concerned with treating problems related to irregular dental development, missing teeth, and other abnormalities
8. **Pediatric Dentistry:** concerned with the treatment of children, adolescents and young adults whose dental development is not complete
9. **Periodontics:** concerned with diseases that affect oral mucous membranes that surround and support the teeth
10. **Prosthodontics:** science and art of replacing missing natural teeth with fixed or removable substitutes

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Aside from prerequisite courses, it is recommended that students engage in extracurricular activities such as volunteering in a dental setting and community service. Pre-dental students should be able to demonstrate their potential for independent critical thought, leadership, concern for others, and an understanding of the dental profession. Additionally, pre-dental students should work at developing and/or improving manual dexterity and eye-hand-coordination.

For the fall 2016 entering class, about 51% of applicants were accepted to dental school (12,058 applicants and 6,099 enrollees). In 2016, the **mean GPA** for accepted students to US dental schools was a **3.55 (Total) and 3.46 (Science)** (ADEA: Official Guide to Dental Schools, 2017). The average 2016 enrollee **DAT test score was 20.3.**

Any major is appropriate for dental school preparation. While a science major requires many of the same basic prerequisites, selecting a science major is not required for admission to any dental school. Students are advised to select a major they find interesting and to work at developing a broad-based, interdisciplinary foundation of knowledge and skills from which they can build upon.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Prerequisite admission requirements vary from school to school. For the specific requirements at individual dental schools, refer to “ADEA: Official Guide to Dental Schools” available for purchase, at the [American Dental Education Association \(ADEA\)](#).

CSULB Courses which fulfill admission requirements for some dental schools:

Students maintain responsibility for verifying course selection with individual dental programs.

Coursework	CSULB Courses
One year of General Chemistry with Lab	Chemistry 111A & 111B
One year of Organic Chemistry with Lab	Chemistry 220A & 220B + 320 L (Chem. & Biochem. majors) OR 220A w/ 223A & 220B w/ 223B
One year of General Biology with Lab	Biology 211, 212 & 213
One year of General Physics with Lab	Physics 100A & 100B OR 151 & 152
One year of English (Composition and/or Literature)	English 100 AND one of the following 101,102, or 300
Additional courses in Biology, including Anatomy	Biology 208
One or more courses in Psychology	Psychology 100
One or more courses in Biochemistry	Chemistry 441A and/or 441B or 448
One semester to one year of Math (Calculus)	Math 119A OR 122 & 123
One course in Statistics	Biology 260 OR Statistics 108

All United States dental schools require applicants to take the Dental Admission Test (DAT). The [UCLA School of Dentistry offers Pre-Dental laboratory courses](#) to strengthen perceptual skills. These courses are offered over weekend days a few times a year.

For more information about dental school, visit www.adea.org/GoDental/ and see the HPAO website for further information on the application process, application assistance, and a list of upcoming workshops and events.