One of the major points that I teach the pre-health students in BIOL 117 is that their career path is not linear—in fact it is very much a zig zag. As a first-year student at UNC-CH, I did not have the skills to navigate a large system. Being from a small town in NC, I was overwhelmed by the large class sizes and did not feel empowered to speak with faculty after class. I was quickly feeling lost in this big system. A chance encounter with the chancellor of UNC-CH encouraged me to volunteer at the hospital, ultimately helping me find my calling as a nurse; a profession I am most proud to be a part of. I am not sure I would have found it if I had not been fortunate to have the exposure through volunteering—and of course the advice that told me to volunteer to begin with. I also had no idea that you could get a PhD in Nursing—and that knowledge gap is something I still find when I teach BIOL 117—with most students expressing surprise that nurses can have doctorates. This reinforces how important exposure really is—and how we need more opportunities for our students if we want them to find their calling too.

When we set out to hire the three health professions advisors last year, I listened to their stories of why they wanted this position—all three of them had a similar story to mine. When we launched our advisory board, many of the participants also shared a similar story. Driven by this desire to align the system, we have created a shared vision of connection and alignment—of identifying and supporting current programs that are focused on pre-health advising and the opportunity to build the new programs to close existing gaps. It’s been amazing what we have accomplished in a year—and it’s because we did this together. I am so grateful to the health professions advisors, the advisory board and cabinet members, the countless volunteer hours of Janne Cannon, Jean DeSaix, and Peter Gilligan, the expertise of Joy Renner and Gidi Schemer, the dedication of Lillian Zwemer and Alaina Garland, and to the amazing student volunteers who have helped us launch the peer guide network. For those who have offered us advice to avoid missteps—I say thank you—and for those who are taking risks with us to build new opportunities—I want you to know how much I appreciate your courage. Abigail Panter has been a staunch advocate for this work, helping us form the BIOL 117 and 118 series and with her guidance and the major support of UNC Health, it looks as if the BIOL 119 course will launch this Fall—allowing us to have a pathway of patient facing skill building opportunities for our undergraduate students. As I type these words, I still can’t believe it’s finally happening—as it surely has been a collaborative effort to launch this program.

Healthcare is rapidly changing—the workforce demands are high, AI and technology are changing the way we work, and both patients and clinicians are demanding a system change. It can feel quite unsettling and overwhelming to be a part of these changes and try to navigate building a system that supports students with so much uncertainty, but I know that I am part of an amazing team of dedicated folks who will figure it out with me. As you read this annual report, I hope you can see these connections, their passion, and of course the outcomes that they have achieved in this first year. Here’s to many more...

Thank you,

Meg Zomorodi PhD, RN, ANEF, FAAN
Associate Provost for Interprofessional Health Initiatives and Director of the Health Professions Advising Office
History

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) has a long history of advising and student support. While UNC-CH does not have a formal pre-health major, many of our students go on to a career in the health professions. Provost Chris Clemens, seeing an opportunity to leverage the network of the health professions schools in the Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice, convened a working group to explore the needs and seize opportunities to reimagine health professions advising at UNC-CH. Building off of the recommendations of a campus wide committee, the Office of Health Professions Advising was launched in February 2023, consisting of three health professions advisors, a peer guide network, and an advisory board made up of representatives from a broad range of groups: Carolina’s health professions schools, Honors Carolina and academic advising hubs; workforce development organizations such as NC AHEC and the College Advising Corps; and Campbell University and NC State University. This pan-university approach has created a network of partnerships, working closely together to support students as they navigate a career path in the health professions. In this way, we can ensure that all students have a chance for connection and exploration—ultimately helping us build a health professions workforce that serves NC and beyond.

Learn more about how the Office of Health Professions Advising came to be in the article from The Well, “Advising network opens doors to health careers.”

Mission and Vision

Our mission at the UNC Office of Health Professions Advising is to partner with students on their health professions journey, encouraging them to take ownership of their career pathway. Through programs and individual support, we collaborate with students to foster self-directed learning; assist with goal setting and action plans; promote extracurricular and curricular growth; and celebrate achievement.

We empower students to become collaborative leaders in a rapidly changing healthcare landscape. We recognize that there is no universal answer to advising, so we take special care to adapt to each student.

We do this by:

- Exploring health professional programs
- Connecting through individualized meetings
- Applying knowledge and experience
Leadership and Staff

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Associate Provost for Interprofessional Health Initiatives
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Mya Shackleford (she, her, hers)
Director of Health Professions Advising & Partnerships
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JOINING IN SUMMER 2024!
MYA SHACKLEFORD

Join us in welcoming Mya Shackleford to our HPA Team in Summer of 2024! Mya will help us build and maintain our partnerships across campus and beyond and implement our strategic plan for HPA. Welcome Mya!

Click here to learn more about our HPA staff
Check out some of the ways that we’ve collaborated with our partners this year!
One-on-One Advising

Since our advisors started meeting with students in March of 2023, they have conducted over 1,000 30-minute general advising sessions with UNC students to help them explore what kind of career they want in healthcare and discuss how to prepare themselves to apply for their chosen degree program. Advisors meet with students virtually and in person at the Health Sciences Library.

Topics from these sessions include but are not limited to:
• Prerequisites for a health professional program
• Gaining clinical experience
• Research opportunities
• Application processes
• Career exploration

Advising

Held 1,603 1:1 meetings with students

- 1st years: 3%
- 2nd years: 15%
- 3rd years: 29%
- 4th years: 20%
- Beyond: 20%

Over 24,000 hours spent advising students 1:1

45+
events hosted
12 events offered
Campus Life Experience Credit

1,100+
students at our events

One-on-One Advising
Coffee Chats

The Office of Health Professions Advising launched a monthly series of coffee chats starting in Spring 2024 to assist students with brief questions about their health profession journey. These sessions are designed for quick answers without the need for a full 30-minute meeting. It offers a more casual and accessible platform for students seeking guidance. The advisors typically will host their coffee chats at the Meantime Café in the Campus Y building. Check out HeelLife to find our next session!

Group Advising

Through one-on-one advising, the advisors found common themes in what kind of advising students typically needed. They decided to start hosting various group advising sessions to reach more students. Our advisors have designed and implemented a number of group advising sessions to allow large numbers of students to receive pre-health advising in a group setting rather than one-on-one. These sessions are ideal for students hoping to gain general knowledge on their pre-health area and to get some time with the advisors while meeting peers who have similar questions and interests.

So, You Want a Career in Health Professions

This is a group advising session for first-year students to start thinking about how to begin building their resume for health professions schools. During these sessions, the advisors cover topics such as prerequisites, extra-curricular activities, standardized testing timelines, and answer any lingering questions students have about starting this process.

349 Students attended September–March

Second Year and Beyond

This is a group advising session for second-year students and above to check in on their pre-health journey towards graduate school. These sessions consist of an open discussion about students’ desired graduate goals, breaking out into groups based on pre-professional pathways and reviewing our health professions pathway roadmaps to make action plans, making sure students achieve their goals.

36 students attended Jan–March

Double Application Schools (2+2 Programs)

This group advising session is for students aiming to apply to one of the several two-year undergraduate health professional programs at UNC, including in the School of Nursing, Gillings School of Global Public Health, Adams School of Dentistry, and the Departments of Biomedical Engineering and Health Sciences in the School of Medicine. Advisors facilitate an open discussion on what each program is looking for and help students create an action plan for applying.

49 Students have attended Jan–March
Alexa Knee, Grading Senior

I have committed to attending the UVA School of Medicine (Dream School and Top Choice) as part of the class of 2028! I first met with Kayela in April of 2023 and throughout the entire application and interview process, she provided invaluable guidance. From assessing my application readiness to helping me craft a strong school list, her expertise made a significant difference. Kayela went above and beyond by providing feedback on my personal statement and activity descriptions for AMCAS, and even conducted mock interviews to help improve my interview skills. HPA provided unwavering support and instilled confidence in me. I am incredibly grateful to Kayela and the entire HPA team for their dedication to my success.”

Student Features

Manasa Raghavan, Sophomore

I just got accepted into the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health’s Health Policy and Management BSPH this year, and next I plan to pursue an MD in Emergency Medicine while continuing my passions in public health policy through an MPH and a potential career as a Medical Director working in community paramedicine! I would not have discovered the overlap in my passions without the HPA office, as the advisors pushed me to pursue opportunities that interested me, beyond the “typical pre-medical” student pathway, and as a non-typical premedical student this support propelled me to lean into my differences and turn them into my strengths! I pursued research in pharmaceutical sciences, was a Health Advocacy intern at a non-profit where I created reproductive care policy for college students and have begun exploring medical education research.”

Abel Salas, Graduating Senior

Thanks to the support of numerous mentors, professors, advisors, friends, and family, I will be matriculating at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine in July. I am incredibly grateful for the support I’ve received over my time at Carolina, and I firmly believe my involvement with Spanish medical interpreting and analytical chemistry research largely contributed to this success. I especially appreciate the HPA office and their willingness to provide feedback on application essays and mock interview sessions throughout the application cycle.”

Advisor Spotlight

Amy Oyos-Yatrofsky

“Personally, it has been a joy to see students find new career pathways they are interested in, and connections made between students who are on the same pathway. I also had the opportunity to hear firsthand what students’ needs were, which led to creating group advising and additional programming.”
Projects

Health Professions Pathway Roadmaps

We, in partnership with a group of HPA Cabinet and Advisory Board representatives from the various health professional programs at UNC worked to create a suggested timeline for students interested in pursuing a healthcare degree. The roadmaps include important non-course related milestones for each semester they are at UNC and beyond. These are primarily used by our Peer Guides to help them advise students in their sessions, at our Second Year and Beyond group advising sessions, and alongside our action plan document for students.

Interested in getting an action plan?
Connect & get started at: hpa.unc.edu/connect
The National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP) is an organization of health professions advisors at colleges and universities throughout the United States, and abroad. The NAAHP serves as a resource for the professional development of health professions advisors and is a representative voice with health professions schools and their professional associations, undergraduate institutions, and other health professions organizations. The Association promotes high standards for health professions advising at universities and colleges. It assists advisors in fostering the intellectual, personal, and humanistic development of students as they prepare for careers in health professions.

Our Health Professions Advisors have been members of NAAHP since February of 2023, and they are currently serving on two committees in the organization.

Amanda Gabbard serves as the Southeastern Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (SAAHP) regional representative for the Member Engagement committee. The committee is charged with maintaining services to members and outside constituents including but not limited to Find An Advisor, the Advisor Mentoring Program, and helps staff NAAHP advisor booths at virtual fairs hosted by our Advisory Council partners, most often AAMC.

Amy Oyos-Yatrofsky serves on the NAAHP Education Task force. As a part of a four-member team, she has created one of three modules. This module has a focus on developing group advising sessions, asynchronous classes and for credit classes. The module is part of a new initiative for NAAHP for a certification and potential accreditation and will go live at the National Conference in Cincinnati this summer, 2024. Amy will be presenting along with two other members at the national conference.

The advisors also attended last year’s regional SAAHP conference where they were able to network with other health professions advisors in the region, meet with representatives from health professional programs across the region, and learn about innovative advising techniques for pre-health students.

Grants

The Office of Health Professions Advising would like to alleviate some of the costs associated with applying to health professions schools through the piloting of a pre-health resource library. The primary goal of this library is to provide students with access to admissions test prep material at no charge. The parents’ council in UNC’s Office of New Student and Family Programs administers grant money to student organizations and campus departments yearly to fund and support campus-wide initiatives. A proposal for this grant was presented on Friday February 23rd. If the grant is successful, the library will launch Fall 2024. An initial library opening will include introducing the library to students and partnering with resources like the Learning Center to help students best understand how to use these resources.
Programs

Since Fall 2022, HPA has hosted fifteen special program events, partnering with internal representatives and offices at UNC, as well as external groups and organizations with the goal of exposing pre-health students to as much helpful information as possible while at UNC. We focused our events on three areas of the pre-health journey, exploring, connecting, and applying, helping us categorize our events.

Explore events are focused on exposing students to healthcare careers, helping them decide on what healthcare pathway is right for them.

Connect events are focused on networking, whether that be with a healthcare program, with other health professional students, or with our own health professions advisors.

Apply events are focused on helping students navigate the application process for their chosen healthcare program.

UNC Undergraduate Public Health Programs
September 19, 2022—Explore and Application event

This session covered the various undergraduate programs that the Gillings School of Global Public Health offers with Jonathan Earnest. It also included useful information on the benefits of a degree in public health, career options in public health, and information on the admissions processes at Gillings and how to strengthen your application.

UNC/NC State Biomedical Engineering Program
September 29, 2022—Explore event

In partnership with Naji Husseini and the UNC/NC State joint department of Biomedical Engineering, HPA hosted a presentation on the program and what students can do with a degree in BME followed by student questions.

Am I Prepared for Dental School?
October 19, 2022—Application event

In partnership with Lamont Lowery, Assistant Dean for Recruitment and Engagement at the Adams School of Dentistry, HPA hosted a presentation on preparing for dental school followed by some time for students to ask questions.

The Dental Hygiene Professional
November 15, 2022—Explore and Application event

In partnership with Tiffanie White from the Adams School of Dentistry, HPA hosted a presentation on what it means to be a dental hygienist and UNC’s dental hygiene program followed by some time for students to ask questions.

Social Work Alumni Panel
February 15, 2023—Explore event

HPA, in partnership with the UNC School of Social Work, hosted three MSW alumni for a discussion on a career in social work. Panelists explored topics on different opportunities in social work, a day in the life of a social worker, and answered student questions.

Am I Ready to Apply to Medical School?
October 3, 2022—Application event

This session from Dr. Janne Cannon covered best practices for applying to medical school, such as extracurricular opportunities, work experience, and general tips for success.
UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy Alumni Panel
March 23, 2023—Explore event

In partnership with the Eshelman School of Pharmacy, HPA hosted three Pharm.D. alumni for a discussion on a day in the life of a pharmacist. Panelists shared their experiences in pharmacy, what options are available for pharmacists, and why they chose their profession.

Health Professions Tour
September 21, 2023—Explore and Connect event

HPA, in partnership with current health professional students from clinical laboratory science, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy, and social work programs at UNC, hosted a tour of their schools. These tours offered an opportunity to explore classrooms, labs, and study areas, fostering meaningful Q&A sessions with current professional students.

Johns Hopkins University Public Health Information Session
September 22, 2023—Connect event

A representative from Johns Hopkins University came to UNC to present on the John Hopkins Public Health Programs. They highlighted the various concentrations, the school’s statistics, admission requirements and held an open Q&A for the students.

Tabling on the Quad with Molly
October 10, 2024—Connect event

In honor of World Mental Health Day, we tabled on the Quad with Happee’s (Hugs & Pups) own Molly, the loving 8-year-old golden retriever. Students stopped by expressing their interest in a health professional career giving us a chance to provide puppy hugs to relieve stress, share information regarding our services, and connect to our Carolina pre-health community.
MD/DO Admissions Panel
November 8, 2023—Application event

HPA hosted a webinar with a panel of Directors of Admissions from UNC, ECU and Campbell University’s MD/DO programs. Students had the opportunity to have an open Q & A at the end.

Barry University School of Podiatric Medicine Information Session
February 7, 2024—Explore and Connect event

HPA hosted a representative from Barry University School of Podiatric Medicine to present on their program. They highlighted the importance of Podiatric Medicine and misconceptions about the specialty including the scope of practice for a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (DPM). Students could ask questions and receive a mini suture demonstration.

MCAT-DAT Panel
February 20, 2024—Application event

In collaboration with UNC Housing, we hosted a Q & A panel on prepping for the MCAT-DAT. Students heard from a panel of students including Peer Guides and recently admitted students who recently took both standardized.

Western Michigan University MD Program Information Session
February 23, 2024—Connect event

HPA hosted representatives from WMU as they presented their new MD program as well as their MD Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences program, which feeds into the MD program.

Pre-Health: Special Master’s vs. Post-Bacc Programs
March 21, 2024—Connect and Application event

Schools across NC including NC State, Campbell, Wake Forest, and UNCG joined us for an open discussion panel. Schools highlighted aspects of their post-bacc and special master’s programs.
Courses

When the Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice (OIPEP) was established in 2018, Dr. Abigail Panter approached us with the possibility of establishing an interprofessional course focused for pre-health learners. Following a meeting with interested partners, the Department of Biology faculty agreed to support the creation of two new courses that would be open to any student interested in exploring health professions. Dr. Jean DeSaix, professor emeritus in the Department of Biology, partnered with Dr. Meg Zomorodi and Master of Nursing Education Student, Anna Mall, to design two courses with the ultimate goals of helping students to understand the personal attributes, skills, and competencies needed for various health care professions, and through exposure and engagement in reflective coursework, evaluate their personal goals and needs in developing a career in health professions. The result was the development of two pass/fail, one credit hour courses—BIOL 117 “Considering Health Professions,” and BIOL 118 “Pursuing Health Professions.” Drs. Alaina Garland and Lillian Zwemer, both Teaching Assistant Professors in Biology, joined the team to help deliver the course content. Each week, students are exposed to interprofessional teams of guest speakers who describe their path to a career in a select health profession while also demonstrating how they work on a team. Both courses are now part of the THRIVE curriculum at UNC-Chapel Hill.

BIOL 117: Considering Health Professions
Offered every Fall; 200–400 students each semester

- This course provides exposure to a variety of health professions, emphasizing ways health care teams work together interprofessionally. Self-assessments are utilized to examine the strengths, interests, skills, and competencies required in healthcare careers.
- Each class, guest speakers from a variety of health fields work on an interprofessional case study together to demonstrate collaboration while also sharing their unique journey towards a career in the health professions.
- This year, students in BIOL 117 got the opportunity to participate in a Stop the Bleed demonstration, where they learned how to use everyday materials or a tourniquet to stop a bleed from an injury.

535 students enrolled

2 courses open to students interested in exploring health professions.

347 BIOL 117 | Considering Health Professions
188 BIOL 118 | Pursuing Health Professions

65% 35%
BIOL 118: Pursuing Health Professions
Offered every Spring; 150–300 students each semester
• This course provides guidance to plan a path toward a profession of interest by selecting appropriate courses, service, and research opportunities to include in a portfolio useful in completing applications.
• Guest speakers from admissions, service learning and research support entities, and student services present topics related to resume building, application preparation, developing skills such as interviewing, team building, and admissions procedures share tips to support students in the application process.
• This year, students in BIOL 118 had the opportunity to participate in a suture clinic, where they gained experience using synthetic materials to practice suturing skills.

BIOL 119: Experiencing Health Professions
Through a partnership with UNC Health, HPA has created a new course “Experiencing Health Professions.” This course will be open to a select number of students who have completed Bio 117 and will allow them to participate in patient-facing experiences due to an intentional partnership with UNC Health. Students will complete 120 hours of service within UNC Health while also participating in class sessions focused on helping them translate their service learning to practice. Class topics will focus on developing skills in reflection, communication, and teamwork for career development. This course was identified as being of great need through academic advisors, health professions advisors, professional school liaisons, and students due to the desire for patient-facing clinical experiences that can assist with career development and health professions applications, while also supporting UNC Health workforce needs and helping students learn the interprofessional skills needed to work on a healthcare team. This 3-credit course is classified as a High Impact Service and a Communication Beyond Carolina credit for undergraduate students.

Coming Fall 2024

Student Testimonials
BIOL 117
“I best thing that I have learned in this course is that it really broadened my view on the medical field, and there are a few more other jobs that I would consider because I know more about them. New information that I gained this semester is that there are not many differences between NPs and PAs or MDs and DOs. A healthcare path that I would consider now is being a Podiatrist.”

“I LOVED THIS COURSE. It actually helped me decide what health profession I wanted to be in and motivated me to reach for my goal (Pharmacy school) a year earlier than I was originally planning on. I loved hearing from all the speakers and it really helped confirm within me that I want to be in healthcare, and that I want to interact with patients, and work towards providing the public with optimal health care.”

BIOL 118
“This is the best possible course for any pre-health student. One truly learns about every healthcare profession and most importantly how they all work together. This course has opened many doors for me, it gave me an insight into other possible career paths. It has guided me through the application process and even through how to ask for a letter of recommendation. The best part has been listening to healthcare professionals talk about their careers, ups and downs, and goals. BIOL 118 has helped me solidify my future career goal.”
HPA: PEER GUIDES
BINGO

I am on the pre-PA track. I want to be an advocate.
I have a dream job: a policy advocate. I want to be
a policy maker. One of my
I have danced all over the world. I have
told stories to help others.
I have a dream of being a

Kingsley Card 12 214
Student Leadership

Peer Guides

UNC’s Health Professions Advising Office Peer Guide program focuses on utilizing our undergraduate students to help current UNC pre-health students discover and navigate their journeys to the health professions. Peer Guides, with the support from the Health Professions Advisors, are the first point of contact for pre-health students, mostly first year students, to answer questions and point them in the right direction for accurate and consistent information. Peer Guides host weekly office hours at various locations on campus and online and have met with over 150 pre-health students in their first year.

Prior to weekly office hours, students participate in a month-long summer training. This training is meant to build community and equip students with the best advising practices and resources. A Canvas site is maintained with updated resources that Peer Guides can access throughout their time volunteering. One of the pivotal highlights of training is teaching students proper use of Health Profession Roadmaps. In addition to summer training, Peer Guides continue building community throughout the year through collaborating with HPA on programs and monthly community building gatherings such as, Semester Kick-Off, Stop the Bleed Clinic, Pre-Finals Yoga, and more.

2023–2024 Health Professions Advising Peer Guides and their desired career path

- Iman Abdi, Pre-Health
- Cecilia Barcena Oviedo, Pre-Dental
- Anthony Bello, Pre-Dental
- Harper Boatwright, Pre-Med
- Arciéne Bonner, Pre-Med
- Madison Broome, Pre-Audiology
- Natalie Deeb, Pre-Med
- Enes Eroglu, Pre-Med
- Meghna Iyer, Pre-Med
- Ashleigh Kieger, Pre-PA
- Claire Peters, Pre-Med
- Robert “Bobby” Peters, Pre-Med
- Emily Poeng, Pre-Med
- Ashton Rierson, Pre-Med
- Manasa Raghavan, Pre-Med
- Morcos Saeed, Pre-Med
- Casen Whitehead, Pre-Med

Programs Peer Guides Have Assisted with:

- Health Professions Advising Open House
- MCAT vs. DAT Panel (Collaboration with UNC Housing)
- Carolina Community Academy Health Professions Visit (Collaboration with the Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice)
- Health Professions Health Fair (Hosted by UNC’s Center for Career Services)
- Equity Fellows Panel (Collaboration with Carolina College Advising Corp)
Graduating Peer Guides

Anthony Bello
Chemistry Major—Attending UNC Adams School of Dentistry in Fall 2024 to pursue a Doctorate of Dental Surgery (DDS)

Why do you think the peer guide program is important to UNC’s pre-health community?

The Peer Guide Program is super important for fostering a community of collaboration, especially in a school with a large student body like UNC, where it’s easy to get lost in the sea of all the pre-health students.

What are your hopes for the program’s growth?

I am hoping that the program can grow to involve professional students (medical, dental, pharmacy) as well as other health graduate students (PA, Social Work, etc). Other programs that I aspire for HPA to grow into are things like the Covenant mentorship program, which pairs Covenant undergraduates with graduate students/professor mentors in various fields.

Arciéne Bonner
Global Studies and Medical Anthropology majors and Health & Society minor—Graduating in August after studying abroad as part of the FLAS Fellowship this summer then attending graduate school for a Master’s in Public Health (MPH) focusing on Maternal and Child Health

Why do you think the peer guide program is important to UNC’s pre-health community?

The peer guide program is designed to meet students where they are on their own journeys, personalizing our Road Map resources to provide a step-by-step process for achieving their goal. Additionally, the program provides support for students who are still exploring pre-health career options, engaging in open discussions to help them discover new options based on their personal interests.

What are your hopes for the program’s growth?

I hope that the program is possibly able to develop to a point where incoming freshman students can be partnered with a peer guide, sort of like a big brother big sister program. Overall, I hope the program can expand to having peer guides from more pre-health paths so that more students can get help from a first-hand experience perspective. And so that the identity of pre-health can expand beyond the traditional health professions.

Madison Broome
Linguistics and Psychology majors and Speech & Hearing Sciences minor—Attending UNC Chapel Hill’s School of Medicine in Fall 2024 to pursue a Doctorate of Audiology (AuD)

Why do you think the peer guide program is important to UNC’s pre-health community?

Participating in the peer guide program has provided me insight into the interdisciplinary nature of pre-health careers, both reinforcing my own career choice while also demonstrating its usefulness across other health professions.
Near Peer Mentors

Building off the success of the Peer Guides, HPA will launch a new Near Peer Mentors program in Fall 2024. Leveraging the network of the Office of IPEP’s Distinguished Scholars program, current health professions students at UNC-CH will be trained to serve as near peer mentors for students exploring a career in a health profession. This opportunity will count as an IPEP Distinguished Scholars Immersion Experience for current health professions students, allowing these students to build mentorship skills and share the story of their own professional journey. Pre-health students will be matched according to discipline and interest and will meet monthly to learn from, with, and about each other. We are grateful to the Medical Mentors program for aligning efforts in this work and to our current health professions students who are sharing their time to engage with the next generation of health professionals.
Communications And Outreach

Through our various communication channels, the Office of Health Professions Advising facilitates engagement and provides valuable resources for students pursuing careers in healthcare. Our updated website stands as a comprehensive resource hub, offering a wealth of information, tools, and guidance tailored to students navigating health professions education and career pathways. Our Instagram platform serves as an interactive space where we share insights, resources, and updates relevant to health professions advising.

Building on the foundational work of the original HPA website, which has been a guiding resource for pre-health students both before the formation of our office and continuing to this day, we’ve worked on expanding the site to match our current vision. This has included visual updates for enhanced user experience and streamlined navigation on the Homepage and the Explore main page. Our updates extend to crucial areas such as updating the medical school prerequisite list and the addition of a dedicated Social Work career page under the Explore tab. We take pride in serving students, alumni, and partners as they Connect, Explore, and Apply through our site.

HPA Website

HPA Instagram

This past February, we celebrated our one-year anniversary and shared the milestone with our Instagram followers. It was a chance to acknowledge our accomplishments and to thank our followers and partners for their support throughout our inaugural year. Our advisors also reflected on their favorite moments thus far, which include working closely with students to witness their successes, sharing diverse opportunities within the pre-health community, and fostering a welcoming and safe space for them every day.
In the spring of 2023, we embarked on a significant overhaul of the HPA newsletter to better meet the needs of our students and partners. The revamped newsletter not only features a more visually appealing design but is also easier to read, ensuring that vital information is readily accessible to all recipients. Our shared HPA mailbox (healthprofessions@unc.edu) serves as a centralized hub for partners to submit opportunities for inclusion in the newsletter. We carefully organize and prioritize these items, categorizing them into sections such as Summer Programs, Job Opportunities, and Information Events and Fairs, confirming that each newsletter is tailored to meet our students’ preferences, but also ensuring we are sharing the latest events from our partners. Since the redesign, each newsletter has achieved over 50% engagement, with each issue garnering 2,000+ views.

4,494 subscribers
18 newsletters sent (Feb 2023–Mar 2024)
371 opportunities sent out
2,000+ views each issue

Click this link to join our HPA listserv!
HPA Communications Interns

Our accomplishments this year would not have been possible without the dedicated work of our Communication Student Interns, Mary Liz Elliott (Senior, Human and Organizational Leadership Development [HOLD], Spring 2023) and Arciéne Bonner (Junior, Global Studies and Medical Anthropology, Fall 2023–Spring 2024).

Since the inception of HPA, they have played a pivotal role in facilitating major milestones such as transitioning us to Mailchimp for our newsletter platform, to significantly expanding our social media outreach. Their dedication and hard work are not only deeply appreciated but also integral to our continued success.

Advisor Spotlight

Amanda Gabbard

“I don’t know how I would have been able to tackle HPA Communications if it wasn’t for Mary Liz and Arciéne’s leadership and commitment to helping us expand and grow. Every week was different, we brainstormed, tried it, and then adjusted as we went. I appreciate how flexible they were and their willingness to run with my wild ideas. Mary Liz did her HOLD internship with us and had no idea what she was getting into, but at the end of her semester we had a redesigned newsletter, a dedicated office Instagram, and a better idea of how our students wanted to communicate with us. It was amazing to see the growth in just one semester. Arciéne started out as a Peer Guide in our office, offered to help with our social media outreach, and it turned into a full year internship. I love getting her ideas and feedback; her design work on Instagram has inspired us. I’m thankful to both Mary Liz and Arciéne for helping me shape this internship and giving me a vision for our future interns!”
At HPA, we pride ourselves in our collaboration and partnerships across campus and the Triangle. We hope that through partnership and community engagement, we can build sustainable programming that connects our pre-health student to all the resources UNC and beyond has to offer.

**Advisory Board and Cabinet**

Since the inception of a health professions advising office in Fall 2022, our first action item was to connect with representatives from across UNC, especially in the health professions programs, to get their feedback and see what they thought was needed for our pre-health students. Our goal in creating the Cabinet and Advisory Board was to make sure we were not duplicating efforts, and to learn from the amazing professionals who were already doing the work of connecting with pre-health students in the absence of a centralized HPA office.
2023–2024 HPA Cabinet

The HPA Cabinet is a group internal to UNC of experts from the health professional schools, academic advising, and student representatives that meet monthly to help further build this work, aligning efforts, and creating a sustainable plan for implementation.

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<tr>
<th>School/Organization</th>
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<td>UNC Student</td>
<td>Dakota Batchek</td>
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<td>UNC Student</td>
<td>Manasa Raghavan</td>
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<td>UNC Student</td>
<td>Cecilia Oviedo-Barcenas</td>
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<td>UNC Adams School of Dentistry</td>
<td>Lamont Lowery</td>
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<td>UNC Advising</td>
<td>Andrea Caldwell</td>
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<td>UNC Department of Health Sciences</td>
<td>Linn Wakeford</td>
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<td>UNC School of Social Work</td>
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“I am thrilled to support the HPA Office at UNC as the pathways to health professions can be challenging to navigate without proper guidance. Our Health Professions Advisors are wonderful collaborative resources who help students connect the dots in pursuing their careers. I especially appreciate how the HPA Office helps spread awareness about programs and careers in public health as it’s a critical field that relates to many students’ interests, yet few learn about it early in their educational journeys. I look forward to continuing to partner with the HPA Office on expanding access, improving advising initiatives, and creating innovative approaches to student success in the health professions.”

“As someone representing the School of Social Work on the HPA Cabinet this year, I’m excited to work with my colleagues across campus to introduce UNC-CH students to the social work profession. Social work plays an integral role in supporting health and well-being in many settings, often considering the complex needs of patients, healthcare providers, and healthcare systems. Social workers are trained to understand and address the diverse dynamics within individuals, groups, and communities so that we may truly meet people where they are to best serve them. I love the energy and creativity that the HPA Office has brought to student advising, and I am excited that social work can bring our perspective and skills to support the HPA Cabinet as we continue to evolve!”

“What excites me the most about the HPA Office is its pivotal role in guiding UNC-CH students along the diverse pathways to a career in healthcare. As a cabinet member, it is my pleasure to collaborate and brainstorm about ways to further advise and expose prospective dental and health professions students; working together to foster intentional partnerships and connections by sharing openly about events and opportunities that might be appealing to pre-health students. While developing programs for the next generation of healthcare professionals, our goal is to create pathways that illuminate possibilities for individuals at all stages, whether they’re in college, high school, or middle school. By collaborating with healthcare professionals, industry leaders, and academic institutions, we can enrich the student experience, providing them with unparalleled opportunities for growth and success in any profession. Together, we will continue to empower students to own and navigate their professional journey with confidence and purpose.”
“In an environment with information coming often randomly from every direction, HPA is an oasis in the desert during a sandstorm. The HPA team is unmatched in providing guidance, resources, and information in an enthusiastic, informed, and stepwise manner to aid each student on their individual journey. Students are great at accessing information about nursing and MD professions. They know all about the specialties, programs and program ratings, and the ins and outs of the application process. What they don’t know is the myriad of other health care professions that are key to patient care that may better align with their talents and skills. It is my pleasure to network with HPA. Together, we share information and student contacts, provide opportunities for HPA staff and students to tour our student labs and hospital labs, meet faculty, and sit in actual lectures with our students. We overwhelmingly hear from students in the allied health professions that they wish they had known about CLS, OT, PT, Rad Sci, PA and others before they graduated with a biology or chemistry degree. The HPA team is often a student lifeline to an undiscovered professional journey that engages in patient care in different ways.”

“What excites me about the HPA Office is its dedication to innovation and its support for students pursuing careers in the health sciences. Being part of the new HPA Cabinet offers an exciting chance to directly contribute to these endeavors. Together, we can establish connections and collaborate with campus experts who are committed to serving both prospective and current students, develop targeted strategies for recruitment and retention, and advocate for policies that support students in their academic endeavors. During my time as a cabinet member, I consistently admired the group’s collaborative approach in identifying opportunities, allocating resources, and breaking down barriers for students. This work not only benefits students directly but is also crucial in addressing the growing demand for healthcare professionals. As a Cabinet member, I eagerly anticipate the opportunity to shape and support these efforts. I am grateful for the chance to represent Nursing in this capacity and am committed to serving with dedication.”

“UNC Advising and Health Professions Advising aims to provide a collaborative partnership to support undergraduates pursuing health profession interests and careers. This effort aligns with the ThriveHubs vision of providing holistic student support and championing individual student stories so they can achieve their academic, personal, and post-UNC goals. With Carolina undergraduate front of mind, our teams met throughout the year to discuss foundational cross training needs in key STEM areas and shared insights regarding intentional student engagement and outreach to ensure they receive appropriate guidance and resources—from acceptance to Carolina through graduation. In sum, the Health Professions Advising team has assembled a wonderful campus-wide network and our team of advising professionals are eager to deepen this critical partnership—which will be a seamless benefit for undergraduates.”
# 2023-2024 HPA Advisory Board

The advisory board is a mix of internal and external partners that meet every semester who help guide the work of the HPA Office and offer suggestions for programs and special projects.

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<td>Campbell College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences</td>
<td>Kendra Sumler</td>
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<td>Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine</td>
<td>Joseph Griffin</td>
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<td>Carolina College Advising Corps</td>
<td>Ni-Eric Perkins</td>
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<td>Carolina Higher Education Opportunity Programs</td>
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<td>Michelle Brown</td>
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<td>Jami Howell</td>
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<td>UNC Office of the Provost</td>
<td>Mindy Storrie</td>
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<td>UNC School of Medicine</td>
<td>Randee Reid</td>
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<td>Meredith Bazemore</td>
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<td>Bev Foster</td>
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<td>UNC/NC State Joint Department of Biomedical Engineering</td>
<td>Devin Hubbard</td>
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<td>UNC Department of Health Sciences</td>
<td>Tamara Mesko</td>
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<td>UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy</td>
<td>Wendy Cox</td>
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Partner Features

Academic Advising

As the HPA Office was being formed, Meg Zomorodi worked closely with Associate Dean and Director of UNC Advising, Chloë Russell, to help us determine how Academic Advising and the health professions advisors would best collaborate with the current efforts and vision of advising at UNC. The goal was to work together; as Meg was building HPA, Chloë was refining the THRIVE Hub System. The result was an intentional partnership that would support both units. Since then, we have worked tirelessly with Andrea Caldwell, Senior Assistant Dean of UNC Advising to define the roles of academic and health professions advisors, and how each group will work independently and together to meet the needs of UNC students. Our goals for the future include creating a streamlined communication system between academic and health professions advisors, specialized cross-trainings between both groups of advisors, and shared resources to support UNC’s pre-health students. Additionally, this past summer and in Summer 2024, the health professions advisors worked with academic advisors to welcome incoming undergraduate pre-health students to UNC during the More than Just a Major presentation at New Student Orientation!

Athletics

Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes

Our partnership with the UNC Athletics Department is a collaboration aimed at supporting student-athletes pursuing health professions. Working closely with Michelle Brown, Ed.D., the Assistant Provost & Director of the Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes, and Cricket Lane, PhD, the Senior Associate Athletic Director in Student-Athlete Development (SA Development), we have joined forces with Path Med, a team of UNC Med students who are former college athletes, and SAPHA, the Student Athlete Pre-Health Association comprised of current student athletes. Together, we have developed impactful programs such as the Student Athlete Health Professions Panel and the How to Study Workshop. Kayela and Amanda attend monthly meetings with Path Med, SAPHA, and SA Development to provide ongoing support and resources, aiding in event planning, and in the future, offering in-person advising in the John W. Pope Student-Athlete Academic Support Center located in the Loudermilk Center for Excellence to cater to the unique needs and schedules of student-athletes aspiring towards health professions.
Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice

The Health Professions Advising Office works in tandem with the Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice. We share office space, our networks, and our staff! The connection between these offices allows for communication between our current health professions students and our pre-health students at UNC. The ability to reach and connect both student populations will lead to invaluable mentorship opportunities for students, resource sharing, and interprofessional events that can benefit all, including our recent event with the Carolina Community Academy (CCA). We had kindergarten and first grade students from CCA travel to UNC to receive programming on the various career opportunities in healthcare. Our IPEP Distinguished Scholars presented their professions, which our HPA Peer Guides helped us deliver programming. Additionally, we hope to build a robust Near Peer Mentors program, utilizing the knowledge of our current health professional students in the IPEP Distinguished Scholars Program to help our pre-health students at UNC. We’re excited to see the ways our offices will collaborate in the future!
We hope you have enjoyed reading this annual report. We are immensely proud of this team and the work they are doing and will continue to do. As we continue to build the infrastructure we look forward to more opportunities for collaboration. In May 2024, we will welcome our new Director of Health Professions Advising and Partnership Engagement. This role will allow us to continue to build and sustain our many partnerships—including that through our alumni network. We aim to build more resources for students who have graduated from UNC-CH and for those who are taking a growth year between programs. We look forward to building more experiential opportunities for our pre-health students to gain exposure to health care—especially in our rural and underserved communities. And we are excited about building up our near-peer mentorship program, where current health students can mentor and support our pre-health students. A huge thanks to the medical mentors program that is aligning efforts with us to build this work. We also recognize that outcomes of this work are important—which is why evaluation and outcome metrics will be a priority to build for next year. We have a strong foundation and it’s going to be exciting to see how we grow.
Empowering Tomorrow’s Healthcare Leaders, One Student at a Time

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