



Charlotte Bennett celebrating at the Oakton Commencement Ceremony

Everyday TRiO students do great things on and off campus. They make progress toward their educational goals by taking advantage of campus trips and successfully transferring to a four year college or university. TRiO students also work in the community, on campus and along side their peers in the classroom.

The TRiO Student Spotlight serves to highlight these experiences and contributions.

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TRiO Student Spotlight

Student Support Services TRiO Program at Oakton Community College

MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY PHARMACY STUDENT SHARES HER STORY

By Renu Abraham (TRiO Alum, 2004)

I had a very pleasant experience at Oakton. Before I applied to pharmacy school, I spoke with the career advisor at Oakton. I took some assessments to see what I would enjoy doing based on my personality, interest and skills. I realized my passion was in health care. As I researched pharmacy as a career, I saw it was indeed a very rewarding and booming industry with lots of job opportunities. A woman especially will love this field because of the flexible schedules with the option of working part-time if she desires to have a family.

Oakton offered all the pharmacy pre-courses that were required at Midwestern. I was able to take classes at Oakton in the evening after working in the morning. I was able to finish all the pre-requisites within two years and apply to Midwestern with no difficulty. I like Oakton's motto which goes "Start here, go anywhere," of which I am a perfect example. It was a smooth transition for me from Oakton to Midwestern also because there were a few students from Oakton who were in the same class as me at Midwestern, and we are very good friends now. I often came back to Oakton to study at the library as well.

Being an immigrant to the U.S.A., I was totally ignorant about what an American university experience would be like. I had an impression that since the university was health sciences related, I would meet a lot of students from different healthcare programs such as physical therapy and medicine, and make a lot of friends when I graduate. Although we had a couple of classes with the

medical students, they were not interactive classes. In fact, the friends I still keep in touch with are the ones I met at Oakton who were in the same class as me at Midwestern.

Midwestern is small, but they have ongoing construction and expansion projects. There are housing and apartments close to and on campus. The school is located in a residential area in Downers Grove, and the campus is safe. A few minutes away from campus, there are various restaurants and places to hang out with friends. I previously thought the commute to Downers Grove would be a miserable experience, but I was mistaken. The drive is only half an hour from the northwest suburbs, and I-294 is the best amongst highways.

Students at Midwestern can range from very competitive to very easy going. The best thing about Midwestern is the friendly faculty and staff. You can always be sure that the staff will help you as much as they can to answer any questions that you may have. Professors have office hours, so students can meet with them if they have any concerns or questions. Classes usually take place in lecture halls with two hundred students in a class. There will be lots of opportunities outside class time to interact or meet with people if you join fraternities and other clubs of your choice.

Classes usually begin around 8 a.m., and lectures last from 1 to 2 hours. The day to day schedule varies because some days there may be labs, and other days there may be lectures or workshops. Lunch breaks are usually an hour long or more. Sometimes, there is so much time between classes that students choose to study, socialize, play a sport, or go to the gym. A typical day ends at 4 p.m.; it is similar to a work schedule from 8am-4pm. During the first and second year of pharmacy school,

MIDWESTERN TRANSFER STUDENT CONTINUED

3-4 quizzes or exams per week are typical. Midwestern runs on a quarterly system, so after each quarter there is a one week break before the next quarter begins. Finals take place at the end of each quarter with one exam each day of the week.

The total time needed to study varies with each student. Some students learn from paying attention in class and need very little time learning at home. Other students like to write and make flash cards to help them learn, which takes more time. Some students learn faster when they study with a group and some learn better on their own. I know so many students that learn the night before the exam and they do totally fine on their exam. Everyone is different in the way they learn. It is better not to compare yourself with another individual when it comes to learning speed. My advice is trying to find out how you learn best and stick with it. I used to casually read my notes like a novel and fool myself into thinking I'll remember it for the exam. This was a big mistake during my first quarter in pharmacy school. I learned certain studying techniques from my friends like trying to explain to a buddy what I learned; this is one of the ways to know if you really learned the material. Another tip is to remember what you learned without looking at your notes and then review it, if you can't recollect before actually taking the exam.



If you are interested in applying to pharmacy school, it is very important to check with the pharmacy school of your choice about their specific requirements. In my class, around 40% of the students had bachelor's degrees. This proportion changes every year. Right now, because of the demand for pharmacists, a lot of people are changing careers and that is why we are seeing a lot of students with bachelor's as well as master's degrees in pharmacy school. Therefore, a lot of students like me transferred out just taking 60 credit hours of pre-requisites. The key to getting in is performing well in your classes and the PCAT, having a good application letter about 'Why you chose pharmacy?' and sending in your application on time. A lot of students wait till the last minute to send in applications, which is to their disadvantage.

Pharmacy schools look for students with a very strong science background, good English verbal and written skills, and a fair math grade. Hence, they are surely going to compare your grades with other applicants. If you don't think you have the greatest grade point average you must make your other areas strong such as have a very good application letter and a good PCAT score. I don't think a student needs to worry too much about getting a "C." In fact, most pharmacy schools say that students have to get a "C" or better in all their pre-courses.

As for financing my education, I solely depend on student loans, and the college has a financial office that helps with getting loans. I will start repaying these loans when I start working. Several opportunities will become available during pharmacy school to apply for scholarships. Also, some retail pharmacies like CVS or Walgreens offers scholarships if you agree to work for them after graduation. Some students from the University of Illinois have their entire education covered by the UIC medical hospital after they sign an agreement to work for them a certain number of hours. Keep your ears and eyes open to learn about opportunities that are out there. I heard about most of these opportunities too late.

Pre-pharmacy students should be prepared for the challenges of pharmacy school and be ready to adapt to constant change. When you apply to pharmacy school do consider out of state options if you are willing to relocate. Don't give up when the going gets tough. Don't let anyone question your own abilities. Stay focused, and finish what you have started. If you have an open mind and you are willing to do your best, you will definitely reach your goal and not regret that you made a great choice towards a rewarding career. All the best to you in all your endeavors!

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE ON TAKING INTERIM COURSES

By Prema Molhotra (Current Oakton TRiO Student)

During the summer, I took a three week interim class. The class that I took was human development. I found that the class was very interesting for me even though it was a bit difficult for me of the late night studying. I found that it was a very good way to get the credits done and the class out of the way in a short amount of time but you really had to be committed to studying and had to keep up with the readings. We did many fun projects in our class which made the learning experience a very positive one. I am doing pretty well in the class and find that it's a struggle for all of the students to be able to keep up with the readings. My professor used a lot of group discussions, which made things a bit helpful for me to understand the material, and I found the class to be a very interesting one. Even though it was very exhausting, three weeks of pure studying almost about 3 to 5 hours daily, it was still worth it in the end. It's something that I may decide to do in the future with another class. It's really a fast pace course so I recommend it for students who can keep up with fast pace type work. All in all, I found it to be a very rewarding and it's wonderful to see your hard work pay off in the end.



Prema Molhotra (left) and fellow TRiO student Colleen Morse at the 2007 Student Leadership Banquet



Tina Rodvong (right) with fellow TRiO alum and previous TRiO Student Spotlight contributor, Cheryl-Lynn May

Don't forget about the...

Annual TRiO Summer Retreat

Tuesday, August 7—
Wednesday, August 8, 2007

Benet Lake, Wisconsin

Departing 8am on August 7
Returning 3pm on August 8

One night overnight stay at a retreat center in Benet Lake, Wisconsin. The retreat is FREE and includes four meals and overnight lodging. There will be a combination of planned workshops and free time.

****Deadline to sign up for the trip is**

Tuesday, July 17**

There is a \$20 cancellation fee if you sign up and do not attend.

UIC TRANSFER STUDENT STORY

By Tina Rodvong (TRiO Alum, 2006)

I transferred to UIC in the fall of 2006 with an AA from Oakton Community College and as an alum of the TRiO program. I transferred into the College of Business Administration (CBA) to pursue a marketing degree with a concentration in international business. My transition was an easy transition. I attended the orientation for new students and registered for my classes with the help of advisors. I also joined the Honors College. The class sizes were large for my core business classes, but my honor class was small and personal. I joined American Marketing Association to network and meet new people with the same interest. I found the CBA to be a very friendly and welcoming office that offers many accommodations for students. They have tutoring available for all the business classes, a computer lab for CBA students with free printing and a copier machine for students to use. They also host a dollar lunch menu every week where students can join and get to know other students, staff and faculty within the CBA. During finals, they also hosted free ice-cream, hot cocoa and apple juice to help students relax from the stress of finals. I find UIC a school with many opportunities that too many students don't take advantage of or explore. I get to go out and explore the Windy City after class from Chinatown, Greek town, Little Italy and the Loop area. I get to enjoy the beautiful city of Chicago.