

Pros and Cons of Being Pre-med in CoChem

Pros:

Smaller class sizes - you get to take the same classes with the same group of friends semester after semester. Most people find a pretty tight knit group of people and study groups are infinitely easier to form in comparison to being thrown into a giant class with a lot of strangers.

Less memorization, more understanding - one thing that I'm realizing more and more is that biology has a lot of blunt force memorization which can be less fulfilling. Chemistry tends to involve a lot more problem solving and analytical technique and analysis that can help you overall.

Great advising - I feel like this is understated, but the CoC advising staff is amazing! Since there are less students in the College of Chem than in L&S and other colleges, the advisers are more accessible and can be more personable.

MCAT Prep - College of chemistry classes prepare you super well for the physical sciences portion of the MCAT. Preparation for the other 3 portions of the MCAT (Bio, Psych/Soc, and Critical Reading), are similar across other majors.

Med School Classes Requirements - If you are planning on not taking a gap year, the Chemical Biology curriculum puts you more or less on track for finishing your Pre-Med Pre-Reqs by halfway through your junior year. For MCB, most people don't finish all those requirements until the end of junior year/senior year. It helps to have your pre-reqs done earlier so that you can take the MCAT earlier. Medical schools have rolling admissions, so the earlier the better.

Opportunities - Some companies/labs will specifically target College of Chem students for internships and positions. (Pretty darn prestigious with 16 elements, a bunch of Nobel Laureate alumni, one of the best Chem programs in the world, etc.)

Cons:

It's incredibly difficult - I'm not going to lie and say that daisies and ponies come out of nowhere as you progress through college. It's really really hard and challenging. College of Chem (and College of Engineering) are known to be the hardest colleges because they really push their students in terms of coursework.

Time - CoC classes and requirements are more time consuming and can take away from time that would have been put into extracurricular activities/friendship/etc. I found myself working significantly harder and for longer hours than my peers in other majors.

GPA - This is a big one and one of the main things that made me think about switching to another major as well. I have quite a few friends who were premed CoC and either switched out of premed or switched out of CoC. As a current junior, there are very few people in my class that plan on applying to medical school because of the fact CoC can be somewhat of a GPA downer. The way I look at it, I'd rather be in classes that interest me, learn a lot, challenge myself and learn how to think critically and suffer from a lower GPA, than be in classes where I just memorize things that I am not super interested in and end up with a higher GPA. I can always hope that medical schools will look at the College of Chem and give some sort of leeway because it can sometimes be more challenging than L&S, but it's unlikely that it's a factor they consider. (They will give some leeway for Berkeley as a whole for sure, but I'm not sure how many medical schools will look into the difference between Chem-Bio and Bio-Chem).