

## **Do Post-Bac Programs Make a Difference for Dental Students' Professional Education? (8)**

*Pipeline: Describing efforts to increase matriculation in health professions education*

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### **Background:**

Increasing numbers of dental students participate in post baccalaureate (post bac) programs before entering dental or medical school. The objectives were to assess the educational experiences of students who participated in a post bac program and to compare their attitudes towards post bac programs with attitudes of students who had not participated in such a program.

### **Actions, Methods or Intervention:**

Data were collected from 469 dental students at the University of Michigan.

### **Results:**

Overall, 31.1% had taken time off after graduating from college and before entering dental school. 31.2% had taken additional courses during this time; 48.1% had worked in a dental office and 67.6% had volunteered in dental settings. Forty students (9.7%) had participated in a post bac program. 5.8% reported that their programs had consisted of classroom-based education, 2.8% that they had participated in clinical activities and 2.3% that they had engaged in research activities. A large number reported that having participated in their post-bac program had helped them in the dental school application process (38.8%), in the admission process (36.9%) and with doing well in their dental school classes (41.6%). When students with vs. without post bac experiences responded to questions concerning the benefits of these programs in general, post bac alumni agreed more strongly than non-alumni that the programs prepare students for the admission process (5-point scale with 5= strongly agree: 3.85 vs. 3.37;  $p=0.012$ ), for the dental school class work (4.20 vs. 3.76;  $p=0.012$ ), that they recommend the programs to others (3.75 vs. 2.95;  $p<0.001$ ) and that the programs give students an edge in dental school (4.00 vs. 3.35;  $p=0.002$ ).

### **Lessons Learned:**

Dental students with post bac experiences perceive the value of these programs for preparing students for the dental school application and admission process and the dental school work more positively than students without such experiences.

### **Future Application and Next Steps:**

Informing applicants from underrepresented backgrounds about post-bac programs could support their efforts to gain admission to health profession schools.

### **Additional Authors:**

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