

# THE LIBERATOR

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## PUTTING THE "A" IN STEAM: PRE-MED AS A LIBERAL ARTS MAJOR

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Written by **Kristi Kamesch**

It is unexpected to find liberal arts students who take predominately STEM courses, but it turns out that a select few do exist as pre-med CoLA students. A study published in *Academic Medicine* "[A Liberal Arts Education as Preparation for Medical School: How Is it Valued? How Do Graduates Perform?](#)" indicated that liberal arts educated students are perceived as "broadly educated, well rounded, and having more experience in integrated courses were mentioned." The study also suggested that liberal arts students have the advantages of social skills and the ability to "think on their feet."

Janet Yim, a third year International Relations and Global Studies and pre-med student, knew she wanted to go to medical school before she entered UT. When asked why she decided to pursue a liberal arts education, Yim said, "I was surrounded by [high school] students who valued critical thinking and connecting ideas, which are part of a liberal arts education." Yim also credits her liberal arts classes with helping her gain the ability to perform well in her science classes, specifically on conceptual ideas and case studies.

Yim's professional goals include incorporating her major into her medical career by becoming a medical missionary. She is also pursuing the Pre-Health Certificate from the College of Natural Sciences.

Fourth year pre-med and English honors student, Deborah Lin, also has a passion for integrating her liberal arts and pre-med studies, saying, "[People] think that they are fundamentally different, but they are more similar than we think." Lin emphasizes how literary themes, such as empathy, can directly coincide with practicing medicine and relating to patients.

Sarah Vaillancourt, a fourth year Psychology B.S. major with a Chemistry minor excelled in her English and History classes in high school, but her passions for equal access to healthcare motivated her to pursue a career as a healthcare provider. "I have always wanted to help people, and I became very aware of the political climate of Texas and the United States regarding healthcare concerns." Vaillancourt continues to pursue medical school because of her "affinity to working with people on a one-on-one basis" in addition to her love of science.

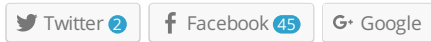
Because these students are simultaneously earning a CoLA degree and pursuing medical school, Yim, Lin, and Vaillancourt have paid special attention to the classes they take. Yim stated that she found some flexibility in her schedule due to claiming AP credits from high school, but Lin expressed a desire for an increase in interdisciplinary classes between CoLA and CNS. Conversely, some of the general coursework for premed students and Vaillancourt's psychology degree have overlapped. She gives credit to her psychology advisers who were instrumental in helping her to create a plan to graduate on time, despite her expanded required course load.

In their respective college careers, Yim, Lin and Vaillancourt have demonstrated the variety of ways that liberal arts and natural science educations can collaborate. The study published by *Academic Medicine* suggests a trend, which depicts that there is proportionally a higher admission rates to medical school of liberal arts students to applicants who majored in the traditional sciences. This may indicate that Yim, Lin,

and Vaillancourt are joined by medical school admissions committees in the opinion that critical thinking and perspectives of the liberal arts students are valuable to the medical field.

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