

SABER SEMINAR SERIES

SPRING 2023

Examining the US Premed Path as an Example of Discriminatory Design

Thursday
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9 am PT, 10 am MT,
11 am CT, 12 ET



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The college-level pathway to medical school (i.e., the “premed path”) includes all coursework, extra-curriculars, shadowing, volunteering, high-stakes examination (e.g., MCAT®), and application-related processes. Although medical school admission committees routinely insist their interest in diverse and “well-rounded” applicants, the premed path (PMP), through formal and informal mechanisms, is constructed to favor those from high in socioeconomic status (SES) privileged backgrounds, and those majoring in typical premed majors such as in the Biological Sciences. In these respects, the PMP is an example of Discriminatory Design—an entity constructed and sustained in a manner that (un)intentionally discriminates against certain groups of individuals. Using data gleaned from interviews with premedical students, content analyses of the curricular structure of particular majors and publicly available data on the various “costs” associated with the PMP, I’ll detail how the PMP is reflective of discriminatory design, spotlighting specific barriers and hurdles for certain groups of students. Given the persistent lack of representation of students from minoritized groups as well as those from diverse academic backgrounds within medical schools, the goal is to spotlight key features and processes within the PMP that actively favor the pursuit of certain majors and students from more privileged backgrounds. I’ll conclude by offering medical schools and undergraduate institutions specific recommendations for remediating these barriers and hurdles.

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