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What was your college major?

Psychology was my major and I also completed a double minor in both Biology and Speech/Debate.

Did this major lead you to your current career?

Not in the least; however, Psychology and Biology are very useful in this business. I attended Bethel College in Newton, Kansas. I was looking for a part-time job to help pay for school and I saw an ad on a bulletin board in my dorm for an ambulance driver. The rest is history. I stayed in the Emergency Medicine field completing my paramedic training at the University of Kansas.

What are the characteristics that your most successful students possess?

Our students must possess a high degree of cognition. We put the students through many scenario-based drills where recall is critical. They also are required to complete a proficiency series that tests their mastery on 36 various skills. The following are deemed crucial to this profession.

- psychomotor skills which can be either hands-on or airway
- affective domain performance with adrenaline load function
- work well under duress and while multi-tasking
- superior people skills that include the high need for an ability to display dignity and respect towards patients of any age.
- The ability to perform crisis intervention

Name three things a student should know when exploring this career.

- That this career field is NOT like anything you see on TV
- That you are expected to handle every patient and every situation with the utmost dignity and respect
- That there exists periods of time where tedium is punctuated with high adrenaline

What skills will a student learn when pursuing this career?

This program requires mastery of 36 specific skills. First and foremost is communicating respect for the individual being treated in a therapeutic manner. Other immediate 'on the scene' skills such as crisis intervention, being able to calm down the injured by offering reassurance that will help people feel better about their situation, are critical first steps. The students are in active rehearsal and training situations, constantly. We impress upon them to accept in this line of work....that *the unusual is usual*. In most emergency situations 90% of the people will stabilize with immediate interventions being administered. Only 10% of people are actually in danger of dying.

For a student needing part-time employment while in college, what types of jobs provide the best experiential learning opportunities?

- Part-time work as an EMT on an ambulance is the best opportunity.
- Working in an emergency room as an EMT.
- Any position that places them in an environment where patient care is primary and where they can learn how various medicines reacts in the human body.

If a college student is unable to find related work experience in this career field, how do you suggest he/she prepare for the workplace?

This really isn't an issue for us – that a student has prior related experience. The student will get plenty of experience in the program, as they will go on anywhere between 180 - 200 calls during the paramedic program. This is the most field internship hours of any program in the country. A student's performance does have to be absolutely perfect.

Is there a selection process for entering this program?

Yes. 26 students are admitted to the program; last year we had 61 applicants. If students do not get accepted into our program, other local programs are offered at Kansas City Kansas or Penn Valley Community Colleges.