WHAT’S NEXT after HIGH SCHOOL?

• Personal growth
  o Explore different academic opportunities that grab YOUR interest and hold a future.
  o Explore and find the balance between academics and extra – curricular opportunities.
  o Explore what it is like to move from a world of high school structure to the more unstructured (or self-structured) environment of academics, friends and choices.
  o Mature: demonstrate that you are capable of making decisions that you will not be apologizing for over the next 1- 5 years post-graduation. A slight academic misstep will not doom your chances for graduate school, but forgetting that you are in college primarily to be a student may take you several years to overcome.
  o Don’t spend all of your time in the books and library.
  o When you enter PA school that is ALL you will do for 28 months, so spend your time learning to balance your academics with other activities while in your undergraduate studies. This demonstrates good time management skills if done well.

• Deciding on a major (or at least try to have it narrowed down by the 2nd semester of your sophomore year)
  o We don’t require that everyone be a science major, but we do require that everyone demonstrate that they have a strong academic aptitude in the biological/chemical sciences. Settling for the minimum level to “get by” is not what we are looking for.
  o If your degree field does not have the majority of our graduate PA prerequisites built into it, you will need to design a plan to meet them, along with some additional upper level coursework.
  o If your degree field does have the majority of the prerequisites built into it, you may still need to seek some additional upper level science coursework to make your academics strong.
  o Challenge yourself with your coursework. PA school is extremely rigorous. You want to have a solid foundation of knowledge from your undergraduate studies and know that you are capable of handling the heavy semester load and excelling. The bulk of your academics that relate to PA preparation need to be taken in an institution that is similar in rigor to that of PA school.
  o At Harding, use the pre-PA advisor (Dr. Debbie Duke or Dr. Justin Bland) along with your majors’ advisor.

• Health Care Experience
  o How do you know you want to be a PA and not a ….? We find that the best way to discover this is to look at several different professions in your area of interest. After working, observing, volunteering and asking lots of questions you will then be able to intelligently make a career choice that is the right fit for you. This doesn’t happen by just reading an article or two, relying on “I’ve always wanted to be…” or using only experiences which are years old. You change and mature and relying on experiences from high school may not be who you are now as a maturing college student.
  o Find out if your school offers help with shadowing opportunities – Harding does but you will need to be active with your participation and continue pursuing activities outside of the school year.

• Nurture your faith so that it becomes your own
  o We are a faith based school/program.
  o There will be many rewards and challenges that will be faced during your undergraduate education. Grow and flourish with each high and low.

• Application to the PA program
  o Applications to a PA program usually occur the year before matriculation is desired. Be sure to read all of the admission requirements well.
  o Acceptance into any PA program is competitive.
  o Remember that by this stage you will be applying to a professional graduate program. This is where the maturity that you have developed during your undergraduate time needs to be evident.