**2017 MSHP Summary**

**Holistic Review and Health Professions School Admissions Expectations:** Admissions committees to health professions schools consider a variety of factors when reviewing applicants. As part of the holistic review process, academics, references, and experiential learning are all part of the application and evaluated.

Experiential learning refers to the exposure to the profession the student wishes to join. For each professions, and each school, standards will vary to some degree; however, knowledge of and commitment to the profession must be demonstrated, usually extensively.

References should provide context for other aspects of the application and also provide examples of various competencies that may not be initially evident. To aid recommenders in this process, The AAMC has published guidelines highlighting competencies that medical school admissions committee members are looking for in applicants:

1. Thinking & Reasoning Competencies: critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, scientific inquiry, and written communication
2. Science Competencies: living systems and human behavior
3. Interpersonal Competencies: service orientation, social skills, cultural competence, teamwork, and oral communication
4. Intrapersonal Competencies: ethical responsibility to self and others, reliability and dependability, resilience and adaptability, and capacity for improvement

It is understood that each letter will not be able to address all of these competencies. It is better to illustrate well one or a few of these competencies with detailed and objective evidence, rather than to produce a bland letter with nonspecific, unsupported praise.

The MSHP program is part of the academic arm of a student’s application. When considering the academic aptitude of an applicant for medical school, the admissions committee considers several questions: Does the applicant have the necessary pre-requisites? What is the trend in the applicant’s academic record? Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to handle the rigors of a health professions education? Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to perform to standards on relevant board exams? All of these are evaluated based on transcripts and standardized test scores. The MSHP program serves, in most cases, as a ‘career enhancer’ to a student’s academic record. Students who enter this program will already have the necessary pre-requisites, but are generally not initially competitive applicants. These students usually must demonstrate sustained upward trends in academic success, but more importantly the ability to handle the rigors of a health profession school education. Some may simply not have been successful in their application without a clear indicator as to why or are taking a ‘gap year’. Again, the goal is the same: demonstrate the ability to handle a rigorous health profession school education. The ability to handle rigor comes from courses taken, course load, and activities outside the classroom. This will be different for every student; therefore, flexibility in the program is essential. Theoretically, this program should also give students fundamentals that would enable them to perform better on certain aspects of admissions tests.

**Market Comparison:**

The AAMC lists 135 Masters Programs that serve as ‘career enhancers’. 108 of these are listed as 9-12 month programs. Only 27 list minimum completion times greater than one year and most of these are either thesis based MS programs or programs with extensive experiential learning, and at schools that offer a 1 year option. In Illinois, only one (Loyola) is listed as a minimum 2 year program, and this program requires a thesis. Loyola also has other programs with 1 year options. One program (RUSH) even has a 20 credit hour semester built into the curriculum. To be competitive in the market the IIT MSHP will need to allow students to complete the program in one year.

**2016 Class:** 16 students were enrolled in the program beginning the 2016-2017 academic year, with 2 starting in Spring 2017. 7 students enrolled in more than 9-10 credits their first semester. 3 of those completed the degree in May 2017, two with a GPA of 3.4 and one with a GPA of 3.0 (while working full time with a job that required travel). One of those 7 cheated on an exam in the fall and did not return in the spring. One of the 7 decreased spring credit hours to 6 despite earning a 3.72 GPA taking 15 credits in the fall. 2 decreased enrollment considerably but still continue to struggle and are still on probation. These two will likely continue to struggle to meet the 3.0 GPA minimum for graduation. They will be on probation until they can replace poor grades and/or start earning A grades in classes. 3 of the 16 students are only part-time (less than 9 credits) with one on probation despite improvement from semester one to semester two. The 6 remaining GPAs for the first semester (9credits) range from 2.33-4.0. The student with the 2.33GPA improved to 3.66 the second semester after adjusting to going to school again.

Graph of combined GPA data for the academic year.

As seen by the data of earned average GPA per credit hour, there is no significant difference between students who enroll part time (<= 6 ch) , with an average graduate load (7-9 ch), a moderately elevated load, or even a typical UG load of 16-18 ch. You will find students with low, moderate, and high GPA in each category, and no GPA cohort is statistically different from any other. This clearly indicates that certain students, when properly advised, can successfully complete the program in 1 year (which takes 16 ch /sem given current course offerings). Clearly the program accepts a wide range of students, with different levels of commitment and ability, and drive, and in different circumstances. However, there is no basis to conclude that students in the > 15 ch cohort were ill served or acting against either their, or IIT’s interests. Indeed, demonstrating the ability to handle elevated course load (typical with UG loads) is crucial to the success of many of these students in their ultimate endeavor: gaining admission to medical, dental or other professional school.