

R&E: Gap Year Q&A

5/1/24

Start time: 8:10 PM

End time: 8:47 PM

What is a Gap Year?

- **Gap year:** period of time when students take a break from school
- Most ppl take it after they graduate from college + before starting professional school
- **Timeline**
 - No gap year = start applying during summer before senior year
 - EX: if you're a junior right now, then you will apply this summer to start pharmacy school right after graduating senior year
 - One gap year = start applying during summer after you graduate
 - EX: if you're a junior right now, then you will apply next summer

Panelists

- **Arti Naik**
 - Graduated Spring 2023, took 1 gap year
 - Major: Nutritional Science
- **Cat Vi Nguyen**
 - Graduated Spring 2023, took 1 gap year
 - Major: Pharmaceutical Chemistry

Questions to Panelists

1. When and why did you decide to take a gap year?

- **Arti**
 - Decided Winter quarter of junior year she wanted to take gap year
 - Didn't feel that she was ready (thought she needed more experience)
 - Knew she would have a tough workload senior year so she wouldn't have enough time to develop a good, high quality application
- **Cat**
 - Transfer student so she spent 3 years at UCD
 - Wanted to spend more time to build up resume + gain more pharmacy-related experience
 - Wanted to use time to prepare for pharmacy school

2. Who did you get your letters of rec from?

- **Arti**

- All LORs were gained from experiences/relationships she had after she decided to take a gap year (during senior year)
- 1st LOR from biochem professor (did research with his lab during summer between junior and senior year)
- 2nd LOR was from nutritional professor (took 2 classes during senior year)
 - Had to be persistent with follow-up emails throughout summer
 - Hard because he wasn't the best at responding but got LOR submitted on time
- 3rd LOR was from pharmacy manager when she worked as pharm tech at CVS at Davis
 - Kept relationship with him and asked over messages
- **Cat**
 - 1st LOR from TA from CHE 130 class
 - 2nd LOR from pharmacist where she's working as pharm tech right now
 - Asked if she was willing to write LOR about 2 months into job
 - Recommends talking to professors about writing LORs before graduating
 - Regularly attend their office hours to build a relationship
 - Hard to get in contact with professors over email
 - Some professors did not respond to her emails

3. What did you do during your gap year? Did you work or take any classes?

- **Cat**
 - Worked full-time as pharm tech at Walgreens
 - Got pharmacy-related experience + got LOR
 - Provides chance to become immunizer (give vaccinations)
 - Fun things she did
 - Hung out with coworkers
 - Spent lots of time crocheting
- **Arti**
 - Worked part-time as pharm tech in hometown
 - Became immunizer (got lots of experience + gained more people skills)
 - Helped when answering situational questions during pharmacy school interviews
 - Took class at community college (pre-req for one of the schools she was thinking of applying to)
 - Ended up dropping the class because she didn't want to apply there anymore
 - Fun things she did
 - Went on little trips with friends + visited Italy with family

- Went to concerts

4. What are the pros and cons of taking a gap year?

○ Arti

■ Pros

- Get more time to focus on writing personal statement + working on application
- Have time before applying to get good GPA + form good connections
- More time for breaks + do fun things outside of school

■ Cons

- Worried about going back to school after taking a long break
- Hard to get back into study mode
- Graduating a year later than if she didn't take a gap year

○ Cat

■ Pros

- Talked with a lot of young pharmacists at her workplace + learned that they took many gap years
 - Just choose the time that's right for you (doesn't have to be right after graduating college)
- Take a break from school, spend more time with family
- Learn something new
- Go travel to somewhere far away

■ Cons

- Might be hard to get back into study mode

5. What is one thing you want to let everyone know about gap years?

○ Cat

- Spend time on hobbies and building up resume + experience
- Try to see if pharmacy school is what you want to commit to for the next 3 or 4 years

○ Arti

- Try to make sure that you do stuff that you can add to resume
 - Even if you don't pursue pharmacy, you can still build your resume for other careers
- Take time to yourself to be mentally + physically prepared
 - **Especially for academic rigor of pharmacy school**

6. Who do you recommend to take a gap year?

○ Arti

- Think of what prerequisites you need to take + plan accordingly

- Follow up with recommender + hitting deadlines on time
- If taking a gap year, have to think of what to do right after graduating
- Think about your own timeline + own priorities to see if taking a gap year is worth it or not
- **Kat**
 - If taking a gap year, have to think about writing personal statement
 - Planned to take 2 gap years at first but changed her mind last minute
 - Started working on personal statement 1 month before priority deadline
 - Had around 2 months to ask for LORs

7. What resources did you utilize for your personal statement?

- **Kat**
 - Set up a 30 min meeting with HPA for them to go over personal statement
 - Attended HPA's drop in advising (has 3 times a week)
 - NOTE: cannot use Davis' writing resource center after graduating
 - Cannot submit to them to review the paper + fix grammar
- **Arti**
 - Used HPA drop in advising as well
 - Only have access to writing resource center 1 quarter after graduating
 - EX: if graduating in Spring, then you have until the end of summer to access the resources
 - Joined UCSF mentor/mentee program a year before applying
 - Asked mentor for advice on application/personal statement