

Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences

Frequently Asked Questions



1. What is Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences?

We are a small, healthcare-focused high school located on the Gaston College campus in Dallas, NC. Our school was the “brainchild” of the collaborative efforts of Gaston College, CaroMont Health, Belmont Abbey College, and Gaston County Schools to address the critical shortage of trained healthcare workers in our area. GEMCS students have the opportunity to complete high school graduation requirements while simultaneously working toward earning an associate’s degree in one of our four healthcare programs—ALL AT NO COST!

2. What is it like attending GECMS?

GECMS is located on the Gaston College campus on one end of the CET building in the heart of campus near the library and clock tower. Our cafeteria is located “up the hill” in the Myers Center, which is directly across from the student center and bookstore. We share buses with GECHS and Highland students. Our students are well-supervised when out and about on campus. They are permitted to mingle in the college student center, purchase items from the bookstore, eat outdoors in the courtyard, and go to the library. Beginning January 2022, many of our students will leave our building in small groups to take college classes with other Gaston College students.

3. What Associate Degrees are offered at GECMS?

We offer four associate degrees and even though all of them are related to the healthcare field, they are very different and interest a diversity of students.

-Associate in General Education (AIG) in Nursing

The AIG in Nursing is 61 college hours of general education courses that students are expected to complete within four years of high school. This degree may be applied to an Associate in Nursing degree from Gaston College or a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from a state university. Students wishing to pursue a registered nursing degree from Gaston College must apply for admission in their senior year. If selected, the student will begin nursing classes the following fall after graduation. The student also has the option to transfer to a four-year university to pursue a Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing.

-Associate of Applied Science in Biotechnology

The Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Biotechnology is designed for students who have an interest in chemistry and molecular biology – the study of life in its smallest, most fundamental form. The degree totals 67 college hours, and students are expected to complete the degree within four years of high school. Upon graduation, students may transfer to a four-year university and/or may enter the workforce as a skill lab technician. Through classes and labs students will develop an understanding of the interaction between the various systems of a cell, and operate laboratory equipment commonly used in a research setting.

-Associate of Applied Science in Health Information Technology

The Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Health Information Technology degree is a 71 college hour program that students will complete in four years of high school. Students are provided the technical knowledge and skills to process, analyze, maintain, and report health information data in compliance with legal, accreditation, licensure and certification standards. Coursework includes diagnosis and procedure coding/classification systems, privacy and security strategies, health informatics, data analytics and use, revenue cycle management, regulatory compliance, and organizational leadership. Graduates of this program may be eligible to take the national certification exam to become a Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) and go directly into the workforce and/or transfer to a four year university to pursue a Bachelor's Degree.

-Associate of Applied Science in Human Services

The Associate of Applied Science in Human Services is a 57 college hour program that requires a 5th year of school to accommodate the clinical requirements. This program prepares students for entry-level positions in institutions and agencies which provide social, community, and educational services. Along with core courses, students take courses which prepare them for specialization in specific human service areas. Students will take courses from a variety of disciplines. Emphasis in core courses is placed on development of relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes in human services. Fieldwork experience will provide opportunities for application of knowledge and skills learned in the classroom. Graduates should qualify for positions in mental health, child care, family services, social services, rehabilitation, correction, and educational agencies. Graduates choosing to continue their education may select from a variety of transfer programs at senior public and private institutions.

4. How can I become a student at GECMS?

*We enroll 80 ninth graders each year. Students interested in attending must reside in Gaston County and meet all eligibility requirements prior to entering the choice lottery. Eligibility requirements include student grades, standardized assessment data, attendance, and discipline record. Special consideration will be given to 1st generation college students, those students whose parents did not attend college after high school. Prior to being offered admission, students and parents will be required to participate in an interview with school staff in which they will be further questioned on their career goals, work ethic, and overall commitment to a 4-year associate degree program. **Note: For the 2022-2023 school year only, we are also accepting applications for rising 10th graders to fill 19 open seats.***

5. When do classes start and does it cost anything to attend?

School hours are 9:00 - 3:45 PM, and fall classes begin the 2nd week of August and conclude around the 3rd week of December. The 2nd semester begins the 1st week of January and ends a few days before Memorial Day in May. District bus transportation is provided as well as school meals (free/reduced if applicable). College tuition, books, and fees are covered by the school; however, if a student does not complete his/her associate degree by graduation, then the student is responsible for any accrued costs after high school graduation.

6. Do you offer any extra-curricular activities?

Students have access to many school-sponsored clubs and activities, as well as, special activities offered by Gaston College. We do NOT offer interscholastic sports, fine arts programs such as chorus and band, and JROTC, etc.