The Biomedical Sciences program started at the Baptist College of Health Sciences in the fall of 2013. After six years, the program has grown a great deal, attracting students interested in pursuing a wide variety of continuing education following graduation.

Lilian Ogari, Ph.D., MPH, chair of the Biomedical Sciences program and assistant professor of biology, started with the College the same year.

“Over the last six years, our Biomedical Sciences program has become more recognizable,” said Dr. Ogari. “As the number of students grow, the more diverse our applicants have become and the more schools they’re getting accepted to for their graduate education.”

Typically, a Biomedical Sciences student is at the College for four years, completing 124 hours of coursework focused on biology and chemistry, in addition to volunteer hours, clinicals and shadowing. However, some students can fast track the courses and graduate in three years, like Isaac Liles, who gradated in April 2019 and plans to attend medical school starting in the fall of 2020 with an end-goal of becoming a cardiothoracic surgeon.

“I recommend to upcoming students to do the clinicals, shadowing and volunteer work earlier in their College career,” said Liles. “That way you can confirm your planned path by surrounding yourself in the work, and then devote more time to studying for entrance exams (like MCATs) later on.”

Liles shadowed Dr. John Craig, vascular surgeon at Baptist Memorial Hospital-Memphis, draping in for surgeries. He also volunteered on Fridays, nights and weekends in the Emergency Department at Baptist Memorial Hospital-Collierville.

Biomedical Sciences students go on to dental school, medical school, PA school and pharmaceutical school. Some students pursue dental surgery, graduate research and chiropractic practice.

The benefit of the College’s Biomedical Sciences program is its small size and one-on-one interactions with professors, with a lot of things in place to help students succeed. Faculty advisors are assigned to students based on their interests beyond graduation.

“Since the Baptist College of Health Sciences is a specialized education, professors can step in early if they see a student struggling,” explained Dr. Ogari.

The Biomedical Sciences program also offers a seminar series, hosting recruiters from graduate schools to showcase what they offer, their admissions process and and preparation for the first year of their programs.

“Early on, when the program first started, we saw a lot of program graduates taking gap years before applying to graduate schools,” said Dr. Ogari. “Our professors actively advise students to help avoid this gap year by taking graduate program entrance exams earlier, working backwards from a career timeline to meet their goals seamlessly.”

Juniors and seniors in the Biomedical Sciences program also act as mentors to underclassmen. The program started in 2018 and mentors are typically leaders in their class with good grades and are well-rounded students.

“The whole point of the student mentor program is to help students navigate the system because the application process to graduate school can be challenging,” added Dr. Ogari.

The College also offers mock interviews for those applying to graduate programs and entrance exam preparation classes

While the plan is for the Biomedical Sciences program to grow, Dr. Ogari also wants to stay small enough to keep professors engaged. Most professors in her programs are published and regularly present original research. Her faculty is also involved in community service.

“Each month during the school year, the Biomedical Sciences program professors open up their labs to students at Memphis Academy of Health Sciences on a Saturday so they can get real-life lab experience,” said Dr. Ogari.

This summer, Biomedical Sciences program faculty will be hosting a camp for local 9th and 10th graders in collaboration with University of Tennessee Health Science Center, University of Memphis, Christian Brothers University and Southern College of Optometry to foster an interest in science.