



Guide to Applying to Medical School

**Office of Health Professions Advising
Purdue University**

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Purdue University Guide to Applying to Medical School

Office of Health Professions Advising

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General Information

About this Guide

The application process for medical school is long, often stressful, expensive, and complicated. The rewards, however, of a medical career are immense, which makes this whole process worthwhile. This guide will help you find your way through the process which lasts a year at best and often several years if you need to apply more than once (and many people do).

Although medical schools are expanding their class sizes to meet the projected need for doctors in the coming years, entry is still extremely competitive and appears to be increasingly so. It is in your best interest to take the application process very seriously, to be well informed, to apply early, and to be realistic about your chances of gaining acceptance to a medical program.

Health Professions Advising Services

The Health Professions Advising Office is here to help you through the application process from deciding whether medical school is right for you to developing a parallel plan in case you don't get in or need to apply again. You can find assistance with your application including your choice of letter writers, input on your personal statement, and information about interviews. The Health Professions Advisor, Dr. Amy Terstriep can help you decide whether to repeat courses, retake the MCAT, or apply at a later time, and she can keep you informed about changes in the application process. The Health Professions Office is also responsible for sending out your letters of evaluation to the medical schools if you choose to use our free Health Professions File letter service.

To provide you with the best advice possible, it is helpful if you release score and application information to the Health Professions Advisor. You generally have a choice of doing this on your MCAT and on your primary application. This access allows Dr. Terstriep to see where your application is in the process and your MCAT scores, but she is bound by the rules of the AAMC to only use that information in assisting the student. She may also use aggregate numbers from test scores and admissions to study how Purdue's students are doing in medical admissions compared to students nationally. Your personal data is never released from this office without your permission and your social security number is not a part of your records.

The Health Professions Advisor is here to work with all students interested in health careers regardless of major. To make an appointment with Dr. Terstriep, call 765-494-4747 or go to 1-123 Lilly Hall.

Although your academic advisor and the health professions advisor are here to help and support you in this process, your application is ultimately your responsibility. It is up to you to read the instructions provided by the application services. Many questions you have can be answered through those instructions. The application services also have helpdesks that you can access. It is also up to you to fill out the application with complete honesty. Being caught fabricating information may keep you from being admitted to medical school.

Tips to Help Us Help You

The Health Professions Advisor tries to be as helpful as possible. But there are some things that can make all of our lives a bit easier:

- On AMCAS and the MCAT, check the box allowing advisor access. This means that the advisor can access some basic information (MCAT scores, GPA, application completion information, and results of your applications). The information is used ONLY to advise you and data is grouped to look at how Purdue students are doing and how we can do a better job of supporting our pre-medical students.
- If you are using our professional file/letter service (described in Letters of Evaluation section), keep us updated with your contact information.
- Let us know what happens with your application!
- If you want the Health Professions Advisor to comment on your personal statement, you need to email it to her (preferably at least a week before you need it).
- Because of the number of students we serve, please check this guide and the website <http://www.purdue.edu/prehealth> to see if you can find the answer to many common questions before contacting the office.

Developing a Parallel Plan

Medical schools take a limited number of students. In any year between 40-50% of all applicants gain admission. Thus, they are highly competitive. Although you will often see minimal grade point averages listed, these are often far lower than the average GPAs accepted by these programs. All of the medical schools also make use of a standardized aptitude test—the MCAT. If standardized tests aren't your thing, then you have another stumbling block on your path to fulfillment in medicine. Regardless of whether you have a 4.0 or a 3.0, you should have a parallel plan, a backup plan, a Plan B, so to speak. Even if you feel like your application is very competitive, having a backup plan is a good thing.

Things to consider:

- Are there related careers you might find just as fulfilling? For example, if you want to be an MD, you should also consider osteopathic medical programs (see next section), chiropractic medicine, and podiatry. PA and nurse practitioner programs might also be areas to explore.

- An array of medical fields are out there. A master's degree in public health might fit your interests. Medical informatics is a hot field if you like computers. You could always apply to the professional program you want after your master's is complete.
- Ask yourself: what can I do to improve my credentials and experience if I take a year off and then apply (or apply again)? If you did apply and were not admitted, speak with the admissions office and ask them their suggestions for strengthening your application. Generally admissions officers are happy to have a constructive conversation about improving your credentials.
- One of the most important things to remember if you are applying at the end of your junior year: your senior year is still important. If you don't get in by the end of your senior year, what has changed in your application? Many students end up re-submitting what was essentially a failed application. Keep your grades up during your senior year, gain more medical experience, and keep up the volunteer work. No senioritis for you!
- Many people are accepted when they apply again. So keep trying, but be smart about your applications and critical about your credentials.

What is the difference between allopathic and osteopathic medical schools?

Allopathic programs (MD) and osteopathic programs (DO) share more characteristics than differences. They differ mainly in their respective philosophies. Most students are aware of what an MD is and does, but often have not heard of osteopathic medicine. The following information is from <http://www.aacom.org/about/osteomed/Pages/default.aspx>

Osteopathic medicine is a distinctive form of medical practice in the United States. Osteopathic medicine provides all of the benefits of modern medicine including prescription drugs, surgery, and the use of technology to diagnose disease and evaluate injury. It also offers the added benefit of hands-on diagnosis and treatment through a system of therapy known as osteopathic manipulative medicine (OMM). Osteopathic Medicine emphasizes helping each person achieve a high level of wellness by focusing on health education, injury prevention and disease prevention. Osteopathic physicians, also known as D.O.s, work in partnership with their patients. They consider the impact that lifestyle and community have on the health of each individual, and they work to erase barriers to good health. D.O.s are licensed to practice the full scope of medicine in all 50 states. They practice in all types of environments including the military, and in all types of specialties from family medicine to obstetrics, surgery, and aerospace medicine. Because of this whole-person approach to medicine, approximately 60 percent of all D.O.s choose to practice in the primary care disciplines of family practice, general internal medicine and pediatrics. Approximately 40 percent of all D.O.s go on to specialize in a wide range of practice areas. If the medical specialty exists, you will find D.O.s there.

About one in five medical students are currently trained in osteopathic programs. By 2019 this will be one in four (as they are opening more osteopathic schools). There are currently 25 colleges of osteopathic medicine and 3 branch campuses.

For both MD and DO medical students, the first 2 years consist of basic science coursework that is the same except the DO students also study OMM (Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine). Osteopathic programs will accept slightly lower grades/test scores because they are interested in other features of their applicants. This is a good option for you if you can fully embrace their philosophy.

Basic Reminders

- Provide access to MCAT/application materials for your health professions advisor
- Your personal information is protected by the Office of Health Professions Advising
- Use this guidebook
- Consider osteopathic medical programs as well as allopathic medical programs
- Start saving money early for the costs of applying—generally \$1000-2000
- Practice patience
- Keep your application materials organized—the application process is long and a bit convoluted
- Always have a backup plan/parallel plan
- **APPLY EARLY**

What are Medical Schools Looking For?

Basically, they want everything: empathy, compassion, dedication to service, altruism, lifelong learning, intellectual curiosity, good judgment, ability to balance priorities, and a passion for science. They have, however, no magic formula. They evaluate each student's credentials and weigh the student's background and judge the fit between the student and the medical school. They want well-rounded students with broad academic interests and backgrounds. They need students who are interested in learning and who will be life-long learners. You should have good communication and interpersonal skills, a record of community service and leadership, a variety of extracurricular activities, and experience with shadowing a physician.

One thing to keep in mind is that you need to establish a record of interest in healthcare. When you write your application essay, you will likely be trying to tell them how much you want to be a doctor. This should be clear in your record of work and activities as well. You must backup your claims of interest in medicine with clear action that shows your interest.

Where do I learn about specific requirements?

Two information sources you should be aware of to make sure you fit the requirements for various schools:

- For information on requirements at MD programs: *Medical School Admission Requirements* (fondly known as the MSAR—pronounced em-sar). Published by the AAMC (Association of American Medical College), this book comes out annually, but doesn't change much from year to year. It contains a description of each school, information about the median* test scores and grades of matriculants (remember this is different from what the numbers would look like for all those who apply), and statistics on in-state and out-of-state applicants. You can order a copy through the AAMC, but it is probably easier to order it at a more user friendly website like Amazon (if you type in MSAR there this book pops up). Generally the price is about \$25. There is also a copy in the Biology Counseling Office in 1-123 Lilly that you can use in the office.

**a median is the middle value in a distribution*

- For information on requirements at DO programs: The DO materials similar to those found in the MSAR are available free on the AACOM (American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine) website. Go to <http://www.aacom.org/resources/bookstore/cib/Documents/cib2008.pdf>

Some of the Experiences/Credentials Sought by Medical Schools

- Prerequisite courses/grades: Some schools do have specific requirements beyond the basic 1 year biology, 1 year general chemistry, 1 year organic chemistry, 1 year physics, and 1 year English. Typically by 1 year, schools mean 8 semester hours. Most also look for several social science and humanities courses. One program even requires 24 credit hours in behavioral science (medical schools define this differently). They may define the number of credit hours necessary in each subject. To see if you have everything you need for the schools to which you want to apply, check the osteopathic schools website and/or the MSAR (both described above).
- GPA: MD schools will look at your science GPA (the BCPM=Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math) and your non-science GPA, as well as the overall GPA. DO programs do the same but do not consider math grades in your science GPA. Ideally, they don't want to see a huge difference between your science and non-science course performance. The most competitive range to be in is a 3.6 or better. Indiana University is competitive enough that a 3.8 makes you more competitive there. Osteopathic programs will take somewhat lower GPAs. Nationally, their overall GPA average is a 3.45 with a non-science average of 3.55 and a science average of 3.37.
- Course load: Medical schools will expect to see a couple of semesters in which you have taken 2-3 lab courses at the same time. They need to know that you can handle a heavy load and still manage good grades. You should also be careful about taking summer science courses to lighten your science load—this does not impress them. You can still take summer courses, but you want to make sure you have science-heavy semesters as well.
- MCAT scores: To be most competitive you want a 10 in each section for MD programs (a 30 overall) or an 8-9 in each section for DO programs (a 24-25 overall). More information on the MCAT in that section of this guide.
- Health care experience: If you want to show a medical school that you are interested in being a doctor, you need to have provided yourself with opportunities to see doctors in action. If you haven't already done so, you need to observe (shadow) a physician. This assures medical schools that you are keenly interested and that you have a more realistic sense of what it means to be a doctor. Osteopathic schools generally require that you have shadowed an osteopathic physician and ask for a letter verifying this.
- Service/Volunteerism: Medical Schools see health care as a service field so doing volunteer work is important. They don't care what it is, only that you have been doing it on a regular basis and show a commitment to it. Showing up to work at a blood drive during the spring of your junior year just won't cut it. It just isn't enough evidence that you are committed to helping others. A number of osteopathic medical schools emphasize volunteer work and use it as a major factor in their decision making. Remember schools are looking for problem solvers, critical thinkers, active listeners, teaching ability, motivators, and those who appreciate the importance of touch in communication and treatment. So seek out service opportunities where you can develop and hone these skills. Consider

- nursing homes, hospice, crisis centers, programs assisting persons living with HIV/AIDS, tutoring/mentoring at risk kids, coaching, etc.
- Leadership: Take charge of a program or student organization event. Work toward a leadership position in your fraternity/sorority/sports team, etc. Medical schools need you to be a leader and a solid team player.
 - Research: Though not required, more and more applicants have some research experience so it is a great thing if you have the opportunity and the inclination. The medical schools don't care what kind of research it was—it is really about what it shows them about your academic development. If you participated in research, you generally were able to balance this with other responsibilities, to work without supervision, and to see both your portion of a project and the bigger picture. The elite schools (Harvard, Stanford, etc) will have a higher percentage of students with published research and/or presentations at conferences.
 - Hands-On Patient Care: Again, not a requirement, but is seen very favorably. This is often difficult experience to get as it generally requires additional training. Some students get their experience through working as a phlebotomist (doing blood draws), working as a certified nurse assistant or as an EMT.
 - Extracurricular activities: Medical schools like to have interesting people as part of their classes. They are looking for people with interesting backgrounds and experiences. They also need to know that you can balance your life. Taking part in extracurricular activities helps to show them this.

Just how competitive is it?

Of the 39,108 people who applied for admission into allopathic medical schools (MD programs) in 2006, a reported 17,370 of them matriculated at a U.S. medical school. This means that nationwide, 44.4% of all applicants gained entrance into an MD granting program. In light of the American Association of Medical College's (AAMC) endorsement of a 30-percent increase in medical school graduates by 2015, medical schools are being challenged to admit more students. This, however, will probably not change the expected credentials at all. In 2007, for example, a medical school admission's dean reported that over 1000 of his program's applicants had a GPA at or above a 3.8 and an MCAT score in the 30s. That is tough competition. To see the applicant and matriculant information for MD programs, go to <http://www.aamc.org/data/facts/>

Osteopathic programs are similarly competitive. Enrollment in osteopathic programs has been growing since 2000 and more schools are currently being built. The 2005 entering class saw 8,258 applicants and 3,646 matriculants (about 44% of applicants later enrolled). In 2006 there were 9,737 applicants and in 2007 a further increase in applications brings the number to 11,459. In 2006, the average science GPA was a 3.37, the average non-science was 3.55, and the average overall was 3.45. Average MCAT scores were close to the national average for the test itself: biological science was 8.64, physical science was 8.04, and verbal reasoning was 8.31.

The Importance of Applying Early

One of the keys to a successful application to medical school is to apply early. The importance of this cannot be overstated! One of the very best things you can do to help your application is to apply early. Although medical schools often have application deadlines from October through January, you want your application to hit their office during the preceding June or July. Your chances of getting in are improved and in the long run, it makes your life much easier. Here's why:

- Many medical schools have rolling admissions. This means that they accept students as they go. So as time passes, they have fewer and fewer spots in their class. If you don't apply until September or October, they may not be able to interview you until January or later (because the fall interview spots were taken by people who applied in June and July). By the time you interview, they may only have 30 spots left.
- From the time you submit your AMCAS or AACOMAS, it can take 3-6 weeks for the application to get to the medical schools. Again, if you apply in September, they won't receive your application until October or November. By then they probably won't have any interview slots until January-March. Fewer slots will be available at this time.
- Ideally you should plan to take the MCAT in January, April or May at least 15 months before you hope to begin medical school. For example, if you hope to start in the fall of 2009, you need these tests in January, April or May of 2008. It will take 1 month to receive your scores. This way if you feel you need to take it again, you have time to schedule a test in July or August. If you do this, you should go ahead and apply without knowing these scores. That way everything else can be in place and schools just have to wait for your scores.
- If you apply as quickly as possible in June or early July, you may receive many of your secondaries and can return them before school begins again in August. Writing all of these extra essays takes time and it is convenient to have it all done before school starts. This past year, we had students who had scheduled interviews by August 3rd.
- If you apply early, it may cut down on your wait time. Much of the stress of applying to medical school is waiting to hear something about your application. If you apply in June and know you have interviews by August, you have shortened some of the wait. Similarly, if you interview in September, you may have an acceptance by October.

The Importance of Shadowing Physicians

It is an exceptionally good idea to shadow (observe) a physician at some point and may even be required for admission at some schools. First, this assures committees that you have actually spoken with a physician about his/her career and have some idea about what it is really like to be a physician—after all, it isn't really like *Grey's Anatomy*. Doctors don't really get to have sex in the supply closets all that often. In addition, doctors can make very good letter writers as they can comment on different skill sets that you may have since they see you in a different setting than your professors.

Shadowing is also important to show schools that you are committed to a career in health care. Here you are trying to convince a school that you have a burning desire to be a doctor—so how do you prove that? Have you placed yourself in medically related situations by volunteering at some sort of medical facility? Have you shadowed a doctor? Have you had hands-on experience with patients? If not, why should they believe that this is what you have always wanted to do?

Don't know how to go about doing this? Start with family and family friends—exploit them if they are in the health care field. If you aren't connected, you can try your own physician. If that doesn't work, open your phone book and start dialing.

After you have arranged your shadowing, be sure to honor patient confidentiality, be prompt, dress appropriately for the setting, and be professional in your demeanor. This includes having a professional sounding voicemail in case the doctor's office needs to reach you. Be sure to send a note thanking the physician after you have completed your time there.

An Extra Note on Shadowing

Shadowing any physician is useful even if he/she isn't in the specialty you are currently thinking about. Many students change their minds about specialty after medical school. All shadowing experiences are valuable!

Transcripts

You must have transcripts sent from every U.S. school at which you attempted college credit even if you did not transfer that credit to Purdue. You are the only one with access to your transcripts, so you must be the one to order them. The online application will have a transcript request form that you should print for each school you attended. Do this as quickly as possible as you start filling out your application. Then give this form to the Registrar's Office. Transcripts must be sent directly from the Registrar's Office. One of the biggest reasons that applications are held-up is because they are waiting to receive your transcripts.

You should also get a copy of your transcripts for yourself. You want the details of your coursework from each school to match what you enter on your primary application. In fact, you want them to match exactly. If you took *Biology: The Detailed Life of Worms* and you list it on your application as just *Worm*, it may cause problems. The application services complete a verification process in which they look at your grades and courses and compare them to your transcripts. If anything is a mismatch, they will pull your application from the process and contact you to figure out the problem. Then your application goes to the back of the line to start the process all over again. Moral of the story: work from transcripts and not from memory.

To order your Purdue transcripts: Take the matching form to the Registrar's Office in Hovde Hall. You can order personal copies online.

If you will have international transcripts, you need to carefully read and follow the instructions on the applications's website for handling this.

Missing transcripts and information entered in your primary application that differs from your transcript are the primary reasons that applications are delayed from being sent to medical schools (thus, delayed in the verification process). You can submit your transcript before you submit your application. They will match it to your application once it arrives. Be sure to check the system frequently to make sure your transcripts have arrived.

Submitting Transcripts

You don't have to wait until you have submitted your application. Once the application service opens and you can start filling it out, you will have access to the transcript release form. Do this early on!

Letters of Evaluation

First of all, medical schools tend to refer to letters as evaluation letters rather than recommendation letters. They want an honest portrait of you as a person and scholar. So they expect commentary on your strengths and weaknesses. Although schools sometimes ask for different kinds of letters, we are using a distribution system that almost all of them take part in. As such, they have agreed to accept a scanned packet of letters that don't necessarily meet what they state in their application materials about required letters. Generally speaking you need 2 science faculty letters and 1 non-science faculty letter plus any others you wish to use. Unless you are applying MD/PhD programs, you should limit it to 5-6 letters total. The tricky part is defining science/non-science. At IU, science faculty are those who taught your classes that can be designated as biology, physics and chemistry. Other schools don't define this quite so clearly. If you are in health sciences, engineering, agriculture, pharmacy, or nutrition science (all in the gray zone of the science or non-science question), you should consider having at least one of your science letters from chemistry, biology or physics faculty. Your other science letter could come from your program. Most other fields are considered non-science. You may need to check with schools to which you wish to apply to make sure you have what you need. You don't want to be notified in October that your application was disqualified because you didn't have the correct letters.

It is important that you select letter writers who have come to know you. A letter that states you were in the top 10% of a class of 300 doesn't really tell the medical schools very much. So you need to go to professors office hours, ask questions, go to class, be on time, look interested...basically act professionally in your approach to courses.

Think carefully about who to ask for letters. Letters from family members are basically meaningless—even if you did work in their clinical setting. Letters from high school teachers, counselors, or principals are generally frowned upon unless you more recently were involved in volunteer work in the school. Knowing the kind of student you were in high school does not help the medical schools.

What if my best letter will be from a graduate teaching assistant?

If the best letter you have will be from a graduate teaching assistant (this is a last resort), then you should ask the graduate student to write the letter but have it signed first by the faculty member and then next to that put the graduate student's signature with the credentials underneath. This way the medical schools know a faculty member (who presumably has more experience with evaluating students in comparison to other students) looked at it and changed anything that was not appropriate for evaluating a student in comparison to other students in that program. If you choose to use a graduate student, they need to have taught your class—that can't have just been an assistant in the class. If that is the case, it would be considered a personal letter.

Can I ask my research advisor for a letter?

You can and should ask your research supervisor for a letter. He/she sees you in settings which often allows them to offer a lot of helpful insight to medical schools. Medical schools, however, view these letters differently. Some will accept them as science faculty letters even if they have not had you in a class. Other schools see these as personal letters.

What are committee letters and advisor letters?

Some schools provide a letter for medical school applicants that compares them to other applicants from that institution. If a faculty committee writes it, it is called a committee letter. If a health professions advisor prepares it, it is an advisor letter. Purdue does not provide these services! If your secondary requests an advisor or committee letter, you do not have to have it. They only mean that you need this if your school provides them. Do not have your academic advisor send in a letter—this is not what they want. You can ignore this requirement. They can and will assess you as a candidate using only your individual letters. This will not hurt your chance of admission.

When IU sent my secondary, they sent some recommendation forms. What do I do with these?

If you already have in your letter file 1 science faculty letter, 1 non-science faculty letter, and 1 personal letter, then the only form you need to provide them is the Dean's form. Drop this off in Schleman B-50 and it will be filled out and returned directly to IU. If you did not cover these letter types in your file already, then you may need to use one of their forms. If you are unsure, contact IU.

Health Professions Letter Service

If you open a professional file in the Health Professions Office (1-123 Lilly Hall), we will handle all of your evaluation letters for you. Your letters can be sent directly to our office. You should never handle your letters!! It is simple to open a file—you just need to complete a few short forms. The process is simple and ensures that your letters are available to medical schools as quickly as possible during the application process.

The Office holds and stores your recommendation letters for 5 years (in case you have to apply again). You can get the forms by picking up a Health Professions Letter Service packet in Lilly 1-123 from 8-12 and 1-5 weekdays. Once we have your completed forms and all your letters have been received, we can send out your letters. We generally send your letters electronically through a system called VirtualEvals (described below). If you are using our service (and you are encouraged to do so), please keep in mind:

- Letters can be used only for their original purpose. Since these are letters for medical school, we can send them to medical schools, post-baccalaureate programs, and medical school scholarships agencies only. All other uses are not allowed.
- You must have a signed release form or your letters cannot be used.
- We send out complete packets of letters. This means that we need all your letters before we can send them out.
- For the most part, we forward all the letters in your file to your schools (the exception is that DO letters are sent only to DO programs).
- We accept only original evaluations directly from the writer. Copies, faxes, and emails* are not acceptable. We require an original signature.
 - *A PDF scan of a letter on letterhead with a signature from a verified email address is acceptable.

We handle your letters in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This means that as an applicant you have the right to retain access to your letters (allowing you to read them in the health professions advisor's presence) if you choose to do so. Your letter writers must know this before they write your letters. You should be aware, however, that admissions committees view confidential evaluations (those you are not able to see because you waived your access rights) much more seriously.

Ideally your letters should not be too old by the time you apply. If you want your biology professor from your freshman year to write a letter for you, you need to keep in touch and ask him/her during your junior year. Ideally you should set up your file during your junior year or in the semester before you plan to apply.

What is Virtual Evals?

VirtualEvals is a web based system for distributing letters of recommendation to the medical schools. Only a handful of schools are not using the system. If you are using our letter service, we will collect your letters and once they all arrive we scan them and create a PDF file. We then enter the secured system and set up a file for you (2 files if you are applying to both MD and DO programs). This file has your name, email address, AAMC ID number, and schools to which you are applying—your social security number is NOT included. Once we attach your letters, you will be emailed directly from the system to alert you that your letters are available. The medical schools are also alerted that they have letters waiting. They can then download them at any time.

Advantages:

- No waiting on snail mail
- No lost letters
- Letters are often downloaded within minutes of our posting them
- We can easily add additional schools to your list at any time (though we cannot add additional letters)
- Most med schools are switching to digital files so this is easier for them

- Environmentally friendly—no more copies and envelopes
- Disadvantages:
- You must use our letter service—which really isn't a disadvantage
 - Once we have uploaded your PDF, we cannot add new letters

Tips on Letters

- Cultivate letters of recommendation by being professional in class, asking questions, going to office hours, and getting to know faculty.
- Ask for letters months in advance.
- Provide faculty with materials to help them write their letters.
- Give them a chance to tell you that they don't feel they are the best person to provide a letter.
- Stay on top of your letters. Follow up (politely) to be sure they have been sent to the letter service. Keep track of your Virtual Evals email to be sure they were sent out.
- These letters are very important for your application. This is one of the first chances that medical schools have to get to know you better. Consider carefully who you will ask.
- Remember that letters kept in the Health Professions Letter Service can only be used for medical school and medical school scholarships. If you would like the same faculty to write other types of letters, ask them to keep a copy of the letter on their computer or consider opening a file through a private company such as Interfolio (<http://www.interfolio.com>).

The MCAT

The MCAT is the standardized test sponsored by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and consists of 3 multiple-choice sections and a writing assessment. MD, DO, and podiatry programs all require the MCAT. The exam has been part of the medical school admissions process for more than 60 years. The MCAT is now a computerized exam and covers physical sciences (general chemistry & physics), biological sciences (biology & organic chemistry), verbal reasoning, and it has a writing sample (two 30 minute essays). The multiple choice sections are each scored on a 15 point scale with the national average for all test takers being a little over an 8. The national average for applicants is actually a bit above a 9 in each section. The average for those who are accepted and enroll (matriculants) is even higher. The written sample is scored on an alphabetical scale with J being the lowest and T being the highest (national average is an O or P). It takes about a month to receive your scores following the test. Scores are generally accepted for 3 years.

- For more information go to <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm>
- You should be sure to read the MCAT Essentials document at <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/mcatessentials.pdf>
- You can also find lists of topics covered on various sections of the test by going to <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/preparing/start.htm>

What are considered competitive scores?

The national average in each of the main sections is a little above an 8. For many MD schools, you are not really competitive unless you have a 10 in each section. IU, for example, is highly competitive. You generally need at least a 10 in each section (a score of 30 or better overall) to be competitive there.

Osteopathic programs will accept slightly lower scores. The national average for each section on the MCAT for students who matriculated (enrolled) at osteopathic schools was an 8.43.

Many MD programs advise that if you have any section below an 8, you should retake the exam.

Should I take the MCAT for practice?

Yes and No. You can find practice MCAT exams at <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/> and should make use of them as you prepare to take the exam. You should not, however, take the actual MCAT just for kicks to see how you do. Medical schools will receive a

score history report showing all of your attempts to take the MCAT. Some will take your best score, others your most recent, while still others average your scores. It is in your best interest to only take the test when you feel most prepared.

One note on practice test scores:

Many students have a better score on their practice tests than they receive on the actual exam. Part of this is because of the stress of test day. A lot is riding on this test, so it is understandably stressful. You should figure out what works for you to try to keep this stress under control. But practice tests are misleading in another way as well. MCAT scores are weighted to reflect the scores of the test taking pool. Your practice test wasn't weighted. This means that your actual MCAT score may well be as much as several points lower than your practice tests.

Should I take an MCAT test preparation course (Kaplan, for example)?

This is entirely up to you. Generally you can prepare on your own with a commercial review book and the online practice tests and save yourself a lot of money. However, this works best for students who have the motivation and control to make themselves study for an hour or two every day without fail in preparation for the MCAT. Students who do well on the MCAT tend to spend 15-20 hours a week for several months preparing for it. If you would have trouble forcing yourself to do this then a test preparation course might be helpful as it keeps you on task with homework assignments and practice exams built in. At about \$1800 you should also consider the cost factor. Applying to medical school will cost from \$1000-2000 so you need to decide if a test preparation course is in your budget. Kaplan and other commercial test prep providers do have some scholarships and offer loans for their courses. If you decide to take a test prep course, remember that it is like having another class in your schedule, so you need to plan accordingly. Also remember that your class time doesn't necessarily count as preparation time. Some students in test preparation courses fail to put in enough time actually studying for the test on their own.

What if I'm not happy with my MCAT score? Should I retake the MCAT?

If you are below national average in any section, you might want to consider retaking the test. But there are many variables. You need to think about some of the following:

- How well did you prepare?
- Are you motivated to review/practice again?
- How do you tend to perform on standardized tests?
- How competitive are other aspects of your application?
- Where would you like to go to medical school?
- What happened to others who re-took the test? You can find this information at www.aamc.org/students/mcat/examineedata/tables.htm
- What opportunities would you miss out on while taking time to prepare again? Could you strengthen your candidacy in other ways?

Depending on just how low your test score was the first time, you should submit your application rather than waiting for your new scores to arrive. If you are waiting until October to submit your application after you receive September MCAT results—you are hurting your chances of gaining admissions because your application is just too late.

Where can I take the MCAT?

The following Thomson Prometric Sites are available in Indiana though all offerings of the MCAT may not be available. You can only see the complete list once you enter the registration site:

- **Bloomington**
601 East Kirkwood Avenue, Franklin Hall 014, Bloomington, 47405
- **Evansville**
923 South Kenmore Drive, Hebron Office Plaza, Evansville, 47714
- **Fort Wayne**
2101 East Collisseum Boulevard, Testing Services, Kettler Hall, Fort Wayne, 46805
- **Indianapolis**
11611 North Meridan Street, Suite 200, Carmel, 46032
77 South Girls School Road, Suite 210, Indianapolis, 46231
2727 East 86th Street, Woodfield Centre, Suite 120, Indianapolis, 46240
- **Lafayette**
4050 Britt Farm Drive, Lafayette, 47905
- **Merrillville**
606B West 81st Street, Merrillville, 46410
- **Muncie**
Ball State University, Lucina Hall, Room 366, Muncie, 47306
- **South Bend**
3005 Grape Road, Suite A, Mishawaka, 46545
- **Terre Haute**
3537 South 3rd Place, Terre Haute, 47803

Reporting MCAT Scores

Schools Using AMCAS

When you apply to medical schools through AMCAS, the AAMC sends your application materials to the medical schools you have designated in the AMCAS application, including your MCAT scores. AMCAS automatically includes MCAT scores for examinees. You do not have the option to withhold scores for exams.

Non-AMCAS Institutions

If you want your scores sent to a non-AMCAS school or application service (AACOMAS, podiatry programs, TMDSAS), use the online MCAT THx system (Score History System) (<http://services.aamc.org/mcatthx>). If the school to which you want your scores sent is not listed, you may print a copy of your scores from the THx system and mail them directly.

The Application Process

Although there is more on this below, an application to medical school is basically completed on 2 levels. You start with a primary application which is completed online. For MD programs, it is called AMCAS (pronounced am-cas) and is available at <http://www.aamc.org>. DO programs use a similar system called AACOMAS (pronounced a-comb-us) which is available at <http://www.aacom.org>. If you are applying to schools in Texas, you will use TMDSAS which is available at <http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas/>. Each system asks for demographic information; a list of extracurricular activities, honors, and research; a listing of every college course ever taken (including those that were red-lined and high school courses taken for college credit) and the grade earned (which is matched with your transcript); and an essay about why you want to be a doctor. The application is tedious to fill out and takes considerable time. You can, however, save completed portions and come back to it so it does not have to be completed in one sitting. There is a fee for submitting the application. In 2007 the fees for AMCAS and AACOMAS are as follows:

- AMCAS: \$160 for first school and \$30 for each additional school
- AACOMAS: \$155 for first school, \$35 for the second school, \$30 for each additional school from 3-10, then \$25 for each school from 11 on
- TMDSAS: see website
<http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas/ApplicationInstructions.htm#ApplicationFee>

The application services (AMCAS, AACOMAS, TMDSAS) will check your transcripts (which you have sent to them) against the information you submitted. If the information does not match, you will be contacted to figure out the error. Then your application will go to the back of the line to be verified again. It is important that your grades/courses match on your application and transcripts. Once your application has been verified, it is sent to your designated medical schools. At this point, the medical schools take over. Each school asks all or just selected students to provide a secondary application. Often this contact is through email and includes more essays and a request for more money. If the school is still interested after you have submitted your secondary application, they will request an interview.

What is an application service?

Online services that collect your initial application materials and submit them to the medical schools are called application services. For MD programs the service is called AMCAS and for DO schools it is AACOMAS. If you are applying for medical schools in Texas, you will also need to use their system TMDSAS. For more information, see above.

Once your online application is complete, you cannot make changes other than your contact information and the listing of schools to which you are applying. Any other

updates to your application should be sent directly to medical schools—not to AMCAS or AACOMAS.

Reminder: It can take 3-6 weeks before the application services can process and forward your application to medical schools.

What type of computer do I need to fill out the applications?

Each application service specifies the computer needs for filling out their application. You can find this information at the following sites:

AMCAS: <http://www.aamc.org/students/amcas/faq/start.htm>

AACOMAS: <https://aacomas.aacom.org/> under FAQ

TMDAS: <http://www.utsystem.edu/TMDAS/FreqAskedQs/09-ComputerRequirements.htm>

What is the application timeline?

The application process starts about 15 months before you want to start medical school. For example, if you want to begin medical school in the fall of 2009, you will begin your application during the spring/summer of 2008. One of the main goals is to apply early. This not only shows enthusiasm, but since most schools do rolling admissions (meaning they fill their class as they go) your best bet is to apply early. The general timeline is as follows:

- April-June: take the MCAT if you have not already done so
- May-July: work on online primary application—AMCAS for MD programs and/or AACOMAS for DO programs.
- Mid June-early August: submit primary application
- July-October: Office of Health Professions submits your letters via VirtualEvals
- Late July-September: complete secondary applications
- Mid September-March: interviews
- Late October-day before start of medical school classes: hear about acceptances

Application Deadlines

You will see deadlines for medical schools that range from October to February. Officially they do accept applications up until this date, however, you will probably not be as viable of a candidate at that time. Many medical schools use rolling admissions so they are filling their class as they go. This means that if you apply just before their deadline, the class is already smaller as are your chances. You also need to think about what applying this late says about you. Does it say that you are enthusiastic about medical school, organized, well-informed, and desperately want to attend their program? Not really.

Primary Applications

Your primary application to medical school (both MD & DO) will be completed online. The application services AMCAS for MD, AACOMAS for DO, and TMDSAS for schools in Texas will include biographic information; lists of your activities and awards (no more than 15 and all since high school); list of all the schools you have attended and all the college level courses you have taken; a personal statement about why you want to be a doctor; and a list of the schools to which you will apply. The applications “go live” in mid-May for AMCAS and early-June for AACOMAS. Generally you have about a month to work on the application before you can submit it. Your credit card will be charged once you hit the submit button. It is important to apply early, but it is equally important that your application be error-free. You need to edit very carefully.

As part of your primary application, you will print a transcript request form for each school at which you have taken college level courses and turn that form in to the appropriate registrar’s offices to have copies of your transcripts mailed directly to the application services. If you open a letter file in the Health Professions Office, we will handle your letters through an online system called VirtualEvals (described above).

Secondary Application

After you complete your primary application online and it is sent out to your chosen schools, the medical schools take over the application process. They will then contact you directly (often by email—so use your Purdue email address or another one that sounds professional—do not have them emailing you at slutbunny@randomemail.com

Some schools send out secondaries to all applicants—it is easy money for them. Others are more selective about who is given a secondary. This information is available in the MSAR for MD programs. You need to follow their directions carefully and return your secondary materials on time (usually within about 2 weeks). Most secondaries will also require more money to be sent directly to the medical school to continue the review of your application.

Many secondary applications include questions that look a lot like the one you answered on your primary application. You should not repeat this answer. You need to write a new one. Basically, if one is all you can think of to state your interest in your chosen profession, you are unlikely to persuade an admissions committee of your passion, commitment, and working knowledge of the profession. This is your chance to tell them additional information, to discuss the breadth of your career exploration, the array of interpersonal skills you have, and your self-understanding. Most of all, you can really focus your thoughts on their program and why you are a good fit. Repeating your AMCAS or AACOMAS essay also makes schools think that you are so disinterested in their program you couldn’t be bothered to supply additional information. The very fact that schools include this question when they know you have already answered it once, should tell you how important it is to them that you are making a well-informed decision.

Going along with writing new paragraphs for your secondaries, you should choose to answer any optional questions. This is your chance to show them your passion for medicine and your fit for their program. Medical school admissions committees are always seeking insights into who is behind the numbers, since excellent grades and MCAT scores are only part of the application process and really tells little about an applicant other than their intellectual aptitude. This is your opportunity to provide those personal insights, including expanding upon your commitment to community; addressing a personal struggle/issue that you might have overcome and what you learned from it; a hobby, interest, skill that you have developed over the years; what unique qualities/skills/life experiences that you will bring to their next entering class; and so on. This is your opportunity to shine. Every applicant has something that makes him/her stand out from the crowd—you need to identify your special qualities or attributes.

A Note on Calculating GPAs

Each of the application services requires that you enter all of the courses you have ever taken and the grades you received. If you repeated courses, all attempts and grades must be entered. Even redlined courses come back for these applications. They see everything. Thus, a new GPA must be calculated. Each system handles this differently. AMCAS has data sent in by our Registrar's Office that helps the system interpret our grades. AACOMAS calculates your GPA after your application has been processed.

Tips for Working with Application Services

- Read the instructions they provide
- Always apply before the deadline
- Make use of the helpdesks provided by the application services
- Give yourself plenty of time—it takes longer than you think.
- Do NOT cut and past. The system does not always handle this well and may insert strange characters.
- Proofread many times.
- Gather information before you begin.
 - Have a copy of your transcript(s)
 - List out your activities/awards
- Print the transcript matching form and submit it to the Registrar early on. Waiting for transcripts slows down the verification process of your application. You may submit your transcript before you submit the rest of your application.
- Work on your personal statement well in advance. This is not something you want to write at the last minute. Type it into the allotted space—DO NOT CUT AND PASTE. The Health Professions Advisor will read and comment on them if you email it to her 1-2 weeks in advance.
- Print a copy of your application for your records. Read over the materials you submitted before each interview.
- Read all instructions carefully.

Personal Statements

Writing personal statements is painful. Writing about yourself is difficult anyway and in this essay you are trying to describe your motivation to become a physician while avoiding clichés and helping your reader get to know you a bit better as a person. No easy task. You are also limited in this essay by the size: AMCAS allows 5300 characters and AACOMAS is even shorter. Other portions of your application allow you to list your courses; grades; test scores; volunteer, work and extracurricular experiences; awards and honors. Your statement should not be another list. If you have already covered these, do not waste your space by mentioning them again unless you talk about how they impacted your life. This is your opportunity to explain the meaning you attach to your activities.

There is no preferred format for these essays but short stories from your life that explain your choices, actions, and motivations are often helpful. Unless you are an extraordinarily gifted writer, stay away from being clever. Clever often translates to admissions officers as weird, at worst, and less than serious at best. You should also type your essay into the spot allocated on your application. The online applications do not respond well to cutting and pasting. MD/PhD and MSTP students have additional statements they write for the primary application.

More help with writing your statement and questions to consider are in the Appendix B.

Tips for Successful Personal Statements

- Be sure to save all drafts. These sentences/paragraphs may help you write secondary application essays.
- Don't include anything you would not want someone to ask about in an interview.
- Be yourself!
- Be specific about things you have done and how they have impacted your life.
- Have many people read and comment on it.
- The personal statement and the letters of evaluation provide the medical schools their first chance to get to know you. Make your statement as personal as possible.

Interviews

Once you have submitted your primary and secondary application, you will hopefully proceed to the lightning round—interviews. Schools do interviews differently. Some use an open file method in which the interviewer has read your file and may ask questions about it. Others have closed files so the interviewer is just asking questions without any background information. Some interviews are very conversational, others are done as a group (2 or 3 other hopeful students with you), and still others try to grill you and see you squirm. In general you want to prepare as best you can for these interviews by finding out about the process used, keeping up on the news, learning about the school and its curriculum and preparing question you want to ask them about their programs. You might also find it helpful to visit www.studentdoctor.net which gathers stories about interviews at various medical schools.

More tips about interviews can be found in Appendix D.

Basic Interview Tips

- Be yourself.
- Dress comfortably and professionally.
- Don't include anything in your written materials that you wouldn't be comfortable discussing in an interview. If it is in your packet—even if it is an especially personal matter—they will consider it “fair game” if it is part of your application.
- Get there early.
- Be polite to everyone you meet that day. You don't know who reports to the admissions committee.
- Send a thank you note to your interviewer.

Tips to Keep You Organized and On Track

- Keep the application services and the Health Professions File Service updated on your contact information.
- If secondary materials are not submitted via email, consider mailing them through certified mail with a return receipt requested.
- Make copies of everything you send out and organize it in a folder or notebook.
- Read over the materials you have submitted to a school before your interview. If they ask a question about something you turned in, you want to remember what you wrote.
- Keep records of requirements at various programs and when you have met them.
- Send thank you notes after your interviews and to the people who wrote letters for you.
- Inform the health professions office about your application outcomes.
- Always be especially polite if you need to contact the medical school admissions offices.

The Health Professions Advising Office is here to help. Please let us know when you need assistance with your application.

Application Outcomes

Accepted to Health Professions Programs:

- If you have recently been accepted into a professional school program, CONGRATULATIONS!
- Please share the news with your advisors and favorite faculty and those who wrote letters for you.
- Make sure you have filed your FAFSA forms for financial aid.
- Be sure you know the rules for informing schools about your choices. MD program rules: <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/policies/applicants.htm>. DO program rules are under *Application Process Guidelines* in the osteopathic information book at <http://www.aacom.org/resources/bookstore/cib/Documents/cib2008.pdf>
- Start working on finding a place to live.
- Make sure you keep doing what you need to do for graduation.

Not Yet Accepted (Waitlisted):

- Not knowing is very difficult. No one really knows what will happen with the list each year, but rest assured they will let you know as soon as a position opens.
- Continue to strengthen your application. Update your file at that school with any major awards or achievements.
- Start working on re-applying—just in case.

Not Accepted:

- Applying to medical programs can be a long and arduous process that is mentally exhausting. If you don't get in you may be dealing with a lot of different emotions. You can always talk to your academic advisor or Health Professions Advisor or head to the Purdue Counseling and Guidance Center.
- You are facing some decisions. Do you really want to be a doctor? Would other careers be equally fulfilling? You should probably explore some of these just to know your options. Consider osteopathic medicine, podiatry, chiropractic medicine, public health and other fields.
- Talk to the schools to which you applied. Ask them how you can strengthen your candidacy (a more constructive question than "Why didn't I get in?").
- Consider whether you need to re-take your aptitude test or undergraduate science classes.
- Research post-bac programs: <http://services.aamc.org/postbac>
- You might find it helpful to meet with the Center for Career Opportunities. <http://www.cco.purdue.edu>

Remember:

- Many re-applicants are accepted. Still, you may find it necessary to wait a year or two to improve your credentials before reapplying.
- **The Office of Health Professions Advising wants to learn from your experiences. Please let us know how your application process is going and any suggestions you have for improving our services.**

Contacting Medical Schools with Questions

The admissions offices at medical schools are extraordinarily busy, but they do want to assist applicants. They are generally happy to answer questions for you. Do try to find the answer first—they don't want to field questions you can easily answer by reading their website—but questions about your situation or options are fine.

This said, you should follow a few guidelines:

- Contact them infrequently. Calling every week to find out about your file will make you a nuisance.
- Your parents should never be the ones contacting the medical school for you. The only exception is if you are studying abroad—and they should make that very clear to the admissions office.
- When you call, be exceedingly polite. Ask them if it is a good time, if you should call back at another time or set up an appointment for a phone conversation.
- Make a list of your questions so that you do not ramble and waste their time.
- Thank them for their time.
- Being rude to the office staff is one way to ensure you will not be accepted. As they see it, this is an indication of how you will treat hospital staff.
- Be sure your voicemail is professional sounding in case they need to contact you.

Adding Updated Material To Your File

As the application process proceeds—especially if you are on a waitlist—you can add updated material to your application file. If you are asking them to go to the trouble of adding to your file, it should be fairly significant additions. They don't care that you received an A on your most recent exam. They would like to know that your article was accepted for publication (though they don't necessarily need to receive the article). Their offices are inundated with emails and mail. So think carefully about your strategy and about the best way to strengthen your application.

Being Professional

Even though medicine is always changing and embracing new technologies, it can still be a fairly conservative field. It behooves you to remember this and to act, dress, and present yourself appropriately. Once you get in, you can try to reform the rules. Here are some pointers:

- Be aware of what is on your Facebook/MySpace/other social networking site. A pre-medical applicant with stolen merchandise pictured, semi-nudity, and/or a beer bong can be hard to take seriously (yes, this has happened). Do they check? Not always, but some do. Your letter writers might also take a cruise through those sites. Also remember that even when you take things down, information tends to remain in cyberspace. Nothing ever really disappears. If you later run for senate, do you want those pictures out there?
- Also be aware of the decisions you make about behavior. Being drunk and disorderly in public may not seem like a big deal. But if you have a conviction, you must report it. Always wanted to model for the *Girls of the Big 10* issue of *Playboy*? Heff may not be your best reference for medical school.
- Be sure that all of your contact information is appropriate. Change your email if it is currently something like sexybunny@outrageousemail.com. Also make sure that your voicemail is appropriately professional. If your message says, “Dude, I’m cleaning my bong, I’ll get back to you later,” it probably won’t be considered in the funny way you meant it (yes, these things happen).
- Dress appropriately. Whether you are shadowing or interviewing, you need to dress appropriately. For interviews this means suits or slacks and a sport coat and tie for men and a dress, skirt and blouse, slacks and blouse, or suit for women. Footwear should be appropriate as well. You may need to do a lot of walking during interviews. No flipflops. No strappy sandals.
- Cover tattoos and consider removing some of your piercings if they are visible. Do you want them focusing on what you say or on your tats?
- Discourage your parents from ever contacting the medical schools. This will not look good for you. Even if you were unaware of this contact, the medical schools will assume that you knew of it. Afterall, what does it say about your assertiveness, ability to gather information, or decision making skills if you ask your parents to do this for you.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I explain a “blip” in my academic record?

Having a 4.0 is not required for attending medical school—it also does not guarantee admission. Still, your grades need to be as high as possible. Students often face a personal or academic problem that leads to a bad semester or poor performance in a selected course. Here are some things to think about:

- If it is one grade and it is a 2.0 or above, you should probably just stop beating yourself up about it. That one grade probably won't keep you from getting in to medical school.
- **If it is a prerequisite course for medical school and the grade is below a 2.0, then you must repeat the course. For medical schools if the grade was below a 2.0 in a required class, it is like you never took it.**
- If you repeat a course, it is better to repeat it at Purdue. If you take the class at another school and your grade improves a lot, they could attribute it to being an easier class. The only way to show you mastered the material is to take it at the same school if at all possible.
- Medical schools do look at trends in your grades. If you had a bad first year and then did better after this, they will see this and take that into account when looking at your overall GPA.
- You can use your application essay/personal statement to discuss any academic issues you wish to. If you do this, it should be carefully worded and should show the personal growth you have had from going through this. Do not, however, make excuses.

Do I have to report redlined courses?

Yes. Every course you attempted for college credit must be reported on your primary application.

Do I have to report a course I didn't transfer to Purdue?

Yes. Every course you attempted for college credit must be reported on your primary application. This means you will need to print more than one transcript request form and have transcripts sent from each college you attended.

Should I retake a course?

If you had one course that gave you trouble, you should probably just move on and not worry too much about it. If it was a required prerequisite for medical school, you must

repeat it if you have below a C. Ideally you would repeat it at Purdue to show that you mastered the material and didn't just find a similar course where it might be easier. Having too many repeated courses on your transcript will not look good for you. How many is too many? Depends on the school and your overall record.

What is a Dean of Students Letter?

Many medical schools require verification that you were in good social and academic standing while at Purdue. They do this by requiring a Dean of Students letter or form. Typically you just have to sign it and turn it in and the Dean's office will take care of returning it to the medical school. You have 3 choices for doing this:

- Go to Schleman B-50 (Student Rights and Responsibilities) and drop off the form.
- Send it through campus mail to Steve Akers, Student Rights and Responsibilities, Schleman B-50
- Mail it to:
Steve Akers
Student Rights and Responsibilities
Schleman Hall B-50
Purdue University
475 Stadium Mall Dr
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2050
- If you have questions, call 765-494-1250
- **The Office of Health Professions Advising does not handle this for you.**

What if a school asks for a committee letter or a health advisor letter?

Currently Purdue does not offer this service. When they ask for this, they mean if your school provides this service. Do not ask your academic advisor to provide this letter for you—this is not what they want. For schools that do not offer this, individual recommendation letters will suffice. This will not negatively impact your application.

Do I have to tell them about being charged with a crime or institutional actions taken against me?

Yes. They are actually very strict about this. You will be subject to a criminal background check (discussed below) before you can matriculate at the medical school, so you might as well be honest during your application. If they find out about it another way, it will probably end your application. They also want to know if you have faced charges from your university for breaking any academic or social rules.

What is the MSAR?

The MSAR (the *Medical School Admission Requirements*) is a book published annually by the Association of American Medical Colleges. Besides a great deal of general information, the MSAR includes details about each medical school including the number of in-state/out-of-state students they admit, the median GPA and MCAT scores, and the required prerequisite courses. You can purchase a copy of the MSAR through the AAMC or through outside vendors such as Amazon (just type in MSAR).

Similar information on osteopathic schools is available at <http://www.aacom.org/resources/bookstore/cib/Pages/default.aspx>

What is the cost of applying?

The application process can get expensive. By the time you pay for the MCAT, the primary application fee, the secondary fees, and travel to interviews—it adds up. You should budget at least \$1000-2000 dollars depending on how many schools you apply to and how far you will need to travel for interviews. Fee waivers are available for the MCAT and through the application services so you might want to look into this. These must be approved before you submit your application. Here are some of the costs for those applying for the Fall 2008 entering class:

- MCAT \$210
- AMCAS \$160 for the first school and \$30 for each additional school
- AACOMAS: <http://www.aacom.org/resources/bookstore/cib/Pages/default.aspx>
- TMDSAS: see chart
<http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas/ApplicationInstructions.htm#ApplicationFee>
- Secondaries: Costs are listed in the MSAR, but generally range from \$50-\$150
- Travel: Varies and depends a lot on whether you can drive to your interview
- Test prep class: If you choose to take a test prep class you should budget about \$1800

So you should consider your choice of schools carefully. If you are an Indiana resident, for example, is it worth your money to apply to Southern Illinois University when, according to the MSAR, they interviewed only 3 out-of-state students last year? Probably not. You should also consider the cost of going someplace for interviews. Want to go to med school in Hawaii? It'll cost you a lot to fly there for interviews—and again, they don't take many mainlanders. Generally a well chosen 6-12 schools (maybe a few more if you apply to both MD and DO programs) will give you good opportunities without overspending.

Is financial assistance available?

Yes. Both the MCAT and the application services provide fee waivers. The application services often have only a certain number of these set aside—so apply early. Individual

medical schools may work with you on secondary fees if you had a fee waiver for your primary application. You can find these on their respective websites at:

- AMCAS: <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/start.htm>
- AACOMAS: <http://www.aacom.org/resources/bookstore/cib/Pages/default.aspx>
- MCAT: <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/start.htm>
- TMDSAS: No fee waivers available

Should I apply early decision (EDP)?

This is, of course, entirely up to you. If there is only one school you would possibly want to attend, then early decision may be a good option for you. Many schools have such plans and the deadline is usually August 1st. Applicants are notified by October 1. If you are a strong applicant and want to save money and stress, this may be a good option.

Applying early decision, however, means that you may not apply to any other medical schools until you have a decision from your early decision school. If you cannot apply to any other program until October 1st, you will be at a disadvantage for other programs. If you are not accepted to their early decision program, many schools will re-evaluate you as part of the general applicant pool and you can then apply to other schools as well. If you are offered admission through early decision, you must accept the offer and CANNOT apply for admission to another medical school during that application year.

What is I decide to apply after I graduate (at the end of my senior year or later)?

Many students do apply after graduation or they are applying for a second time after graduation. The Office of Health Professions Advising continues to work with you even after you have graduated. To make this process as smooth as possible, please update your professional file in 1-123 Lilly Hall. Make sure that we have current contact information for you. You will also need an email address. At some point your Purdue address may stop working. You should find a professional sounding address that you will check regularly so that the medical schools can contact you there.

As long as you are doing something interesting with your time—work, research, travel, volunteering—the medical schools do not see this application year as “wasted” time. They see it as an extra year of maturity and experience. You should think about this as a time to continue to build your resume. Need to work a retail job? That’s fine and it will help you improve your people skills. Be sure to keep volunteering in a health care setting so that you continuously affirm your interest in medicine.

If you are going to be out working before you go to medical school, be careful about overly investing in your life. Many people get out of their poor college years and start making money and use their credit cards for new flat screen TVs, iPhones, and maybe

even buying a car. Any new debt may make it harder for you to quit working and head back to school.

Can I go to a U.S. medical school as a non-U.S. citizen?

It is very difficult. Only a small number of international students are granted access to U.S. medical schools each year. You should research the process very carefully before applying. Many medical schools that say they take international students, for example, mean that they will consider students from Canada—and only Canada. Others want 2-4 years of tuition up front. That is a hefty sum to be able to set aside. You should read the following article to learn more about applying to medical schools as a non-U.S. citizen or permanent resident: http://www.naahp.org/resources_InternatMed_Article.htm

Are there special programs for underrepresented students?

Yes. One of the problems in our health care system is that the numbers of health care providers from ethnic minorities and lower incomes do not reflect our population. This contributes to health care disparities as people are often more comfortable seeking care from someone from their own community. Many schools have someone in their admissions office who works directly with underrepresented students. Thus, your application may be handled by a specialist.

There are also programs that were initially intended to recruit underrepresented students that you might consider. Many medical schools have summer enrichment programs. You could also consider the wonderful summer programs offered through SMDEP (only available after the freshman and sophomore years). In these programs you spend clinical time, work on reviewing for the MCAT, participate in research, learn about professionalism, and enjoy some time in another city with future colleagues. Most of these programs, while initially intended to recruit minority students, are now open to all students. <http://www.smdep.org>

Where should I apply?

There is, of course, no one answer for this question. It is often a highly personal issue. Here are some things to think about:

- Where do you have residency (generally where your parent(s) live)? You have the best chance of getting into your state school. Make sure you check the residency statistics for various schools. If you are an Indiana resident and want to go to Southern Illinois University...well, good luck with that. They interviewed 3 out of state students in 2006-2007.

- Are your numbers and qualifications in the appropriate range for that school? If you have a 3.2 GPA and a 26 MCAT and modest shadowing and other achievements—you will likely not be competitive at a school like Johns Hopkins.
- Is it important to you to stay within a day's drive of family?
- Do you have other people in your life you need to consider (spouse, significant other)? The other side of this should also be considered. If you limit your choices because of another person, will you later resent that decision—especially if things don't work out in the relationship?
- Would you be miserable living in a rural area or conversely in a large metropolitan area?
- Are you looking to apply at highly selective schools?
- Do you need to find schools that accept international students (not all will)?
- Are there specific types of programs or research you want to be involved in as a medical student? Is that something you can do at the schools you are looking at?
- Do you need the school to supply any special assistance? Is the school equipped for that?
- You can use national rankings to help you decide, but these lists often indicate more about the research funding in certain areas than the actual education in those areas. It also indicates strong associated residencies and fellowships—which may not have much impact on you as a medical student.

How many schools should I apply to?

National average for number of schools is about 11. A well chosen 6-12 can maximize your chance of getting in while limiting your expenses. For osteopathic schools, most students apply to 6-8 programs. Applying to all schools will cost a lot of money and probably will not improve your options very much.

What if I have to apply more than once?

Many people do need to apply more than once. Medical schools cannot possibly accept all the extraordinary applicants they see. So don't get too disheartened. Do, however, be critical of your credentials and think carefully about how you can strengthen your application for the next time. Some things to think about:

- You should always hope for the best but plan for the worst when it comes to applications. What does this mean? Go into your application hoping to get in, but work on the assumption that you may not. That means during your application year, work toward improving your application just in case you need to apply again. If you don't do this and are not admitted, you will basically be resubmitting a failed application.
- Assess your original application. How could you improve it?
- If you have not been admitted, call the admissions office and ask how to strengthen your application.

- Medical schools do sometimes look up your previous applications. They expect to see growth as a person and applicant.
- To show that you have learned and matured, write all new application essays. After a year, you should have new thoughts, ideas, and experiences to share with them. After all, if you can only write one page about why you want to be a doctor, maybe this isn't the best field for you.
- If you are applying for a second time, you need to make sure you are also working on a parallel plan. Seriously. What will you choose to do if this doesn't work out? Is there something you could find equally fulfilling? Have you taken a serious look at some other career fields?

Should I consider an MD/PhD or DO/PhD?

If you are considering focusing more of your efforts on medical research, you might want to consider an MD/PhD or DO/PhD program. Many medical schools offer these combined programs with an emphasis in biomedical sciences. Only a few offer the PhD in humanities or social science. The hope is that these physician/scientists can combine basic and clinical sciences with their unique interdisciplinary education. These are typically very small programs as they cover all the tuition for students during their entire training. Typically students do the first 2 years of medical school (the basic science years), then complete their PhD in 3-5 years, then go back for the clinical portion of their training.

MSTP programs are Medical Scientist Training Programs which are MD/PhD programs supported by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. Although the money comes from the federal government, the individual programs make decisions about admissions. Applicants to MSTP programs must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the United States.

Typically to gain admission in these combined programs, you will need a significant research background (often presenting information at national meetings and/or publishing your results), very strong letters from research supervisors, and high MCAT scores (34 or better). Application to these combined programs often takes a few more steps and it differs for each school. So be sure you carefully investigate the process at each program. Typically there are more essay questions, sometimes 2 interviews, and your letters may need to be handled differently. Some programs also require that you take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) as well as the MCAT.

One point to investigate with each program is their policy for handling students who decide they only want one of the degrees in the middle of the program. At some schools, they ask you to repay the tuition they already invested in you (about \$40,000 a year). Others just have you pay from that point on. Make sure you know the policy!

For more information on MD/PhD and MSTP programs check the MSAR and <http://services.aamc.org/currdir/section3/degree2.cfm>

For more information on combined DO/PhD programs check under individual programs at: <http://www.aacom.org/resources/bookstore/cib/Pages/default.aspx>

What other combined programs are available?

Both DO and MD programs offer a number of combined programs. The most common are physician training along with a public health degree (MPH), a business degree (MBA), or a legal degree (JD). All of these degrees prepare you well for administrative duties in the future. The MPH especially prepares you to work in public policy arenas, in the uniformed public health corps, and to work for the Centers for Disease Control Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS). Some programs also offer additional training in medical informatics, medical humanities, and complementary medicine.

What about attending an international medical school?

Off shore medical schools include those in the Caribbean and Mexico and a few in Europe. Students who are not admitted to U.S. programs sometimes don't want to wait to apply again or have already applied several times and consider these programs. Some are better than others. One study of physicians brought up on disciplinary charges found that more of them had attended off-shore schools, so you do want to be careful here. Some things to consider:

- What is the gap in your application that has prevented you from being accepted? Is it something you could consider fixing then reapplying to U.S. schools?
- Is a poor MCAT score the reason you didn't get into a stateside school? If you have problems with standardized tests, then an off-shore program may not be the best place for you. In order to get the residency you want, you will need to score especially well on the board exams—which are standardized tests. These will be especially important coming from an off-shore program. The bulk of Caribbean medical graduates go into primary care fields.
- Will you be able to be away from family for extended periods?
- Do you feel strong enough to handle the cultural differences and different rhythm of life in another country? It may look like paradise, but living in other countries can sometimes be frustrating.
- Have you checked out the first time pass rate of board examinees?
- Have you checked out the financial aid situation thoroughly?
- Are you considering primary care? About 1 in 4 of our new primary care physicians are coming from Caribbean schools these days.
- Before you make this decision, you should read the article at http://www.naahp.org/resources_ForeignMed_Article.htm

What are post-baccalaureate programs?

One suggestion for students who either decide later in their education that they want to go to medical school, decide their application is not yet strong enough, or don't get in to medical school on initial application is to attend a post-baccalaureate program (post-bacs). These are generally certificate or master's level programs. For more information go to: <http://services.aamc.org/postbac/>

Some programs allow students who did not take undergraduate science courses to gain their prerequisites. Others are special masters programs that focus on medical laboratory skills (they are special masters because they do not require a thesis). Still others basically just provide more science grades for the medical schools to see. To decide if a post-bac is right for you, you should consider:

- What is the gap in your credentials? If all of your undergraduate level science grades or all of your undergraduate grades in general are low, you may need more undergraduate level courses.
- If your science grades are good, will taking more science classes really make you a stronger candidate?
- What will you do with this degree if you still don't gain acceptance in medical school?
- The one year Pre-Professional non-Thesis MS program at IUPUI is not on the AAMC website (above): <http://www.biology.iupui.edu/graduateinformation.html>

How do I pay for medical school?

This is a big issue and one you should look at carefully. The AAMC has a very good site that discusses the expenses you should plan for and financing options. This site can be found at: <http://www.aamc.org/students/financing/md2/phase1/start.htm>. The Osteopathic schools also have a site discussing financial aid which is found at <http://www.aacom.org/resources/bookstore/cib/Pages/default.aspx> (read the AAMC site as well even if you are only applying DO).

Besides student loans, which most medical students use to pay for medical school, there are several other options. The military offers scholarships that pay for your tuition and expenses as well as providing about \$20,000 a year to live on. Military recruiters from the Army, Navy, and Air Force can tell you about your options. You can enter as a medical student and then spend several years practicing in the military or you can join after your training. There is also the National Health Service Corps that operates in much the same way. If you are willing to work in a clinic of need, they will pay your expenses and then you pay them back with service. You can also take out the loans and they will pay back a certain amount for each year you work in one of their clinics.

One thing you should be aware of is your spending habits as an undergraduate. If you manage to take on a lot of consumer debt (credit card debt), you may be unable to get the loans needed to pay for medical school because of a poor credit rating. So be mindful of this as you use credit.

What are the rules about informing medical schools about my decisions?

Allopathic Programs: You are allowed to hold acceptances from multiple medical schools until May 15th. This means that you can essentially accept offers for several schools, but you must notify the schools at which you do not intend to matriculate by no later than May 15th. For all the other students waiting to get a spot, it is kindest to alert schools immediately after you decide where you want to go. You should check out student rights and responsibilities (sometimes called the “Traffic Rules”) at <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/policies/applicants.htm> for MD programs and at <http://www.aacom.org/resources/bookstore/cib/Pages/default.aspx> for DO programs

What are Criminal Background Checks?

In August 2005, the AAMC recommended that all US allopathic medical schools procure a national background check on applicants upon their initial acceptance to medical school. This is in place to protect the safety and well being of patients and to help students later become licensed physicians. The background check is not a part of your application, interview, or selection process for medical school. It is, however, a mandatory component of the pre-matriculation process for each accepted applicant.

The AAMC has initiated an AMCAS-facilitated national background check service through Certiphi Screening, Inc that they are testing. The company will procure a national background report on applicants at the point of acceptance. The AAMC initiated this service in order to prevent applicants from paying additional fees at each medical school to which they are accepted. You must provide consent for this process and will be allowed to view the report once it is complete. You can contest the report should there be a mistake and the report will not be available to the medical schools until the issue is resolved.

While the AAMC determines if the AMCAS based system will work, participating medical schools may continue to require applicants to undergo a separate national background check.

You may be able to pre-order a background check on AMCAS if you are applying to at least one of the schools participating in the pilot study. This would allow you to order a report on yourself. You will be charged a fee for this service which will vary depending on applicant information.

To view more information about this new process, go to <http://www.aamc.org/students/amcas/faq/background.htm>

The osteopathic schools require a background check before your third year of medical school. In order to be allowed in clinical settings—which is what the third year is all about—you must pass the background check.

Appendix A

Application Checklist

Sophomore Year:

- Start collecting information about the process for applying to the type of program you are considering.
- Arrange to shadow a professional in that field.
- Consider taking your aptitude test at the end of this year if you have the necessary course background. Scores are usually good for 3 years.
- Continue to get to know faculty who will write letters for you.

Junior Year (or senior year if applying after graduation):

- Attend application workshops and/or meet with your advisor and the Health Professions Advisor.
- Decide on who will write letters of recommendation for you. Meet with them and ask them early (January or February). Prepare a resume for them.
- Open a Health Professions Letter File in 1-123 Lilly Hall.
- Continue researching the application process for your field and start thinking about which programs you want to apply to.
- Gather the materials you will need for your application: copy of your transcript(s) for yourself, create a resume, begin working on a personal statement which explains why you want to go into your chosen field.
- Take the MCAT if you have not already done so.
- If you are using an application service, most of them “go live” during the summer. **APPLY EARLY!** (Though not before the earliest date listed.) Follow their directions closely.
- Be aware of all application deadlines and submit materials well before these.
- Please check “yes” to the Advisor Information Release—it helps to advise you better and your personal information is still confidential.
- Release your MCAT scores to individual schools if needed (for osteopathic schools).
- You are in charge of your transcript as only you have access to it. Make sure you know when and where it should be sent and whether you need to have a matching form with it (application services often have a matching form you print to go with your transcript).

Senior Year:

- Keep doing what you need to do to graduate and keep your grades up.
- Continue to build your credentials in case you need to apply again. Also consider a parallel plan—a plan for what you will do if you don’t get in.
- Prepare for interviews.
- Be aware of and meet all application deadlines.
- Let schools know as quickly as possible if you intend to matriculate there.

Appendix B

Tips for Writing your Personal Statement

Personal statements help medical schools to get to know you and to discover your motivations for wanting to enter medicine. Remember, this is their first interaction with you. So be yourself and give them the chance to get to know you.

This is your opportunity to expand upon your experiences or to address anything that you feel has not already been covered in your application. Remember, however, that they are trying to get to know you. The essay, as much as possible, should give them insight into you. How have various experiences motivated you and changed the way you view the world? What unique qualities do you bring? What have you gained from various experiences? Saying that you are a very empathetic person isn't really helpful. You need to give them concrete examples of how this has played out in your life.

Remember that probably 9 out of 10 applicants are well qualified. So do not underestimate the time you should spend on this or the importance of it.

What are they looking for?

- The ability to assess yourself and your skills/experiences realistically
- The ability to articulate your views
- The ability to interact with a variety of people
- Long range goals
- Leadership ability
- A desire to work with people
- Demonstrated interest in medicine and an explanation of your motivation
- Explanation of any hardships, challenges, or obstacles that may have influenced your educational pursuits
- Explanations for any major gap in your application
- Well written and compelling to read
- Provide good examples and explanations

Questions to ask yourself (don't feel like you have to answer all of these):

- What is special, unique, distinctive about you?
- What details of your life (personal or family problems, history, events) have shaped you or influenced your goals?
- When and how did you become interested in medicine? How have you explored this? What makes you think you are well suited to medicine?
- How have you learned about the field?

- Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain?
- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships?
- What personal characteristics do you have that would make you successful in this field?
- Why do you love what you love? For example, if you have a hobby that you are passionate about, talk about your dedication to this. (Then make the link that you would bring these same qualities to health care.)
- Who are the most influential people in your life and how did they affect your development?
- How have you changed over time?
- What are the most important events/activities in your life?
- How have you demonstrated a strong work ethic, the ability to manage your time, communication skills, and leadership qualities?
- How have you worked with patients and health care professionals?
- How have you been involved in scientific research?
- What can you do as a member of this profession that you could not do in other professions?

Tips

- Create a unifying theme—your volunteer work and how it exemplifies your leadership, caring, and communication skills, for example. Another example, your dedication to athletics, the work you put into getting better and overcoming obstacles. Choose 2-3 main points you want to make and tie them together.
- Give good examples and explanations. Don't just list the things you've done.
- Help your reader understand how the information is important.
- Answer the actual question posed in the application and follow instructions carefully.
- Be specific. Don't just state that you would make an excellent doctor unless you can back it up.
- Strive for depth rather than breadth.
- Show the reader what makes you who you are.
- Evaluate your experiences rather than just recounting them.
- Enlist others to help proofread and to give you comments.
- If you are explaining something negative on your application (such as a bad semester), be honest but positive. What did you learn from going through this? Mention it and move on, but don't make excuses.
- If you are reapplying, write a new personal statement!
- Use everyday words. You don't need to impress them with obscure vocabulary.
- Avoid contractions. This is a formal essay.

Common Pitfalls

- Grammatical and spelling errors.
- Not answering the question.
- Duplication from other sections of the application. If you have already mentioned

- it in another portion of the application (under the activities section, for example) then you should only bring it up again if you have more to add (especially if you are adding information on how it has impacted you).
- Starting with a quotation (and using quotations, in general)—this is overused. Unless that quote is something you think about every day—skip it.
 - Using cliché: “I want to help people” and “I’ve wanted to be a doctor since I received my first toy doctor’s kit” and “I’m fascinated with science” or even the “I want to save lives.” Money should also not be used as a motivating factor.
 - Not making it personal. They are trying to get to know you. Make your essay distinctive by adding a story or anecdote from your life.
 - Being clever. Clever often translates as weird to admissions committees. Comparing patients to Victoria’s Secret underwear may seem meaningful to you, but will likely just make you seem very strange to the committee. Even if they don’t see you as strange, they make think you do not take the process seriously.
 - Trying to be who you think they want you to be. They read hundreds and even thousands of essays. They know when you aren’t being yourself.
 - Including certain subjects. Most programs cannot assess you based on your religion, sexuality, or political beliefs. Making these major foci of your essay means you are wasting space. You might also offend one of your readers, so tread carefully on these subjects.
 - Starting every sentence with I. You certainly can and should write in first person at times, but avoid having every statement start with *I*.
 - Waiting until deadline to begin working on it—this essay is important and generally difficult to write.
 - Preaching or getting on a soapbox about your pet subject. Expressing an opinion is fine—even desirable—but you need to avoid coming across as fanatical.

Getting started:

Writing these statements is exceedingly difficult. It is hard to know where to begin and they almost always sound lame when you read it back to yourself. It does not generally read this way to others. So make sure you get help from other readers. You can also send it to the Health Professions Advisor who will provide comments.

- Start well in advance and write a number of drafts. Be sure to save any discarded paragraphs as these might help you with your secondary application essays.
- Focus on 2-3 points you want to make.
- Don’t feel like you have to start at the beginning. Write separate paragraphs about experiences you would like to include. You can work on how to interconnect these later.
- Think about vignettes of your experiences that you can describe and use to exemplify your motivations, skills, and interests.
- You can and probably should discuss parts of your life other than interests in health care. Often your other interests can help show your motivations, how you have developed as the person you are, and offer you an opportunity for self-reflection.

Appendix C

Requesting Letters of Evaluation

Medical schools require letters of evaluation. Each school may have different requirements for letters, but if you follow the general guideline of 2 science faculty, one non-science faculty, and 1 personal letter, you should be covered for most schools.

Letters are generally submitted electronically by the Office of Health Professions Advising using VirtualEvals to the individual schools. If they are a non-VirtualEvals school, letters will be mailed to them only after they have been requested by those schools. No more than 6 letters should be submitted.

General Letter Requirements:

- Medical (Allopathic): 2 science faculty, 1 non-science faculty and possibly a healthcare, research, or volunteer experience letter. IU asks for 1 science faculty (preferably biology, chemistry, or physics), 1 non-science letter, and 1 personal letter.
- Medical (Osteopathic): Same as above with the addition of a letter from a D.O. Letters distributed as above.
- Chiropractic: Letters required are same as allopathic medicine. Your letters should be sent directly to schools when you complete the applications to each program.
- Podiatry: Letters required are same as allopathic medicine and should be mailed directly to the schools.

Asking for letters

- First and foremost, be courteous. You are making a request that takes considerable time. Professors do not have to write a letter for you.
- Ideally, faculty and others writing your letters should be familiar with medical education, knowledgeable about the qualities that admissions committees are seeking, able to compare you with your peers, and well acquainted with you.
- You should request letters at least **2-3 months** in advance.
- When approaching people about writing a letter for you, you should include these questions:
 - Would you be willing to write a letter of evaluation for me?
 - Do you feel you can write in support of my application? If you sense any hesitancy, you should discuss this then decide whether to continue with your request.
 - May we set up a time to talk about and review my qualifications?
- Provide a brief resume and autobiography to the evaluator. These should be typed.

- Follow up to POLITELY verify that letters have been sent. Rather than asking if they have done it, for example, you could ask if they need any more information from you to assist them in writing it.
- Decide whether you will keep your right of access to the letter or waive your access and let your letter writer know your decision. (This is on the forms used by the Health Professions Letter Service.) Although this is your decision, professional schools generally feel that letters you did not see are more forthright.

Appendix D

Medical School Interviews

All medical schools require a personal interview. The interview helps them evaluate your preparation for medical school as well as your social skills and your fit with that program.

Interviewers are typically faculty members, administrators, and students who may or may not be members of the admissions committee. Some schools have open files which means that the interviewer may have read your submitted materials. Others have closed files so the interviewer will not have read about you before your interview. Either way, you should be prepared to discuss materials from your application including work you have done, your extracurricular activities, interests and hobbies. You should also be prepared to discuss current news events, issues in healthcare, and new scientific developments.

Preparing for your interview:

- In general, remember that you are always “on” during an interview day. You never know who is giving information to the admissions committee. The student leading your tour may, in fact, report to the admissions committee. The office staff will certainly report if you were rude or disrespectful to them.
- Dress appropriately. Suits and ties for men (or slacks and a sport coat), dresses, skirt/blouse, slacks/blouse, or suit for women. Be aware of anything that might distract them from your credentials such as strappy high heeled sandals, piercings, tattoos, cleavage, etc. Above all, look neat.
- This is your chance to show how well you fit that institution. Do your homework, read everything you can about that institution and its programs, prepare questions for them. Make sure you can explain your activities and projects with enough detail to illustrate their relevance to your decision to pursue a medical career.
- Prepare for basic questions like, “Why do you want to be a doctor,” “Tell me about yourself,” and the ever popular final question of “Do you have anything to add?” You should be ready to discuss news events, developments in medicine, science research and even ethical questions.
- Ask well thought out questions that cannot be answered by even a quick browse through their website.
- Figure out the best way for you to relax during that day.
- Schedule a mock interview with CCO.
- Check out interview feedback at <http://www.studentdoctor.net>
- Your parents or any other family members cannot come with you that day. They can go to the campus with you if you like, but they should not enter the medical school building. You can show them around after you are accepted. (Yes, this really happens.)
- If you are interviewing at an osteopathic program, you need to be ready to talk about your understanding of the osteopathic approach.

- Above all...be yourself. These folks do a lot of interviews. They will know if you are giving the answers you think they want to hear.
- Review the following website:
<http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/about/31questions.htm>
- Though not required, it is a very nice gesture to send a thank you note to your interviewer.
- Immediately following your interview, sit down and jot some notes about questions you were not expecting and things you might want to work on before your next interview.

Appendix E

Helpful Links

Info on allopathic medicine, the MCAT, and AMCAS:

<http://www.aamc.org>

Info on osteopathic medicine:

<http://www.aacom.org>

Student Organizations

American Medical Student Association:

<http://www.amsa.org>

Student National Medical Association:

<http://www.snma.org>

Student Osteopathic Medical Association:

<http://www.studentdo.com/>

National Society for Nontraditional Premedical and Medical Students

<http://www.oldpremed.org>

Interview Information

Interview feedback

<http://www.studentdoctor.net>

Web Sites for Health-Related Articles

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/health/index.html>

<http://www.healthaffairs.com>

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/>

<http://www.medscape.com/home>

Other Information

Physician Salaries

<http://www.physicianssearch.com/physician/salary.html>

Occupational Outlook Statistics

<http://www.bls.gov/oco/oco1002.htm>



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