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SO YOU WANT TO BE A DOCTOR?

STUDENT NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



A GUIDE FOR APPLYING TO MEDICAL SCHOOL FOR
THE PRE-MEDICAL STUDENT

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SO YOU WANT TO BE A DOCTOR?

INTRODUCTION

The Student National Medical Association is the nation's oldest and largest organization focused on the needs and concerns of medical student of color. Established in 1964, on the campuses of Howard University College of Medicine and Meharry Medical College, the SNMA is dedicated to increasing the number of minority physicians practicing in medically underserved communities. The SNMA boasts over forty years of committed service to communities and continues to advocate for improved health care services and education to meet the needs of minority and underserved populations.

SNMA represents more than 6,400 medical and pre-medical student members in over 150 chapters across the United States and the Caribbean. SNMA membership is open to all who wish to make a difference in the health and medical concerns of underserved populations. Although consisting primarily of African Americans, the array of SNMA members reflects the organization's appeal to students and professionals from many cultures. SNMA members are African American, African, West Indian, Latino, Asian American, Native American and Caucasian who together, bring a global perspective to the medical education and health care issues the organization addresses. The SNMA even sends representatives to many other national organizations whose decisions may influence or impact the goals of the SNMA.

SNMA members are involved in pre-medical recruitment, community outreach, and public health education. The SNMA implements several national protocols designed to provide underrepresented pre-medical students with the knowledge, skills and experiences that are both prerequisite and concomitant to professional participation in the health care industry. Most notably, the Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students (MAPS) endeavors to increase the matriculation of undergraduate members into health

professions programs through increased awareness and interaction with host SNMA medical school chapters.

The medical school application process is very complex. This publication is an effort to help undergraduate students understand the procedures involved, while centralizing information for easy access. Our hope is that students will increase their chances of gaining admission to medical school with the use of this publication. We also encourage students to consult the office of admission of each medical school they might want to attend, current medical student, your local SNMA chapter, and your Premedical Advisor for more advice.

If there are any questions about information contained in this booklet or to identify the SNMA chapter nearest you, please contact Headquarters:

Student National Medical Association

5113 Georgia Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20011

Phone: (202) 882-2881

Fax: (202) 882-2886

Email: premedical@smna.org

PRE-MEDICAL PLANNING

Medical schools seek candidates who demonstrate strong academic records as well as a diversity of talents and interests. The purpose of pre-medical planning is to become such a candidate; one who is a viable competitor in the application process. Medicine attracts individuals with diverse backgrounds, skills, and interests. An undergraduate education must therefore include a variety of experiences with a strong emphasis on the sciences, augmented by courses in the humanities, and extracurricular activities.

MAJORS

It is NOT essential to major in the basic sciences (Biology, Chemistry, etc.) in order to enter medical school. In fact, an increasing number of medical school applicants/matriculants have been non-science majors. Many medical schools favor having a wide mixture of undergraduate disciplines represented among their students. Regardless of one's major, all medical school applicants must complete, at least, the following coursework*:

- One year of general biology (with laboratory)
- One year of general chemistry (with laboratory)
- One year of organic chemistry (with laboratory)
- One year of general physics (with laboratory)
- One year of English
- One year of mathematics (preferably calculus and/ or statistics)

NOTE:

Over 80 medical schools highly recommend or require a semester of **biochemistry**.

22 schools require at least one semester of **calculus**.

These core courses provide the minimum level of knowledge and understanding required as a foundation on which to build during your first year of medical school. Some schools also require additional courses in the biological sciences, social sciences, foreign languages, or statistics. In order to make sure that all requirements are met, contact the individual schools that you are interested in applying to early in your pre-medical preparation.

The Medical School Admissions Requirement Book published annually by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and contains requirements for the various medical schools. Purchase price is \$25, though many pre-med

advisors may have a copy. In addition, it contains useful information regarding average MCAT scores, average GPAs, and grading policies.

The American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) also publishes the Osteopathic Medical College Information Book, which contains similar information about osteopathic medical schools. Also available for \$15 purchase or can be downloaded free of charge.

Although additional science courses may not be required or formally recommended, they should be considered by non- science or science majors who wish to gain exposure to more advanced topics. Pay attention in these classes, take good notes, and keep the textbooks because they may be useful as references during medical school. Courses such as physiology, biochemistry, and cell or molecular biology are all taken during the first year of medical school. Prior exposure makes the subject less taxing the second time around.

Regardless of the major or courses one chooses, it is essential to perform at a high level. Strive for A's and B's in all of your classes. GPAs play a major role in admission and are often separated into science and non-science GPAs. More emphasis is placed on the science GPA, but the non-science GPA is not to be disregarded. While a "C" in a science or non-science class does not preclude an applicant for failure of getting into medical school, students with science GPAs of a B or better do have the best chance of being accepted.

***Check out this link for a list of the required courses for all U.S. medical schools:** <https://students-residents.aamc.org/choosing-medical-career/article/required-premedical-coursework-and-competencies/>.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- Grades and MCAT scores are important factors in determining successful medical school performance but medical schools also look for traits of leadership, maturity, purpose, motivation, initiative, perseverance, and breadth of interests. These traits can be best demonstrated through extracurricular activities. Any extracurricular activity that allows one to work with others will demonstrate an ability to relate to people and to be a team player. Both qualities are important since there is a "team approach" to medical care; physicians must be able to relate to others effectively.
- Participation in the pre-medical clubs and organizations on campus may allow an applicant to obtain inside information on the application process, in addition to demonstrating an interest to utilize all resources available. SNMA MAPS chapters provide this information, facilitate social and academic contact with current medical students and physicians, and allow exposure to community service projects. Interactions with minority medical students at regional and national conferences are a great advantage that SNMA gives to MAPS members. This mentoring opportunity may be important in your application process and interviewing process with specific schools.
- It is important to find an activity that you enjoy and stick with it. This shows dedication and determination. Assume some responsibility in your organization as an active member. However, be advised not to spread yourself too thin. While extracurricular activities are helpful, keep in mind that your coursework is your first priority.

Student Spotlight

What is your best advice for pre-medical students?

If you want to do medicine, you have to be committed to working hard. The path to becoming a physician is a long and arduous road. It takes dedication and hard work to make it.

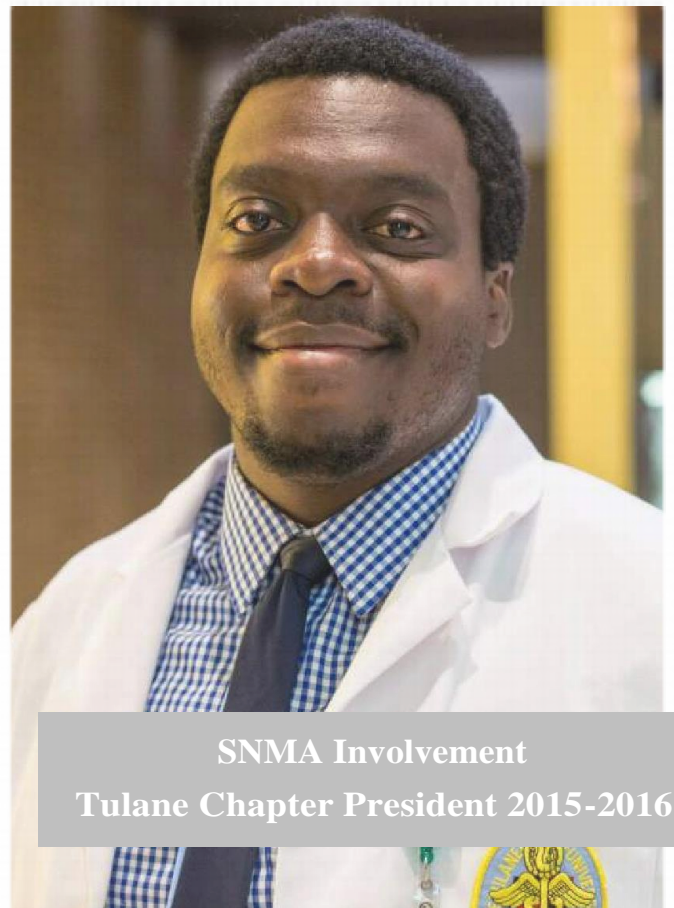
If you could talk to yourself during your senior year of undergrad, what advice would you give?

Don't give up. Don't get discouraged. Don't doubt yourself. You're good enough and smart enough to make it.

Best school or summer opportunities you participated in prior to medical school?

As undergraduate my summers were spent either taking more classes, doing research, or working. My best experience by far was my research experience in an anatomy lab.

Bolaji Akingbola, MS2
Tulane University School of Medicine
Mississippi College, M.S. '12
University of Michigan, B.S. Kinesiology
'10
Hometown: New Orleans, LA



SNMA Involvement
Tulane Chapter President 2015-2016

RESEARCH AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Experiences such as research and clinical volunteering are other options to demonstrate an interest and an attempt to gain exposure to the medical field. Research may be done either longitudinally during the year or during the summer. There are national research programs, such as the [Minority Access to Research Careers \(MARC\)](#) and [Minority Biomedical Research Support \(MBRS\)](#) that can be applied for through your institution.

Note:

If you are interested in pursuing a MD/PhD combined program, research is a requirement so get involved with research early.

In addition, many medical schools have summer programs in which students have paid internships/research positions. Professors from local universities may also need laboratory assistants. Any of these experiences will provide laboratory experience and exposure to networking opportunities. Many programs require presentations or research posters that provide a chance to sharpen presentation and public speaking skills.

Volunteering, especially in a hospital, clinic, or other health care setting can provide enrichment and insight into the types of things that you will experience both during medical school and in your career. It is especially helpful to shadow a physician in their daily activities. All of these activities are examples of ways to impress upon an admissions committee that the decision to pursue a career in medicine has been well contemplated. Contact the volunteer office of your local hospital, clinic, etc. to obtain more information.

Suggestions for national research that can be applied for through your respective institutions are listed below:

Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC)

FASEB MARC Program

FASEB Career Resources Office

9650 Rockville Pike

Bethesda, Md. 20814-3998

Phone: (301) 634-7020

Fax: (301) 634-7353

marc@faseb.org

Minority Biomedical Research Support (MBRS)

Dr. Hinda Zlotnik

LMBRS Branch Chief

(301) 594-3900

zlotnikh@nigms.nih.gov

SUMMER EXPERIENCES

Summer experiences are as varied as medical school applicants themselves. The majority of successful applicants engage in research or volunteer experiences as listed above or summer enrichment programs that may offer academic or MCAT preparation at some point during their undergraduate or post-baccalaureate careers. These summer enrichment programs are offered at many institutions across the country, most encouraging minority student participation. It is especially advantageous to attend a program at one's medical school of choice. Other applicants use this time for working, taking summer classes, travel, or MCAT preparation. There is no magic formula for a successful application process, but all summer activities should be constructive in one way or another.

For a comprehensive listing of summer programs consult the resource, [AAMC Summer Program Database](#).

Also consult [Co-op/Internships and Summer Research Opportunities in Biomedical Research and for Pre-Medical Studies Students](#).

There are also many summer programs that are geared toward underrepresented minorities.

[Summer Health Professions Education Program \(SHPEP\)](#) is one of these programs. SHPEP is a free enrichment program that focuses on preparing underrepresented minorities for applying to medical school and other health profession schools. Participants take classes such as organic chemistry, physics and calculus. They also shadow physicians and prepare for the MCAT.

UNDERGRADUATE TIMELINE

The path to medical school varies person to person. There is no one way to get accepted into medical school. The following is a timeline for students who will apply to medical school beginning in the summer after their junior year and during their senior year of college. Whatever pathway or timeline you wish to take, be sure to meet regularly with your pre-medical advisor and to also seek advice from trusted professors, medical students, and student leaders who will help guide you in your preparation for medical school.

FRESHMAN YEAR

- Speak with an academic advisor to obtain information on the classes to be taken during the next four years for your major.
- Identify required courses for medical school and adjust your schedule as needed.
- Identify upperclassman and student organizational resources for information on professors, study guides, old tests, and courses.
- Plan for the summer by searching for medical enrichment/volunteer programs.
- Begin saving science textbooks and notes for MCAT review.
- Begin thinking about recommendation letter writers; your summer experiences are good sources for letters.
- Start taking mock MCAT exams to become familiar with the exam and to practice your test-taking skills.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

- Attempt to finish math requirements, as they usually provide a basis for more advanced chemistry, biology, or physics courses.
- Meet with your pre-medical advisor and revise academic schedule if necessary, to make sure that medical school prerequisites will be met by the end of junior year.
- Continue to save science textbooks for MCAT review.
- Begin outlining and writing a rough draft of your personal statement for medical school admissions through the AMCAS/AACOMAS.
- Plan for the summer by searching for medical enrichment/volunteer/research programs.
- Start saving money for MCAT prep courses/materials. Consider applying for Kaplan's tuition assistance program. Contact the Pre-Medical Board Member (premedical@snma.org) and the Academic Affairs Committee (academicaffairs@snma.org) for more information regarding MAPS member benefits for MCAT prep.
- Save money and create a financial plan to cover application and interview expenses. Keep in mind that expenses for primary and secondary applications, flights, hotels, local transportation, food, a nice suit, alterations and dry cleaning can add up quickly, and it's a good idea to start saving early.
- Begin researching medical schools.
- Continue to network with professors, faculty, and administration and begin thinking about from whom you will ask for a letter of recommendation for medical school.

JUNIOR YEAR:

- Continue to meet with your academic and pre- medical advisor to evaluate your academic progress prior to taking the MCAT examination.
- Sign up for the MCAT examination. The MCAT is offered several times throughout the year. You should take the MCAT as soon as you can, in case you potentially want or need to take the exam a second time.
- Sign up for an MCAT prep course to prepare for the MCAT or make a schedule to study on your own.
- Stay focused on your schoolwork while preparing for the MCAT and have a solid plan ready for the summer. It is important that internships at hospitals and research apprenticeships be heavily considered. You can also spend the summer preparing for the MCAT.
- Start the second draft of your medical school personal statement. Look at an old AMCAS/AACOMAS application. This will give you an idea of the material that you will have to have prepared prior to submitting your AMCAS/AACOMAS application.
- Contact your parent SNMA chapter and ask members for advice on the application and interview process.
- Begin looking at alternative options to medicine. This is just a back-up plan. Most students look into graduate school, research positions, or other options that may interest them.

SENIOR YEAR

- Make sure your AMCAS/AACOMAS application material was submitted in early part of the summer. The application can be submitted beginning June 1.
- Complete secondary applications in an orderly fashion and submit them shortly after receiving them. Maintain a timely turnaround period for secondary applications. It is best to set a goal of returning secondaries within 2 weeks of receiving them, but keep in mind, the earlier the better. Some schools have specific instructions regarding timeline, so make sure to read instructions regarding secondary submission closely.
- Contact the administration of the medical schools you are applying to and get in touch with a minority affairs director or medical students (SNMA chapter) who can give you their perspectives on the institution, the interview format, etc.
- Be sure to highlight those application dates as well as the medical school interview dates.
- Make economical trips to schools for interviews. Try to limit coastal travel to once or twice and combine interviews dates that are within the same regions. Make sure to contact the institution's SNMA chapter. A chapter member may be able to host you.
- Enjoy your senior year and be patient as you wait to hear from medical schools.
- Look into post-baccalaureate programs and other options to apply to if you decide not to attend medical school the following year.

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (HBCU)

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Historically black colleges or universities, also known as HBCUs, are institutions that were founded primarily for the education of African Americans. With the founding of Cheyney University in Pennsylvania in 1837, African Americans were able to gain the tools that they needed to become skilled in a trade or farming or to become successful teachers.

From meager beginnings in Pennsylvania came more than 100 HBCUs, most being located primarily in the southeast region of the United States, with other locations including the District of Columbia, Oklahoma, Delaware, Kentucky, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Although the courses, majors, and campuses of the schools of yesteryear have changed, the goal of all HBCUs remains the same: to promote and advance the education of African-Americans. Now more than ever, students of HBCUs are being equipped with the knowledge and tools that they need to successfully compete against their colleagues that attend fellow HBCUs and those that do not. Proud alumni of HBCUs include Emmy award winning journalist Ed Bradley of "60 minutes" (Cheyney University), past U.S. Secretary of the Department of Labor Alexis Herman (Xavier University of Louisiana), Martin Luther King, Jr.

(Morehouse), Jerry Rice (Mississippi Valley State University), and former Surgeon General of the United States Dr. Regina Benjamin (Xavier University of Louisiana). But beyond the fame and recognition, Historically Black Colleges or Universities are producing lawyers, teachers, engineers, nurses, artists, and doctors every single day.

The contributions that HBCUs have made to the medical profession are quite numerous. Every year they produce medical, dental, nursing, and various therapy school applicants. In the past, questions were raised regarding the effectiveness of HBCUs in producing solid medical school applicants. But the medical school applicant pool over the past 10 years has shown that those that attend HBCUs can be just as competitive as those that attend a non-HBCU. The thing to remember is that regardless of the undergraduate university attended, all applicants must fulfill the same minimum requirements. But pushing the student beyond the minimum is what has proven to be effective for HBCUs getting such high applicant acceptance rates.

Xavier University of Louisiana has consistently helped African Americans gain acceptance to medical school. Xavier also has a linkage program to medical schools. In 2013, XULA helped put 77 of its student applicants into U.S. medical schools. How did they do it you ask? By learning the strengths and weaknesses of their students and using that to develop academic programs to help make them stronger candidates for medical school. Xavier pushes their students above and beyond the minimum and will not settle for the status quo that has been established for the African American applicant.

From the beginning of their academic career at Xavier the students are embraced by faculty members who believe that race and color are not limitations to reaching a goal. The students are encouraged by the "wall of fame" that shows so many minority students that have gone on before them to achieve the same dream that they have, to become physicians. Xavier, like many other HBCUs, teaches their students that they should not feel that they are at a disadvantage because they were educated at an HBCU, but empowered.

The faculty and staff at HBCUs are an integral part of the success of the university and the reason why they are the top producers of minority medical students. Their goal is to promote the mission of the university at which they teach and to instill in their students the wisdom and strength that they need to succeed. The faculty and staff understand the uphill battle that faces most minorities as they apply to medical school.

Because of that, some schools like Prairie View A&M University, Howard University, and Langston University have developed curriculum that is tailored to the pre-medical student. This allows the student to not only meet the minimum course requirements needed for application, but it also helps prepare the pre-medical student to become a well-equipped medical student. This preparation is what allows schools like Xavier University of Louisiana boast a 93% graduation rate of their applicants from medical and dental programs.

Prairie View A&M University has a program called "Prairie View A&M University Undergraduate Medical Academy". Through this program, students that are interested in the medical profession are given the skills that they need to be competitive students. They are provided with mentors that nurture their interests

and improve their chances of getting into medical school. The Biomedical Research and Training programs of Alabama State University are highly competitive programs designed to prepare student participants in biomedical research and facilitate their entry into the nation's top graduate, health and allied health professions schools. Schools like Texas State University, the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, and Spelman University all provide premed/pre-professional programs that coordinate and facilitate the efforts of students that wish to pursue health and allied health careers.

Many universities produce African American medical school applicants, with some producing more than others. When ranked from most to least number of African American applicants, four of the top five universities were HBCUs. Another interesting fact is that Xavier University of Louisiana, the only Catholic HBCU in the United States, has been the number one producer of African American medical school applicants for the past 8 years. Spelman University, a women only HBCU in Atlanta, GA, has the distinct honor of being one of the nation's number one producers of African American graduates in science. As a result of their diligent efforts they are ranked as one of the top 5 producers of African American medical school applicants.

In addition to stellar undergraduate programs, there are HBCUs with top ranking fully accredited medical schools. For example, Morehouse School of Medicine has ranked number one among U.S. medical schools in the percentage of graduates in primary care practices on national surveys. Along with Morehouse School of Medicine, Meharry Medical College and Howard University College of Medicine help to ensure the diversity of the medical field.

Regardless of the glaring evidence that shows that students that attend HBCUs are receiving excellent preparation for medical school, there are still naysayers that believe that HBCU students are deprived of the foundation needed to be competitive medical school applicants. Apart from the school or the type of school attended all students must be diligent in their studies and present themselves as well-rounded individuals.

All applicants also must show themselves as assets to the medical schools to which they apply. The ability to represent themselves as well-qualified applicants is a skill that most HBCU students receive from the training provided by their prospective HBCU. The learning environment at an HBCU is nurturing and supportive and has proven time and time again to produce great results. So in the end, the question one should ask himself should not be "why should I attend an HBCU?" but rather "why shouldn't I attend an HBCU?"

Check out the following sites for more information about HBCU's

<http://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/>

http://www.uncf.org/sections/MemberColleges/SS_AboutHBCUs/about.hbcu.asp

<http://www.aamc.org/data/facts/>

Student Spotlight

Best advice to a premed student?

It is very important to confirm that medicine is your true calling before endeavoring down this career path. Your convictions to pursue this field should be noble and borne of genuine concern for the suffering of others. There are so many rich rewards along the path of medicine, however it is truly a road of delayed gratification. I advise that students take the time to speak with medical students and physicians in a variety of specialties. Also, it is very important to spend some time shadowing a physician or another health provider in a clinical/surgical setting. Above all else, do not doubt your ability, or intelligence, to pursue medicine. Yes, it is an arduous course, but it is not insurmountable. Find good mentors, get involved on your campus and in the local community, spend time shadowing, and excel in your academics. Your skills and talents are needed, and you possess what is necessary to join the rank as a healthcare provider.

Current campus Involvement?

Co-Director of Student Interviewing for the Office of Admissions & Recruitment in the School of Medicine

Director of the Meharry Gospel Choir

Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Scholar

Lawrence Brown, MS2

Meharry Medical College

Meharry Medical College, M.H.S. '14

Oakwood University -

B.M Music Composition & Recording Arts '13

Hometown: Stockton, CA



SNMA Involvement

Meharry Medical College President-Elect

2015-2016

DECIDING WHERE TO APPLY

There are many factors to consider when deciding which medical schools to apply to. The most convenient way to research information regarding each medical school is to utilize the [Medical School Admission Requirements \(MSAR\)](#) (available in libraries, bookstores, and through the AAMC), the Osteopathic Medical College Information Book (available through AACOM) or visit the school's website. You may also want to call the admissions offices of the schools you are considering for more information.

Consider the Following:

- Class size
- Family support
- Financial costs
- Geographic location
- Grading system
- Teaching philosophies of the medical school
- Research opportunities
- Retention rates
- Support systems by the school (e.g. board preparation, academic assistance, time management, situation of academic difficulty and emergency leave)
- Does the school interact with the population you wish to serve?
- Will you feel comfortable interacting with the people at this school?
- Minority presence and support

After you have ranked each school you are considering, narrow the list down by looking at their average G.P.A. and MCAT scores for both the students that applied and those that were accepted. Try to be close to that range to improve your likelihood of getting an interview. Keep in mind that the G.P.A. and scores shown may not be the same for minority student applicants, so call the school and ask if you don't meet the first range, but would still like to apply.

Consider using the 3-tier system for choosing the right medical school:

1. Apply to your ideal school
2. Apply to a school where you fit their range of accepted students
3. Apply to safety schools (where you have a strong chance of getting in)

Talk with your pre-medical advisor about the schools on your list. You also may be able to call the schools you are considering. Speak to the Dean of Minority Student Affairs and give them your statistics. Ask them if you honestly have a chance or not. Some Deans of Minority Student Affairs sit on the admissions committee and may be able to give you a good idea of your chances of at least being granted an interview.

The number of schools you apply to is totally up to you (the average is 15-20). Keep in mind, that you still have to pay for secondary applications and any travel to interviews. If you have financial burdens, speak with your pre-medical advisor regarding application fee waivers that may be available. Also consider applying for the Financial Assistance Program (FAP) offered by the AAMC. FAP will provide reduced MCAT registration fees, access to MSAR, and waived AMCAS fees. AACOM also offers fee waivers for applications to osteopathic medical schools

Accredited Allopathic Schools visit:

<https://www.aamc.org/about/membership/378788/medicalschoools.html>

Accredited Osteopathic Schools visit:

<http://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor/us-coms>

OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL SCHOOLS

The degree Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.), like the Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) degree, is one of the fastest growing health professions nationally, and represents a fully trained physician who is licensed in all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia. DOs are licensed physicians who can prescribe medication and practice in all specialty areas, including surgery, in the United States. They complete approximately four years of medical school followed by graduate medical education through internship and residency programs typically lasting three to eight years. In addition, DOs receive extra training in the musculoskeletal system, providing them with an in-depth knowledge of the ways that illness or injury in one part of the body can affect another. As one of the fastest-growing segments of health care professionals in the nation, the number of DOs has grown more than 200% during the past 25 years.

Source: <http://www.osteopathic.org/inside-aoa/news-and-publications/media-center/Pages/default.aspx>



DEBUSK COLLEGE OF OST

WHAT IS OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE?

GREAT QUESTION!

The osteopathic approach to medical practice was founded in the late 1800s in Kirksville, Missouri, by Andrew Taylor Still, M.D., who felt the medical practices of the day often caused more harm than good. After losing members of his immediate family to meningitis, Dr. Still focused on developing a system of medical care that would promote the body's innate ability to heal itself. Since then, osteopathic medical schools have produced comprehensively-trained physicians who are taught to consider the patient from a biopsychosocial perspective rather than focusing just on the patient's disease or symptoms. D.O.s and M.D.s practice side-by-side in hospitals and offices across the country in the effort of improving the healthcare of America.

Osteopathic medicine is particularly concerned with the promotion of health and prevention of human illness, disease, and injury. Today, there are 30 existing osteopathic medical schools located in all parts of the country, with several branch campuses. Osteopathic medical education has a four-year curriculum very similar to our allopathic colleagues.

A unique feature of the osteopathic medicine is the teaching and clinical use of osteopathic principles and osteopathic manipulative therapy (OMT).



OMT is a technique in which osteopathic physicians use their hands to diagnose illness and treat patients, giving particular attention to the neuro-musculoskeletal system.



SNMA Involvement

LMU-DCOM First Year Liaison, + National Member

2015-2016

Why Medicine?

I'm a science geek. I love knowing how and why things function the way they do. As cliché as it sounds, I believe the human body is the most fascinating thing on Earth. Why not use my passion for science to better the lives of others?

Best school or summer opportunities you participated in prior to medical school?

In undergrad, I went on a mission trip to a remote village in Costa Rica. That experience by far has been the most impactful on my pursuit of medicine. We sometimes forget how blessed we are with adequate access to healthcare. To see the less fortunate drastically suffer from ailments that could easily be treated here in the U.S. motivates me to become part of the solution.

Janice Uduma, OMSI

DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine

Lincoln Memorial University M.S '15

Baylor University B.S Health Science '12

Hometown: Houston, TX

FAQ Addressed by Current 2015-2016 SNMA Osteopathic Schools Committee Co-Chair Danielle Ward MS, OMS-II, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine - Georgia Campus:

What is an osteopathic physician and how does this differ from being an MD?

There are only two types of fully licensed physicians in the United States: Osteopathic physicians who bear a DO after their name, and allopathic physicians who have an MD after their name. For the most part there really are no differences between the two. Osteopathic physicians are taught to view medicine in a holistic manner, which means if you come in for a stomach ache then the general idea is that a DO will look at all areas of an individual's body rather than focusing on the single area of concern. I believe the osteopathic philosophy is to "treat the person and not the symptoms". It is one of the things that I admire most about DOs, and I do feel that it makes for a better physician. This is not to say that MDs don't do the same, but I believe osteopathic medicine places a lot more emphasis on this. DO's also have an added step in their training that consists of OMT (more below), but that is pretty much it for the differences between the two. DOs are not naturopaths or anything else that involves alternative medicine. It is just that a lot of people assume when they go to the doctor that they are seeing an MD, and I believe this adds to many misconceptions about DO's. Plus, I have noticed that a few DO's only refer to themselves as Dr. and leave off the DO part of their titles. I believe this also adds to the problem of the public not properly being informed about the types of physicians that do exist.

Is it harder to specialize or gain acceptance as a DO?

The difficulty to gaining acceptance into competitive specialties or residency programs at Ivy-League level institutions for DOs varies based on the field and the institution. Currently there are two organizations that accredit residency programs: they are the AOA (osteopathic) and ACGME (allopathic). All this means is that there are two options for osteopathic medical students to enter residency, they can either go to an osteopathic or allopathic program. At some institutions, there are slight biases against accepting DOs, but this has been decreasing in recent years, especially with the impending merger between the AOA and ACGME. However, for all students, the deciding factors for residency acceptance are board scores, grades, research, leadership, and volunteer experiences, and personal work ethic. For many DOs applying to osteopathic residencies allows for more opportunities in competitive specialties such as dermatology and urology. However, at several allopathic dermatology and urology programs throughout the country you will find at least one DO in the program. Also, for certain specialties that are focused on the musculoskeletal system, such as orthopedic surgery and pain management and rehabilitation (PM&R), DOs have a leg up.

The leg up is due to DOs' additional training in the musculoskeletal system and OMM (which is similar to many joint reduction and rehabilitation techniques). In general, if you are thinking of specializing in a competitive field you will want to do well in your courses, get a strong board score on both the COMLEX and USMLE, and apply broadly to as many programs as possible.



ADMISSION TO OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL SCHOOL

Admission to osteopathic medical school is competitive; in 2014-2015 there were 20,447 applications for a first year enrollment of 7,219. (Data source: <http://www.aacom.org/docs/default-source/data-and-trends/2015-Trends-COM-AEG-XLS.xlsx?sfvrsn=30>)

Requirements for admission to most schools are:

- B.A. /B.S. degree
- Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)
- Submission of the required application(s).
- Physics (8 credits)
- General Biology (8 credits)
- Inorganic Chemistry (8 credits)
- English (8 credits)
- Organic Chemistry (8 credits)
- Most schools also require a broad spectrum of elective courses in the humanities
- Non-traditional students and students with previous work experience are encouraged to apply

Note: Please contact all schools you are interested in applying to for an accurate listing of all admission requirements. Osteopathic schools participate in the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS). An initial application is submitted to AACOMAS and then is distributed by them to the designated medical schools of your choice. Admissions committees then review secondary or supplementary applications and interviews are granted to competitive candidates. For more information and/or applications: <http://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor/applying>

FAQ Addressed by Current 2015-2016 SNMA Osteopathic Schools Committee Co-Chair Danielle Ward:

Regarding admission to osteopathic medical school, what other factors are taken into consideration?

Osteopathic medical schools are unique in that they take a holistic approach in viewing their medical school applicants. This means that they look at more than just a GPA and MCAT score in deciding if you will fit into their program. They want to see well-rounded students who may have participated in community service, did research, or had some other exciting life events that set them apart from the rest of the applicant pool. Additionally, if you are a student who had to retake a few classes due to poor scores, you could see a boost to your overall GPA when applying to osteopathic programs. This is because osteopathic medical schools have the advantage of grade replacement when calculating your overall GPA. This means if you previously made a D in a chemistry class, retook the course, and made an A, then the A will be the only score looked at when considering your GPA. In the osteopathic medical school application process, the first and second grades would simply be averaged together. The holistic review also applies to MCAT scores at some schools. There are certain osteopathic medical schools that will do a complete review of all your MCAT attempts and use a composite score that includes your highest section scores. Lastly, osteopathic schools often like to see a letter of recommendation from an osteopathic physician, so actively seeking out an osteopathic mentor should be something you set out to do.

Student Spotlight

How did you utilize MAPS/SNMA as an undergrad?

I got involved with MAPS during my freshman year. Our chapter establish a YSEP group with a local high school. Our MAPS chapter also had close relationships with UT Houston and UTMB-Galveston School of Medicine. When I became vice-president of our chapter, we planned and executed various seminars and panels with medical students and administrators from both schools which allowed our students to form relationships/mentorships to further the mission of establishing the pipeline of minority students pursuing a career in medicine.

Best medical summer programs you have participated in?

I participated in the Medical Education Development Program (MED) at UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine the summer before my senior year. The program consisted of us taking medical school courses throughout the summer which allowed us to gain insight into the realities of attending medical school. Although challenging, the program gave me further confirmation that medicine was the path for me, and it showed me that I am more than capable of handling the rigor of medical school.

Best advice for the summer before starting medical school?

HAVE FUN! Travel, volunteer, spend time with family and friends. Reward yourself for the accomplishment and the work you put in to get to this point. Relax before you enter this wonderful journey!



Current SNMA Involvement

LMU-DCOM Chapter President 2015-2016

Region X - Webmaster 2015-2016

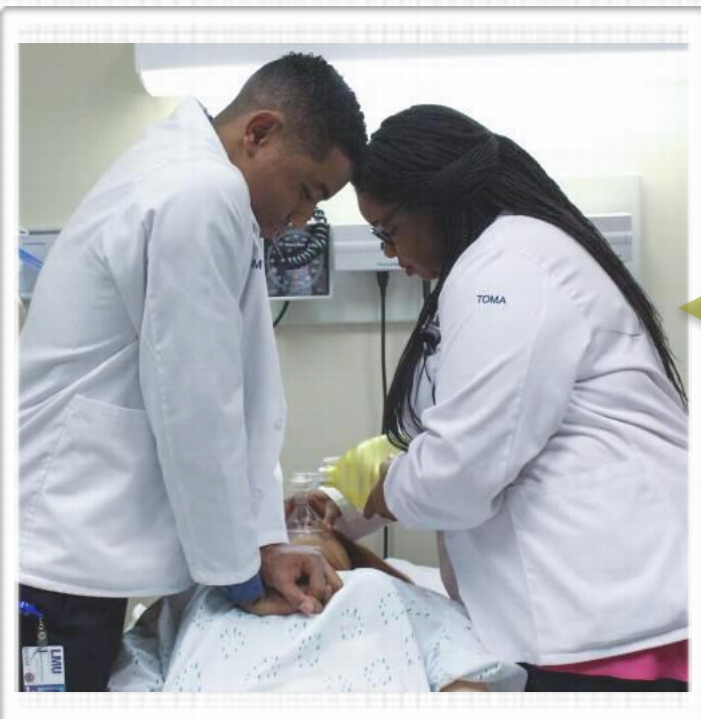
Courtney Brooks, OMSII

DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine

Lincoln Memorial University M.S. '14

Prairie View A&M B.S. Biology '12

Hometown: Houston, TX



What are your future plans? How will your osteopathic medical school education help with this?

I would like to go into primary care and have a career in academic medicine. I have interests in health policy, and I plan to be an advocate in the community I will serve. My osteopathic training will enable me to utilize the idea of a 'patient centered approach' within my future practice. I will be able to integrate the pillars of osteopathic medicine by creating the best overall plan for every patient I work with.

What sparked your interest in academic medicine?

For two summers, I participated in a clinical research pilot study at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, Texas. This experience taught me how to develop a research project from the ground up. I learned that treatment development is a process. Research is fundamental to health promotion and disease prevention, and it was this experience that stimulated my desire to pursue a career in academic medicine. In addition, it was the impact the primary investigator on the study made on me personally that ignited a passion for teaching and development that I plan on continuing throughout my career.

OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL SCHOOL EDUCATION

Year 1 and 2 focus on the basic sciences and introduction to clinical sciences. First and second-year courses include anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, immunology, pathology, pharmacology, and internal medicine to name a few.

Year 3 and 4 are spent doing clinical rotations.- This includes rotating with attending physicians in the hospital, and in ambulatory care settings on various required and elective specialties. Location of rotations vary by school, so please refer to each college's individual catalog or website for more information.

FAQ Addressed by Current 2015-2016 SNMA Osteopathic Schools Committee Co-Chair Kristyn Smith, OMS-III Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine:

What exactly differentiates the osteopathic medical school education?

When comparing osteopathic medical school education from allopathic school education, there are truly more similarities than differences. Osteopathic medical students spend their first two years learning the basic sciences in- depth. During first year, most medical students take classes necessary to learn how the body normally works. First year classes at most schools include anatomy, biochemistry, histology, microbiology/immunology, physiology, radiology, and neuroscience. During the second year, students learn about the different diseases that occur when something goes awry in the body. Second year courses include pathology, pharmacology, clinical skills/physical diagnosis relevant to the major systems of the body (i.e., cardiac, endocrine, dermatological, respiratory, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, hematopoietic, neurologic, psychiatric, reproductive systems).¹

Osteopathic medicine differs from allopathic medicine, due to the emphasis on a *holistic approach to medicine*. During the first two years students do not typically learn about diseases in silos, but rather holistically in context of the entire body. For example, a common disease such as erectile dysfunction can be caused by physical and psychological problems, such as issues with the genitourinary system or stress, which will usually be taught in an osteopathic medical school course.

Not only does osteopathic medical school include a holistic approach to medical education, but it also includes an additional course! *In addition* to the courses mentioned above, osteopathic medical students also take courses in osteopathic manipulative medicine (OMM), also known as osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT). OMM is essentially a hands-on approach to medical treatment that is often used to treat common problems such as back pain or headaches. OMM is based on 4 central principles, such as “the body is a unit” and “structure and function are related” . Based on these principles damage to your lower back would not only affect your low back, but also your pelvis, upper back, shoulders, and head. This is why OMM treatment for low back pain not only includes treating the low back, but also the pelvis, upper back, neck, and sometimes the legs. There are several specific types of OMM techniques that all focus on restoring the body’s normal range of motion and functioning in order to alleviate pain and disease.

During the third and fourth years osteopathic medical students complete clinical rotations (also known as clerkships). It is during this time when students can put their medical knowledge to use by working in the hospital and outpatient clinics. For many osteopathic medical schools, there is an emphasis on mastering general care of the whole patient, which is best learned during family medicine and internal medicine rotations. At many osteopathic medical schools, students spend a bit more time on family medicine or internal medicine rotations, but students complete rotations in all of the core clerkships. Core clerkships include family medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, cardiology/pulmonology, internal medicine, surgery, obstetrics & gynecology, and emergency medicine. Most students will also complete clerkships in radiology and geriatrics.

Sources: 1. American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM). “About Osteopathic Medicine”. <<https://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor>> 2. Martin, RB. “Osteopathic approach to sexual dysfunction: holistic care to improve patient satisfaction and prevent mortality and morbidity”. J AM Osteopath Assoc. 2004; Jan; 104(1 Suppl 1): S1-8.



TIME TO GET IN

THE MEDICAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS PROCESS

MCAT (P.22)
APPLICATION (P.23)
INTERVIEW (P.29)

MEDICAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TEST (MCAT)

The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is a standardized, multiple-choice examination designed to assist admission committees in predicting which of their applicants will perform adequately in the medical school curriculum. Medical college admission committees consider MCAT scores as part of their admission decision process.

The MCAT changed in 2015 (<https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/mcat2015/>).

The AAMC rolled out a new MCAT that is “designed to help better prepare tomorrow’s doctors for the rapidly advancing and transforming health care system.” The first examinees to take the MCAT2015 exam will be those who apply to medical school in the fall of 2016.

Some of the highlights in terms of changes according to the AAMC for this new MCAT:

- Natural sciences sections of the MCAT2015 exam reflect recent changes in medical education.
- Addition of the social and behavioral sciences section, Psychological, Social and Biological Foundations of Behavior, recognizes the importance of socio-cultural and behavioral determinants of health and health outcomes.
- And the new Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills section reflects the fact that medical schools want well-rounded applicants from a variety of backgrounds.

The way the test will be scored is based off four sections -- Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems; Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems; Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior; and Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills -- with a range from 118 to 132 (avg 125). Combining all these scores will produce a composite result of 472 to 528. A score of 500 is the median that schools are looking for. Aim to score at least 125 on each section. (<https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/mcat2015/mcat2015scores/>).

A score report will include MCAT scores, percentile ranks, confidence bands, and score profiles in a way that highlights applicants' strengths and weaknesses.

The MCAT is offered several times throughout the year starting in January and ending in October. It is usually

recommended that medical school applicants take the MCAT by April of the year they will submit their applications for medical school since it takes 6-8 weeks for scores to be reported, (i.e., April of the junior year for traditional undergraduate students).

The AAMC has established the MCAT Fee Assistance Program (FAP) (<https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/>) to aid individuals with extreme financial limitations whose inability to pay the full registration fee would prohibit registration for the examination.

Preparation Courses

Some students find it extremely helpful to enroll in an MCAT preparation course. Some of the more popular courses include [Kaplan®](#), [The Princeton Review®](#), and [Examcrackers®](#). Each of these courses offers textbooks, on-site and online classes, and various other media resources. These preparatory courses differ somewhat in structure and schedule, but generally cover the same material. Although these classes within these courses can be very helpful, much time spent studying outside of class is necessary to prepare adequately for the MCAT. If you are unable to take a prep course, be sure to utilize the resources provided by the AAMC such as the question banks, practice exams, etc. Additionally, UWorld recently made available question banks for the MCAT.

MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION (AMCAS + AACOMAS)

The American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) and the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS) are the centralized, electronic application systems used to apply to medical schools in the United States. The application becomes available to start entering information in early spring each year (May 1), with official submission/verification opening in early summer (May 30).

The electronic systems will allow applicants to:

- Complete all AMCAS application materials using a personal computer;
- Prepare transcript requests;
- Apply for an AMCAS Fee Waiver;
- Prepare additional medical school designations;
- Prepare biographic and academic change requests;
- Obtain information for minority applicants;

The application is completed by the student and forwarded to AMCAS/AACOMAS along with the appropriate application fee (depends on the number of schools to which you apply). Once the application is received by the application system, depending on the time of year (summer is the busiest time), it can take 4-8 weeks for the service to verify the application, and send it to the schools you indicated for consideration. The average number of schools is 15. Some students apply to both AMCAS and AACOMAS; and some students apply to 15 schools each.

FEES:

AMCAS: \$160 initial application fee + 1 medical school designation; \$38/school applied thereafter

AACOMAS: \$195 initial application fee + 1 medical school designation; \$45/school applied there after

***Texas:** \$150 flat fee covering all submitted applications to any school in Texas



NOTE:

To apply to schools not participating in AMCAS/AACOMAS (e.g., Caribbean Medical Schools), you must request individual applications from each school.

*To apply to most of the medical schools in Texas, you must use the [Texas Medical & Dental Schools Application Service](#).

Application tips by section

The application consists of the following five major parts:

1. Biographic Information
2. Academic Record
3. Experiences (Extracurricular activities, Awards, Volunteer work, and Employment history)
4. Personal Statement
5. Letters of Recommendation

O1 Biographic

- Provide your full legal name, no abbreviations or nicknames.
- Provide address and telephone numbers that are not likely to change. Do have the opportunity to list your permanent (ex. Home) address, and your mailing (ex. School) address.
- Will enter all pertaining biographically information including race, area or primary childhood residence, and citizenship. Regarding childhood will enter information regarding type of area (ex. Urban, Rural), and information regarding how you paid for undergrad.
- Will have to provide information for parents , and all siblings whether or not you are currently living with them.
- Can enter disadvantaged statement if applicable.

Disadvantaged Statement

Using a disadvantaged statement allows applicants who qualify to take advantage of special admission requirements that certain medical schools extend. These "special" considerations allow Admission Committees to take into account the depth of disadvantage endured by students in their efforts to achieve their goals. Do not hesitate to claim this status if you qualify.

It is vitally important to be aware that each schools admissions committees is different, with respect to minority students. You should be prepared to explain to each school the impact of your listed disadvantage and explain the subsequent effects clearly and with conviction.

Student Spotlight

What is your best advice for pre-medical students for successfully completing the application process?

1. Actively seek connections with individuals in the medical field. They can help you broaden your network and deepen the breadth of your experiences.
2. Apply widely, even to schools located in states that you have never pictured yourself living in. Remember, the ultimate goal is to become a physician, allow yourself the freedom to do that anywhere.
3. Your personal statement is the ONLY opportunity to truly connect with the committee. Take it seriously and be diligent in writing it. It allows the reader to get a better sense of who you are. Even the tone should feel like you. If you're funny, be funny! If you're analytical, be analytical! Be sure to send it to a few trusted advisors who can give you constructive feedback.



SNMA Involvement:

Chapter Vice President 2014-2015

Community Service Liaison 2014-2015

Olufunke Ogunfolami, MS3

Michigan State University College of Human Medicine '17

Brown University Sc.B Human Biology '11

Hometown: Cottage Grove, MN

02 Academic Record

- List all Advance placement courses, or college-level coursework while taken as a high-school student.
- Will have to manually enter all courses, credit numbers, and grades for every college/graduate course ever taken. This is done by school. It is important to list every school ever attended whether you obtained a degree from that institution or not.
 - **Tip:** Print out unofficial transcripts from each school attended and use that as a guide while entering coursework.
- Remember you will need to send an official transcript for every school attended. Check each institution regarding policies surrounding this. Grades will be verified against official transcripts by the application systems during the verification process.
- **Official GPA:** Grades entered (and verified) is how your subsequent ‘official’ medical school application GPAs are calculated. Depending on which system (AMCAS or AACOMAS) your GPA may differ slightly or vastly due to how each system calculates GPAs. Your GPA will be separated out in several ways included: GPA by YEAR in undergrad, Overall undergrad GPA Post-baccalaureate GPA (if applicable), Graduate GPA (if applicable), Undergraduate Science GPA (calculating grades in all Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Math courses - see manuals for additional information), and Overall Science GPA.
- It is Important to view each systems posted FAQ guides for additional information on this. Medical school admissions committee’s will only see the official calculated GPAs by the application systems, so it is important to know what your GPA is (both overall, and science) when considering your stats for admission.
 - **AMCAS Instruction manual:** https://aamc-orange.global.ssl.fastly.net/production/media/filer_public/2d/5d/2d5d7c94-6b23-4edf-ab1b-d574221bf6e3/2019-amcas-applicant-guide.pdf
 - **AACOMAS Instruction Manual:** <https://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor/applying/aacomas-application-instructions>
- **MCAT Scores:** Your MCAT scores will be reported following your official GPAs. The AMCAS system will automatically populate this for you. In regards to the AACOMAS system, you will have to have the AAMC send your MCAT scores to the AACOMAS system. Both systems allow you the opportunity to list any planned/future MCAT testing dates. Keep this in mind as if a future MCAT test date is listed, some medical school admissions committees will hold review of your application until the official score from that testing date has been reported.

03 Experiences

(Extracurricular activities, Awards, Volunteer work, and Employment history)

- You will have an opportunity to list out experiences you have participated in up until this point as an applicant. The number of experiences you will list, word count, and information required, will depend on the application system AMCAS or AACOMAS. **Check each system’s respective manuals prior to applying for specific information.**
- Extracurricular activities based in the community or in a health care setting are extremely important. Sports participation shows another aspect of your personality. Can also list any leadership positions you may have held, organizations involved with. This can be pre-health specific or not! This section allows admissions committees to get a better picture of who you are as an overall applicant. If you can, add 15 maximum activities.
- List as many honors and awards as you have received. No award is too small. Scholarships can also be listed here. It is best to list your highest honors first and then others as space allows.
- Employment and volunteer work are essential pieces of information. Again, does not have to be specifically related to medicine, but it is important to include things that are healthcare related. It is important to describe your experiences generally, but also explain what you learned from each.

04 Personal Statement

This is one of the most important parts of your application. A poorly written personal statement could kill your chances to get into medical school. Conversely, a well written, well thought out, well developed essay can make you shine.

- Begin writing your personal statement early. Your sophomore year is not too soon. Start by jotting down ideas. Keep all of your ideas in a word document, or other place you can access later, along with all awards and scholarships you receive during your undergraduate training. When you are really ready to write the complete essay you'll have just about everything you need.
- The personal statement should tell a story. The thoughts should flow coherently and the story should represent you in a positive way. Remember, the person reading your essay wants to get to know you better so it is up to you to convince them that "you're the one."

Questions to ask yourself while writing:

- What is special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about you or your life story?
- What details of your life (personal or family problems, history, people or events that have shaped you or influenced your goals) might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart from other applicants?
- When did you become interested in this medicine and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field? What insights have you gained?
- If you have worked a lot during your college years, what have you learned (leadership or managerial skills, for example), and how has that work contributed to your growth?
- What are your career goals?
- Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain (great grades but mediocre MCAT scores, for example, or a distinct upward pattern to your GPA if it was only average in the beginning)?

- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships (for example, economic, familial, or physical) in your life?
- What personal characteristics (for example, integrity, compassion, persistence) do you possess that would improve your prospects for success in the field or profession? Is there a way to demonstrate or document that you have these characteristics?
- What skills (for example, leadership, communicative, analytical) do you possess?
- Why might you be a stronger candidate for graduate school—and more successful and effective in the profession or field than other applicants?
- What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in you?

Other things to keep in mind

- Things to Include in the Personal Statement:
- It's OK to talk about yourself, blow your own horn as loudly as possible. If you don't, no one else will. Remember to stay away from arrogance, be confident!
- Address your weaknesses, but don't dwell on them. Be frank about academic problems. Do not blame your problems on others. If you had a difficult quarter or semester, discuss this in your essay; two or three sentences are sufficient. The best tactic is to spin the negatives into positives by stressing your attempts to improve; for example, mention your poor first-quarter grades briefly, then describe what you did to bring them up.
- Mention the episode in your life that brought you to this point—In other words, "What made you pursue this goal?"
- Expand on any extracurricular activities or work experiences that had clinical significance. For example, explain what you did as an Emergency Room volunteer. Short "case reports" about patient interactions are jewels.
- Discuss any research and/or volunteer experience in your essay. A few sentences about how you got involved and what you did are appropriate.

(Personal Statement Con't)

- No matter what, always tell the truth. It will catch up to you later if you don't.
- Shoot to reach the full character count allowed, but make it meaningful —short statements don't say a lot about you.
- Have someone you trust read your personal statement—don't be afraid of a little criticism, it can only help you. Also have different people read the statement such as someone in the medical field and maybe someone who majored in English.
- Don't resort to cliches- every year, medical school admissions officers read thousands of variations of this sentence: "I want to be a doctor so I can help people." It's undoubtedly true in most instances, yet it inevitably fails because it reveals nothing unique about the individual applicant. Instead, describe specific activities—community service, for example that will prove your desire to help others.
- Revise, revise, revise!!!

05 Letters of Recommendation

The Letter of Recommendation can be a very important part of your application. Medical schools want to know others' opinions of you, and this is an ideal way for them to get the information. Most schools ask for at least 2 letters from science professors and at least 1 letter from a non-science professor. Other letters can be provided by anyone you choose. Good choices would be employers, supervisors, or volunteer leaders.

NOTE: Check each schools specific requirements on the letter writes they will accept, and require. Many DO's school require a letter written by a practicing DO.

- When looking for someone to write your letter, consider your relationship with that person. How well do they know you? Can they write you a strong letter? Do they know about your goals? If you can answer these questions in a positive way, then you should feel safe asking that person for a letter.
- Sometimes, it is difficult to get to know your professors. Take advantage of their office hours as well as the time before and after classes to become acquainted with them. It is always a good idea to provide your professors with a copy of a biographical statement or your personal statement, including some special achievements, and a copy of your transcript. This information will help them write a letter that more accurately represents you.
- Some professors may ask you to waive your right to read your letter. There is nothing wrong with waiving access to the letter; you should not be worried about the content of the letter if your source is dependable.
- Look for shadowing opportunities or call local physicians offices if looking for a physician to write a letter of recommendation for you. Check with your school's pre-health organization to see if they have any existing connections.

Always be looking for a solid letter writer:

- * It's never too early to ask someone for a recommendation letter. In general, the best time to ask for a letter of recommendation is soon after the course, job, or extracurricular activity has ended. Your letter writer is likely to be quite busy, and it can take a long time for a letter to get into your file, so make sure to ask well ahead of the deadline. Aim to have at maximum 7 letters: 2-3 from science professors, and others from volunteering or shadowing experiences who can speak of personal characteristics.
- * If you do research, make sure your research professor writes you a letter. Committees will be looking for it.
- * If you do hospital volunteer work, get a letter from the nursing supervisor or attending physician that you worked with—these letters look really good.
- * Don't send too many letters—most schools want at least three letters with the average sent by students being five letters.
- * Always specifically ask if the letter writer will write you a strong, positive, letter of recommendation. Offer to Provide CV, Resume, or any other supplementary material.

The Secondary Application

Once your primary application has been submitted, verified, and received by each medical school that you designate, it is time for the final step in the electronically submitted application process, the secondary application.

A secondary application comes directly from an individual medical school. The application is designed to gather more information about you. The questions allow you the student to provide more information about yourself and your goals. Keep in mind some secondary applications require an additional personal statement separate from the one included in your AMCAS/AACOMAS application.

It is crucial that you send these applications back as soon as possible. Sending these applications back in an expeditious manner is important in order to ensure you of the best chance at acceptance. Late applications make it more difficult for you to be accepted. The earlier your application is complete, the earlier most schools will invite you for an interview. Remember most schools have rolling admissions until their class is full. You want to interview in fall/early winter when they are beginning to fill the class, rather than February/March when they have filled most of it. Make sure you include all information requested.

Keep in mind, some of these applications may require additional fees that are paid to the school. This ranges from \$60-\$175 per medical school. Additionally, you may not receive a secondary application from every school you apply to. Certain medical schools look first at your primary application statistics before deciding if they will offer you the opportunity to fill out a secondary. To anticipate this, find out the process for each medical school you designate usually found on their website. always call each school with any questions.

Student Spotlight

If you could talk to yourself during your senior year of undergrad, what advice would you give?

Don't rush things and never lose your purpose. When I was in college I wanted to rush to get into medical school so that I could hurry up and become a doctor. I had a 10 year plan already mapped out in my head. Fortunately, some circumstances in my life slowed this process to a point where I could deeply reflect and focus on WHY I want to pursue a medical career. It also allowed me to mature and determine what was really important to me outside of medicine including my personal relationships with family and friends. A career in medicine is a long, arduous road, and can sometimes be isolating; Be mindful of that as you travel down it and keep the things you care about close to you.

Other Medical School Involvement/Leadership?

National Liaison Officer for the Student Osteopathic Medical Association (SOMA) 2015-2016

Founding member of Students for a National Health Program (SNaHP), LMU-DCOM chapter

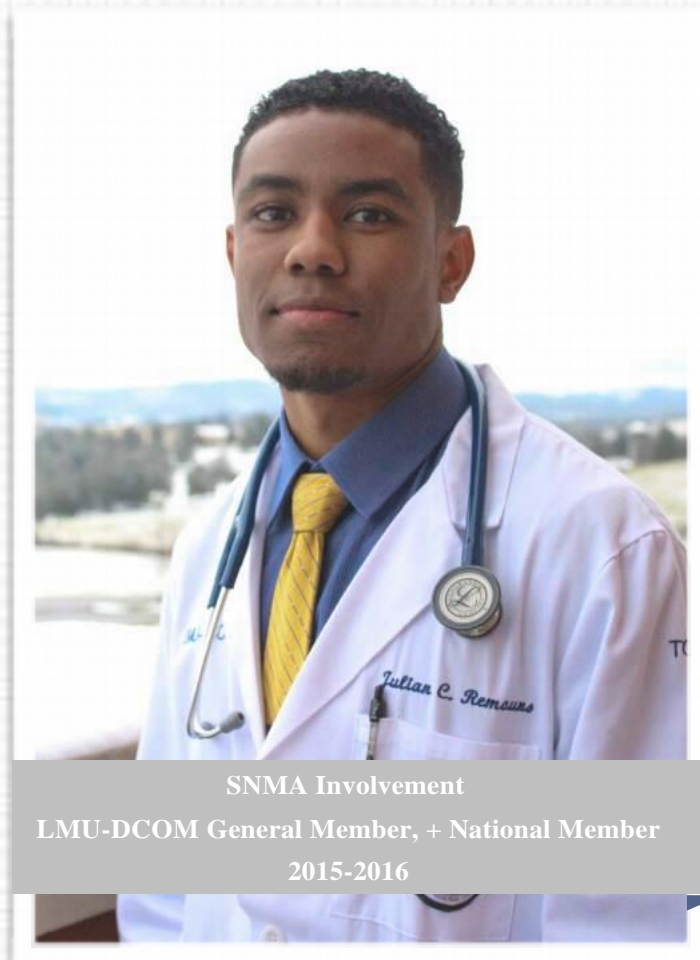
Julian Remouns, MS, OMS-II

LMU-DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine

Drexel University M.S. '13

Cornell University B.S. Biological Sciences '11

Hometown: Washingtonville and Bronx, NY



SNMA Involvement

LMU-DCOM General Member, + National Member

2015-2016

THE MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW

Now that you have submitted your secondary applications to the schools you are most interested in; it's time for each school to decide whether they are truly interested in you. Admissions committees now have their first crack at evaluating you as a potential medical student at their school. While every school varies, some generalizations may be made about the way admissions committees' function.

Admissions Committees

Each committee includes medical students, faculty, and staff of the medical school who come together on a regular basis to read applicant files and decide which applicants they would like to interview for possible acceptance. Medical schools generally interview about 2-3 times the number of applicants needed to fill their entering class each year. Of those interviewed, about half will be accepted and only about one-quarter of them will matriculate to the school.

Once the admissions committee has reviewed your file and decided to interview you, you are well on your way into medical school. The interview is one of the most important determining factors of your success as an applicant. This is where they separate "the cream from the milk." This is your chance to toot your own horn. It is up to you to look as good as you possibly can. The purpose of the interview is to allow the medical school to get to know you personally. Most medical schools are looking for well-rounded people who are able to care for their patients, not just people who can master the material. Until this moment in the process, the admissions committee has only been able to evaluate you on paper, now they can see a complete picture of who you are. It is up to you to present yourself to the committee in the most positive light. One's personality is an important attribute which is looked at intensely here. There are many applicants who are "golden" and make it this far because they have the G.P.A. and the MCAT score; some of which lack personality and have a bad interview. For them, it is the end of the road. Put your best foot forward during this time and enjoy yourself. The interview process can also be fun!

The Multiple Mini Interview or MMI

More medical schools are using the Multiple Mini Interview Format. This format differs from the traditional format in that the applicant has 6-8 mini interviews rather than 2 or 3 interviews. More information about the MMI can be found at Aspiring Docs - <https://www.aamc.org/students/aspiring/369362/whatsitliketoparticipateinmultipleminiinterviewsmmis.html>

Things to Keep in Mind

Dress for Success

Believe it or not, you will be evaluated on your appearance. What you wear is very important. The saying "Clothes make the person," was never so true. You should dress for this occasion just as you would dress for a job interview. A suit color of black, blue, brown or dark gray, is certainly appropriate dress and should be encouraged for both men and women. The key words here are low key.

You want a look that says "I am a professional; I take my work seriously." You want an outfit that complements you but does not distract from your verbal presentation. When in doubt, tone it down and take no chances. Your clothing should be a neutral factor in the decision made about your fit for the school; ideally the interviewer should not even notice what you are wearing. For women, this means no excessive jewelry, excessive makeup or strong-smelling perfume. Choose a hairstyle that is both professional and comfortable. As for males, you should try and have a clean cut face and hair style, stay away from bulky watches that draw attention, and shoes that lace up are recommended Also avoid using strong smelling cologne.

The Early Bird...

The worst impression you can make is to arrive late to your interview. Be on time, in fact, it wouldn't hurt to be a little early, at least ten minutes early. It gives you a chance to get lost and found. If you are not familiar with the campus, factor in the time you need to find a parking spot. You may also find that you need time to calm down a little before going through this nerve-wracking ordeal. Being early takes one less worry off your mind—that of being late. You'll also make a good impression on your interviewer!

Things to Keep in Mind

Relax

Interviews are generally times of excruciating anxiety, and this interview is no different. However, your entire future career is riding on what these people think of you, your anxiety can be compounded one hundred-fold. Just remember, you cannot make your best impression if you're a ball of nerves waiting to explode.

SNMA offers mock interviews at the Annual Medical Education Conference. The 2016 AMEC Conference will take place in Austin, Texas from March 23rd-27th. Be sure to check the schedule, and register for a mock interview slot ASAP!

Practice relaxing while under pressure. This is where mock interviews come in handy. Find out how to arrange a few interview sessions before the Big One. Most SNMA chapters can make arrangements for you to receive an informal mock interview where you can be critiqued and receive suggestions on the best way to present yourself. Make use of the resources available. This is one of the most important things you will do, so take every measure to do your best. Also remember, you have made it this far and their medical school wants to learn more about you on a personal level. The interviewer is not supposed to make you feel uncomfortable. They want you to be open with them; therefore, they will act in accordance. One's anxiety when dealing with these situations is a sign that he/she needs work in that area and not entirely the interviewer's fault.

Be Prepared

Interviews are as different as individual interviewers are. While it is impossible to predict what an interviewer will ask you, there are a few things you should anticipate being asked.

1. Be familiar with the contents of your personal statement. It was written long before you began interviewing so it is a good idea to re-read it in case you're asked anything contained in it.
2. Be familiar with major developments in medicine. Interviewers love to ask about opinions concerning the major medical issues of the day. Have a well thought out opinion ready for them, but if you don't, just say so and move on from there.
3. Be familiar with the highlights of the school. If the school has a problem-based learning format or a special program in neurosurgery, you should probably know something about it. This just requires you to read the supplement sent to you by the school.

4. Ethical issues pertinent to the practice of medicine are very popular questions. Be prepared to have opinions on anything from abortion to assisted suicide. Don't be afraid to share your point of view. Your interviewer should not give you a bad rating just because he/she didn't agree with you.

Questions?

You should have questions that you ask the interviewer of each school you go to. Ask about anything from student social activities, to support services, to faculty accessibility. Don't be afraid to ask controversial questions about racism or gender bias. This is your chance to give the medical school a chance to sell itself, and your chance to separate schools based on desirable qualities.

At most schools, a faculty member and a student will interview you. Some schools have more interviews and some less. Some interviews will be "blind interviews," meaning that the interviewer knows only your name and has not had access to your application. Interviewers who have seen some or all of your application may be more prepared to ask questions about information contained within the file. There are pros and cons to each method of interviewing. Make sure you are familiar with your application. Reread your personal statement with each interview.

After you have interviewed, your file will be completed when your interviewers have turned in an interview report. Once this has happened, your file goes back to the admissions committee to be voted on. Your file is voted on by anywhere from 5-15 people. This gives you a pretty good chance of being evaluated as fairly as possible. If you are accepted, the medical school will send you a letter of notification by mail. If you are rejected, you will also receive a letter. The entire process takes about 4-6 weeks after the interview has been completed. Contacting the medical school in the interim does not speed up the process and may only cause you frustration. Realize that some schools may only reply to students after a certain date, so just be patient.

Most schools have an anonymous evaluation form for the interview process. Be honest. If there were any problems during your interview, such as inappropriate questions, do not wait until later to express your concerns. When it is all done, just relax! **DO NOT STRESS**. Treat yourself to something nice and try to stay occupied to keep your mind off of the process for a while.

RELATED + COMBINED DEGREE PROGRAMS

Outside of the traditional routes to medical school, there are a number of special programs available to students to assist them in pursuing a medical education. A few suggestions are listed below:

BS/MD

As our focus of this publication is students who are currently looking to apply to medical school, we will not go too in-depth about the BS/MD track. Visit <https://students-residents.aamc.org/choosing-medical-career/article/what-its-participate-bsmd-program/> for more information about combined BS/BA/MD programs.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.) in Public Health

This degree is intended for students seeking teaching careers in institutions of higher learning and/or research careers in health policy. Students in the Ph.D. Program in Health Policy choose a concentration and meet specific curriculum requirements. Interested students may apply during their second or third year of medical school or concurrently with their application to medical school.

MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY

Many schools offer a joint degree program combining the M.D. /D.O. degree with the Master of Public Policy. The joint program is particularly appropriate for students who wish to contribute to the field of medicine by helping to set policy or administer programs involving health care issues of public concern. Graduates of the joint programs are prepared to assume positions of leadership in federal, state and local governments, international organizations, nonprofit institutions, large service delivery organizations, or research centers. Usually, applicants to the joint degree program may apply to both schools simultaneously, or may begin study at one school before applying to the other.

SPECIALIZED MASTER'S DEGREE

Some students desire to obtain more intensive research training than is possible in the standard four-year M.D. curriculum. One option stretches the M.D./D.O. program to five or more years in order to permit a major research training component. This program may lead to the award of a Master's Degree in addition to the M.D. /D.O. degree. Requirements for the degree include submission of a substantial thesis documenting original research, and also the completion of additional course work in scientific, technical or clinical areas which are relevant to the student's research interests. Students enrolled in the Master's Degree Program would generally have sufficient time for research and could work as full-time Research Assistants, thus substantially reducing the burden of tuition and living expenses during the program.

JURIS DOCTOR (J.D.)

Many medical schools and law schools around the country sponsor a highly selective program of combined medical and legal training leading to the M.D./D.O. and J.D. Students must apply and be admitted to both the School of Medicine and the School of Law. Usually this is done concurrently; however, medical students in residence may apply in their first or second year to the law school leading to the J.D. beginning the third year and is completed in three years. Students then complete their final two years of medical education.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.)

The M.D. /D.O./Ph.D. dual degree program is for the development of physician-scientists that are prepared for academic or industrial careers involving clinical, medical or basic research, or a combination of medicine and research. M.D. /D.O. /Ph.D. programs vary, but most entail 2 years of medical school covering the basic sciences, followed by 3-4 years of research and classes for one's graduate school thesis, followed up by the last two years of clinical rotations in medical school. After an average of 7-8 years, one earns both M.D. /D.O. and the Ph.D. degree.

Funding is usually provided for most or all of the time one spends in a formal M.D./D.O./Ph.D. program. The Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) is a highly competitive venture that provides funds for one's entire training through the National Institutes of Health. Grants through the MSTP provide tuition and a minimal stipend. Other mechanisms of funding include the Minority Access to Research Careers and other pre- doctoral fellowships, also through the NIH. These other fellowships in combination with institutional funds can cover varying amounts of tuition and a small stipend. You should consult potential schools of interest for specific details to your particular situation.

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (M.B.A.)

The dual degree M.D./D.O./M.B.A. program is designed for students interested in integrating the study of medicine with training in managerial, financial, and technical expertise in the health care field. The majority of students who matriculate in the M.D./D.O./MBA program enroll in the Health Care Management major, but other majors are also available. Five years are required to earn both degrees for most programs.

MASTER OF BIOENGINEERING

Students may take an additional year during medical school and focus on bioengineering, leading to a Master of Science or a Master of Engineering, as well as an M.D. This additional training is ideal for those interested in the design and application of new technologies in their chosen area of clinical focus.

MASTER OF EDUCATION (M.ED.)

Students interested in teaching may take an extra year to earn a Master's in Education. With this dual degree, students may have a major impact on medical education through either teaching future physicians or primary involvement in curriculum involvement.

OTHER + ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Other dual degree programs are possible including a Masters in Theology, Divinity, Nutrition, and Law and Diplomacy. These options are available depending on the institution you attend. If you are interested in a combined degree program, contact the Office of Medical Undergraduate Education at the schools you are applying to for more information.

All Osteopathic combined programs (BA/DO, BS/DO, DO/MA, DO/MBA, DO/MHA, DO/MMEL, DO/MPH, DO/MS, DO/MSBS, DO/MSHS, DO/MSMS, DO/D.Ed., DO/DMD, DO/JD, DO/PhD) can be found in the updated *Osteopathic College Information Booklet*: <http://www.aacom.org/news-and-events/publications/cib> and if you would like further information directly from specific Osteopathic medical schools in the United States, please click on the following link where you can find the respective schools' websites: <http://www.aacom.org/about/colleges/Pages/default.aspx>

Student Spotlight

MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Students interested in population aspects of health, community health, preventive medicine, health policy and management, international health, or occupational and environmental health may elect a program which leads to both a Master's degree from the school's public health department and the M.D. / D.O. degree. The combined degree program will ordinarily require five years, with the public health portion taken either as one academic year of full-time study, or integrated into the M.D. /D.O. curriculum over five years. There are a few schools that offer the M.D./MPH degree in four years. Be sure to investigate these programs if you're interested. The two degrees are awarded concurrently upon completion of both programs. Visit <https://www.aamc.org/students/mdmph/> for more information. - Some students opt to do the MPH or MSPH degree prior to or after medical school matriculation. As this degree and field are widely applicable to the field of medicine, there are many reasons why one would chose to pursue this degree. In addition, some MPH/MSPH programs allow for specializing within the degree itself allowing for focus on a particular type of population (geriatrics, pediatrics), race, or socioeconomic factor. This degree is offered both at school locations in addition to some that offer courses online. For more information regarding the general MPH/MSPH programs please visit <http://ceph.org/accredited/>.



SNMA Involvement
LMU-DCOM General Member
National Member 2015-2016

Why did you decide to pursue an MSPH?

I felt like it was important to understand the community that I wanted to work with. I thought it was vitally important to really research the types of things I would see and work with before entering into medical school. It is still helping me to this day as I can relate well with the patient I interact with. I feel like if you have a passion for community health and wanting to have a better understanding of your patient population, then I think this is a great route to go. In the long run it will give you a better perspective of medicine.

Best Advice for the Pre-Med Student?

Enjoy every moment! Don't feel as if everything needs to happen right away. Trust that the process will work at the right time.

Khyrista Valentine, OMSI
DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine
Lincoln Memorial University M.S '15
Meharry Medical College MSPH, '12
Oakwood University BS Biology '10
Hometown: Kansas City, MO

RESEARCH TRAINING

Research programs ranging from a few months to a year or more can assist students in exploring their talents for biomedical research or academic medicine. Two programs have been established to expose minority students to medical research: the Minority Biomedical Research Support Program (MBRS) and the Minority Access to Research Careers Program (MARC). MARC is also offered at the undergraduate level and is known as UMARC. These programs are under the umbrella of the Division of Minority Opportunities in Research of the National Institutes of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS). A complete list of all programs offered by the NIGMS can be seen at their website: www.nigms.nih.gov. Further information about these programs can be obtained by contacting the NIGMS Office of Communications and Public Liaison via e-mail at info@nigms.nih.gov or by telephone at **301-496-7301**.

NIH also offers a combined M.D./D.O./Ph.D. program, entitled the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP), that provides both scientific and medical training to highly motivated students with outstanding research and academic potential. Trainees are obligated to serve in the health-related or teaching program for one year less than the period of support in exchange for six years of support including a yearly stipend. For more information, contact:

Peter Preach, Ph.D.

Program Director

Medical Scientist Training Program

National Institute of General Medical Sciences

45 Center Drive MSC 6200 Bethesda, MD 20892-6200

301-594-0828

preuschp@nigms.nih.gov

With research, one thing to consider is gaining experience with creating a poster or oral presentation of your research material, and presenting at a national conference. A great option to consider is the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Medical Students. Additional information available here: <http://www.abrcms.org/index.php/program>.



REAPPLYING TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

Ever since you made the decision to become a physician, you have done your best to work towards that goal. Whether you have been planning for a career in the medical profession since career day in the fourth grade or you simply woke up one day and realized that your present endeavor wasn't really what you wanted to do with the rest of your life, you feel the same disappointment when you are not accepted to medical school.

Of course, when you don't get in, you ask yourself the obvious question, "Why?" That question should lead to a serious review of your academic preparation. Since you most likely know someone who got in, you will probably compare grades, MCAT scores, extracurricular involvement—anything that could possibly provide some insight as to why they were admitted and you were not. You should actually spend very little time, if any, analyzing these differences because, simply put, you are not them and they are not you. The worst thing you could do is resubmit the same exact application. You need to reassess your application and find areas (grades, volunteer experience, MCAT scores) where you can improve.

Before you reapply, consider applying to a post-baccalaureate program or masters. Many of these programs have a successful matriculation rates. There are many programs out there with different requirements and benefits. Another option is to apply to schools that have their own post-baccalaureate program that allows automatic admission after successful completion of their program. You might also want to consider gaining clinical experience such as an EMT or Scribe. Speak to a pre-medical or academic advisor whom you trust to help plan your next step. Keep in mind that some schools will offer personal sessions to talk with you about what you can do to make yourself more competitive.

**MOST IMPORTANTLY, DO NOT BE
DISCOURAGED!**



FINANCING MEDICAL SCHOOL

FINANCING MEDICAL SCHOOL

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LASTTIDBITS (P. 40)

GENERAL FINANCES

Finances are a major consideration in your journey into higher education. Professional school students can incur enormous debt during their educational pursuits. Your goal, when financing your education, should be to find and take advantage of as many grants and scholarships as possible.

There are two general kinds of financial aid available: gifts and loans. Gifts such as scholarships, grants, and stipends, do not require repayment and can enhance your financial aid profile significantly. Be aware that receipts of these funds are considered when figuring your financial need. There also may be strings attached or special designations for the money, so make sure that you know what you are getting into. Loans are the predominant means of financing medical school for most students. Low interest subsidized loans are available through the Federal government [Stafford/Guaranteed Student Loan Program](#). This money does have to be paid back, but as you know, repayment is deferred for six months after graduation from medical school. Loans are great ways to finance your education, but remember, try not to overextend yourself. You'll pay for it later! By no means should you live below the poverty level, but neither should you buy a new BMW with your loan money.

Remember, for most forms of financial aid, your parent's financial information and records will be required, even if you are an independent student. Make sure that these documents are close at hand; this will make things easier for you. Make note of all of the deadlines, and always get your paperwork in on time. Delays may cause you to lose out on the opportunity for a larger sum of money or delay the disbursement of your money.

Note: Documents typically needed to apply for financial and institution specific scholarships are as follows:

- 1) FAFSA application
- 2) Student-Specific Application
- 3) Parent Federal Tax Return (including Schedules and W-2)
- 4) Individual Tax Return (including schedules and W-2)

Also, the AAMC has a wealth of information regarding the [costs of applying to medical school, how to pay for medical school](#), and the [different types of financial loans to pay for medical school](#).

TIPS + TRICKS

Student Spotlight



SNMA Involvement
MAPS Academic Affairs Coordinator 2015-2016

Are there any unexpected costs you have come across in medical school?

I have always been a very fiscally responsible person. I clip coupons and look for the best sales. With that being said, those behaviors have not changed upon entering medical school. When I projected my budget, I took into account the following: rent, utilities, food, books, medical equipment, health insurance, etc. Each month, I set aside a portion of money that goes directly into my savings account. Life happens, you must plan for the unexpected. There were some unexpected maintenance costs with my vehicle, but thankfully the money in my savings account was more than enough to cover it. Large loans do not permit you to spend as though you are living the high life. Plan a budget, and stick to it. Relish in the luxuries after you have graduated medical school and paid off your student loans!

Best advice to the pre-med student?

While there are many classes that are required for you to enter medical school, make sure that you are taking classes in topics that you enjoy. Do not be afraid to explore your inner artist, historian, or writer; as these are elements that you will not have the opportunity to explore in medical school. When completing your applications and writing your personal statement, stay true to yourself.

Britney M.D Howard, MS
University of Kentucky College of Medicine
Spelman College BA Psychology '11

Check out your school's financial aid office.

Most schools have a book with scholarship references. Ask for this book at each school when you interview, it is a more directed approach to obtaining funding information.

1.) State and Federal Repayment, Loan and Scholarship database from AAMC. This searchable data base provides detailed information about many of the state and federal programs available to medical and other health professions students. You can visit the website here:

www.aamc.org/stloan

2.) AAMC Organization of Student Representatives Scholarship Supplement

<https://www.aamc.org/download/266720/data/scholarshippdf>

Check out the following programs:

- Armed Forces Scholarships
- National Medical Fellowships
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- American Medical Association
- Public Health Service Scholarship
- National Institutes of Health Scholarship
- National Health Service Corps

Hit the Net and check out the following web sites:

- Graduate School Financial Aid Resources -> www.finaid.org
- Financial Aid Search through the Web -> www.fastweb.com

Make sure you pay attention to scholarships and loans that have special requirements such as:

- Gender
- Financial Need
- Minority group affiliation
- County/State of Residence
- Academic Standing
- Special hobbies or abilities
- Area of medical interest
- High School/College Alumni
- Religious affiliation

BUDGETING

Much like being an undergraduate, as a graduate student, you will be forced to live within a structured budget. Your financial aid office will often try to provide you with a budget that will meet your tuition and expenses. You have to be a medical student without having to worry about where your next meal will come from.

Things to think about:

• Books

Don't buy everything suggested or required. You can sometimes get by with good class notes and the reference books in the library. Also, ask senior students which books they suggest and if they would like to get rid of theirs. Hand-me-downs save lots of money and can also help you focus on areas of importance in your curriculum.

• Equipment

Some schools require students to give deposits for the use of school equipment, while other schools require you to buy certain equipment. You must plan for these expenses.

• Seasonal Expenses

Plan and save for your USMLE exam fees, which will be due with the application to sit for the exam. Don't get caught without the proper fee. The financial aid office generally will not be able to help. You also may want to take advantage of a board review course, which can cost from \$400 to \$3000 depending on your needs.

• Transportation

Driving or riding to school, clinics, and hospitals can become a hassle and leads to added expenses during your second, third, and fourth years. While most schools allow an increase in financial aid for this reason, you must also budget the money to avoid problems during this time.

Also, traveling between home and school can be an expensive venture depending on your situation, so make sure you have designed a plan that allows you to get home as often as you like without breaking the bank.

• Rent, food, and other necessities

You must be able to provide for yourself with respect to the necessities in life. Taking the proper steps to avoid homelessness and malnutrition are essential! When you get your semester refund, pay expenses that can be paid six months in advance (if possible), so that if your money starts to get low at the end of the semester you will at least have a place to live. Don't forget to plan for the inevitable and remember Murphy's Law—if it can go wrong, it will go wrong. In case you do get in a bind in which you need extra money to tie you over until next semester, most schools have resources such as emergency loans or the credit union associated with your school will have loans you can take out that can range from \$300.00 up to \$3500.00. Most of the time you have to pay these back as soon as you get your next financial aid disbursement, so only use these resources if they are needed.

Entertainment, clothing, etc.

The key to financially surviving medical school is to live within your means.

LAST TIDBITS

Working and Medical School

Most schools frown upon student employment during medical school. Some schools even forbid students to hold a job. If you feel the need to work during school, find out what the policy is at your school before you start working. The last thing you want to do is put your career in jeopardy for the sake of a few extra dollars. However, if you really need to work, consider speaking with the Dean of Student Affairs at your institution so that arrangements can be made to enhance your financial aid profile. It is generally not advisable to work during medical school, and this is a good practice to follow because you have enough work to do already.

Loan Repayment

Although an extremely distant thought, loan repayment is a reality. There are a few programs around that allow students to work after completing their residency training and have a certain dollar amount of indebtedness paid off per year. There are also scholarships available that have time commitments associated with them. It's never too early to start looking into these programs. Most are administered through the federal government and require time and commitment up front.

Undergraduate Debt

Since you will be living on financial aid during your time in medical school, you do not want to have to use part of your money to pay off debt that you acquired from your undergraduate years such as credit cards and other kinds of debt. Before you start medical school, try to pay off all credit cards and other debts so that you will not be straining yourself to pay them off during medical school. It will be very hard to do that because you have to budget your money in medical school for other expenses such as rent, food, and other necessities. Also, we all have received credit card offers in our mail while in college, but as soon as you receive them throw them away! Having too much debt before entering medical school can also prevent you from being approved for some of the loans you will need to pay for medical school. You do not want to lose a chance to go to medical school because of a shopping spree!



A photograph of three medical professionals in white lab coats. One man on the right is pointing at a clipboard while talking to two women on the left. The background shows a patterned wall. At the bottom of the image, there is a red ECG line on a white grid.

What to Expect in Medical School

TESTS + MEDICAL SCHOOL

Standardized testing does not end with the MCAT. The USMLE (United States Medical Licensing Exam) is a three step series that allopathic medical students and residents must pass in order to qualify for medical licensure in the United States. Unlike previous USMLE exams in which candidates all took the same test on the same dates, the computer versions are administered by appointment on a year-round basis.

Step 1 is a one-day computer exam taken by most medical students at the end of their second year of medical school.

It emphasizes basic science principles, specifically in anatomy, behavioral science, biochemistry, microbiology, pathology, pharmacology, and physiology. Interdisciplinary areas such as genetics, immunology, and nutrition are also tested. Step 2 is also a one-day computer exam, but it is taken by most medical students at the end of their third year or during the fourth year of medical school. It emphasizes clinical principles, especially in internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, psychiatry, and surgery. Step 3 is a 2-day computerized examination that focuses primarily on patient management. Other "physician tasks" tested include history and physical, lab and diagnostic studies, diagnosis, prognosis, and pathophysiology.

In addition to taking the computer-based written portion of USMLE Step 2, medical students will be required to take Step 2K, which is a clinical skills exam, at the conclusion of the third year or during the fourth year of medical school. The examination will consist of clinical case encounters with fifteen-minute interviews of standardized patients (of varying races, genders, and ethnicities) and a ten-minute session to record information about the encounter.

Like their allopathic counterparts, osteopathic medical students must take a series of licensing exams entitled COMLEX. The COMLEX-USA series is designed to assess the osteopathic medical knowledge and clinical skills considered essential for osteopathic generalist physicians to practice medicine without supervision. Students are expected to utilize the philosophy and principles of osteopathic medicine to solve medical problems. The exam is broken down into three sections, Level I, Level II-CE, Level II-PE, and Level III. More information is available at <http://www.nbome.org/exams.asp?m=serv>.

POST-BACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS

For many students, the decision to pursue a career in medicine is made after a bachelor's degree has already been earned. Frequently, these candidates must complete additional course work in the sciences before they are ready to apply to medical school. For these reasons, many schools are now offering formal non-degree programs designed to assist students in preparing for medical school. These programs vary in length, as they are based on the prior academic history of the prospective student:

Note: AAMC has a database of Post-Bac and Special Master's Programs. You can access it here: <https://services.aamc.org/postbac/>

If you're interested in pursuing MD/PhD and would like to strengthen your research credentials, please visit https://www.nigms.nih.gov/Research/specificareas/MIDAS/pages/Publications_archive.aspx

Programs for students who have little or no science background

Bennington College (Pre-medical)
Bryn Mar
Bryn Mar (PB/MD)
Brandeis University
Columbia University
Goutier College
Mount Holyoke College
Johns Hopkins
Long Island University
Mills College
New York University
The Pennsylvania State University
Scripps College
Towson State University
Tufts University
Wake Forest University School of Medicine
Chicago Area Health & Medical Careers Program
Associated Medical Schools of New York
University of Connecticut

The Ohio State University
New York College of Osteopathic Medicine
UCLA School of Medicine
University of Vermont
University of Connecticut
University of Miami
University of Pennsylvania, Postbacc Pre- Medical Program
Roosevelt College
Agnes Scott College
University of Southern California
Hofstra University
La Salle University
University of Maryland Science in the Evening Program
Drexel University College of Medicine
Evening Post-Baccalaureate Pre-Medical Program (EPBPM)

Programs for students underrepresented in the health sciences

Southern Illinois University (MEDPREP)
University of California Davis
University of California Irvine
University of California San Diego (UCSD)
Wayne State
Michigan State
Georgetown University (GEMS)
Roswell Park Graduate Division, SUNY at Buffalo

Programs for students who need to improve their credentials as well as those who have little or no sciences:

American International College
 American University
 Assumption College
 Roosevelt College
 University of Florida
 University of Miami
 University of Pennsylvania
 Wellesley College
 Worcester State College
 Agnes Scott College
 California State University, Fullerton
 Duquesne University
 Virginia Commonwealth University and
 Medical College of Virginia
 Drexel University College of Medicine, Medical Science
 Preparatory (MSP)
 Harvard University Extension School
 The Ohio State University
 Loyola University Chicago,
 Mundelein College
 Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine

Special Master Programs

Drexel University College of Medicine - Interdepartmental
 Medical Science (IMS) Program
 Drexel University College of Medicine - Masters in
 Laboratory Animal Science (M.L.A.S.)
 Georgetown University (SMP)
 Roswell Park Graduate Division, SUNY at Buffalo
 National Institutes of Health (NIH)
 Boston University School of Medicine
 New York Medical College
 Syracuse University (Neuroscience)
 New York College of Podiatric Medicine Pre- Matriculation
 Course
 Dartmouth College

Indiana University
 University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey
 Finch University of Health Sciences / The Chicago Medical
 School
 State University of New York at Albany
 Union College
 Nova Southeastern University
 Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Additional Options

National Institutes of Health
 NIH Undergraduate Scholarship Program for disadvantaged
 students committed to a career in biomedical research
 National Science Foundation (NSF)
 American Association for the Advancement of Science
 (AAAS)
 Mayo Clinic Post Baccalaureate Research for Recent
 College Graduates/Initiative for Minority Student
 Development
 Mabelle Arole International Fellowship
 Partners HealthCare: an employer providing research and
 career opportunities throughout Eastern Massachusetts.
 Find out about positions at hospitals and member
 organizations by visiting this on-line database and individual
 hospital web sites. <http://www.partners.org/>

**Post Baccalaureate options made available by the SNMA
 Premed Online Resource Library. Please contact the Pre-
 medical Board Member for more information.**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SUGGESTED PUBLICATIONS, WEBSITES, PROGRAMS, +GUIDES

Publications available from the AAMC:

Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR)

A good and very complete compendium of information on U.S. and Canadian medical schools published by the AAMC. The AAMC advocates that the MSAR is the number one source for application procedures and deadlines, selection factors such as MCAT & GPA data, medical school class profiles, costs and financial aid packages, MD/PhD and other combined degrees, and graduates' specialty choices. It also includes information on opportunities for minority students as well as information for foreign applicants. The MSAR can be purchased online at any time and is often handsomely discounted if purchased at the time of MCAT registration.

The AAMC Curriculum Directory

Includes information comparing the basic science and clinical curricula of all of the medical schools covered in the Medical School Admissions Requirements book.

Minority Student Opportunities in U.S. Medical Schools

Has statistics on minority enrollment and information about admissions procedures and financial aid and recruitment programs.

Additional Information about Financial Aid

Leads you through financing a medical school education

<https://www.aamc.org/students/aspiring/paying/>

<https://www.aamc.org/services/first/>

Website: AspiringDocs.org

AspiringDocs.org is a free Web site and online community designed by the AAMC (Association of

American Medical Colleges). It provides students with the information, tools, and support necessary to navigate the MCAT, medical school application process, financial aid, admission, career options in medicine, and more.

Check out:

- Ask the Experts—Get advice and answers to your questions from medical school experts.
- Hot Topics—Share your ideas and experiences with other aspiring docs around the country.
- News and Deadlines—Get updates on upcoming events and important deadlines
- Inspiring Stories—Read how today's doctors overcame challenges in their journeys to an M.D. degree.

Register on the site today: www.aspiringdocs.org. It's fast and it's free!

To order print version, contact AAMC Membership and Publication Orders:

Association of American Medical Colleges

2450 N. Street, NW

Washington, DC 20037-1126

Phone: (202) 828-0416

Also available online at the AAMC website: <http://www.aamc.org>

Programs and Workshops from the AAMC**Summer Health Professions Education Program (SHPEP)**

The Summer Health Professions Education Program (SHPEP) is a free six-week summer academic enrichment program for freshman and sophomore college students who are interested in a career in medicine, dentistry, and other health professions. SHPEP is implemented at 12 sites across the nation, and all programs provide a basic science curriculum, career development activities, clinical exposure, and a financial planning workshop. The program is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with direction and technical assistance provided by the AAMC and the American Dental Education Association. For additional information, visit www.smdep.org.

Minority Student Medical Career Awareness Workshops and Recruitment Fair

The Association of American Medical Colleges' (AAMC) Division of Diversity Policy and Programs and Group on Student Affairs-Minority Affairs Section (GSA-MAS) hosts the annual Minority Student Medical Career Awareness Workshops and Recruitment Fair during the AAMC annual meeting. The event is open to all who are interested in pursuing a career in medicine.

Minority college and high school students meet minority affairs and admissions officers from U.S. medical schools. Everyone learns from the experts how to:

- Get ready academically
- Identify resources
- Apply for medical school
- Pay for medical school

For more information, visit www.aamc.org/medicalcareerfair

Pre-medical Guides***The Medical School Admissions Guide: A Harvard MD's Week-By-Week Admissions Handbook, 3rd Edition***

By Suzanne M. Miller

Dr. Suzanne Miller has a weekly, step-by-step plan that she used to get into Harvard Medical School. This book contains plenty of advice and examples of successful personal statements, secondary essays, and AMCAS work activities. There are also special sections geared toward applicants, nontraditional applicants, and applicants applying to DO schools.

So, You Want to Be a Physician: Getting an Edge in your Pursuit of the Challenging Dream of Becoming a Medical Professional

By Edward M. Goldberg

This book offers firsthand advice examples from aspiring medical students. This book contains information about personal statements, actual interview questions, and how to be a successful interviewee.

Getting into Medical School: The Pre-Medical Student's Guidebook (11th Ed)

By Sanford J. Brown

There are plenty of doctors' reference books on diseases and drugs, but few to assist the would-be doctor in navigating the seas of the application process. And there is an overwhelming blizzard of issues to face! Considering the effort that goes into passing organic chemistry, it's not a major time commitment to spend a few hours learning how to choose a college, survive premed, take the MCAT, and apply successfully to medical school. And as a bonus, there is an appendix of summer programs for pre-meds and a full directory of American medical schools (with grade point averages, enrollment, costs, and application information) as well.

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