Assessing the Strength of your Application: Is this the best application cycle for you?

Students should consider applying only when they feel they are at their strongest. Take into account all factors in this handout and apply in the cycle that is best for you. All applicants are in control of this decision; the UAAC will be supportive of the applicant’s choice.

Medical School Application Components: ACADEMIC FACTORS

Science GPA
- Calculate your science gpa for MD and DO programs:
  - MD = all bio, chem, physics and math courses; DO = all bio, chem, and physics courses
- Is your science gpa within most of the 10%-90% sci gpa ranges provided in the AAMC’s Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR) online database?
- For Fall 2014 cycle, the average sci gpa for accepted NU students was 3.58
- Acceptance Rate by science gpa: first-time NU applicants (non-HPME):
  - 3.0 and above: 72%
  - 3.2 and above: 78%
  - Less than 3.0 sci gpa: 17% (but many applicants had post-bacc coursework in this group)

MCAT
- Do you plan on taking the MCAT by the end of spring quarter of the year you apply?
- Are you planning on devoting 3-4 months of study for the MCAT?
- Is your MCAT score within most of the 10%-90% MCAT ranges provided in the MSAR?
- For Fall 2014 cycle, the average MCAT score for accepted NU students (non-HPME) was 33.85

MCAT Score Release Information and Test Preparation Resources
- April examinees will receive a $150 Amazon gift card ($60 for FAP recipients)
- For April and May exams, preliminary percentile rank scores will be released to applicants within 2-3 weeks
- Official scores for April/May exams will not be released until mid-June
  - Official MCAT Sample Test
  - What’s on the MCAT 2015 interactive tool
  - The Online Practice Questions from The Official Guide to the MCAT® Exam (MCAT2015)
  - MCAT - Khan Academy: https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat
  - Pre-health Collection within MedEdPORTAL’s iCollaborative
  - Psychology and Sociology Textbook Resource
  - Official MCAT questions (released in early 2015)

Coursework Requirements
- Know the required courses for all of your med schools; review MSAR and schools’ websites
- The basic science pre-reqs (gen chem, orgo, bio and physics) should be completed before applying
- If you have AP for any science pre-req, check the schools’ AP policies
- Additional course requirements can be completed after an application has been submitted
Medical School Application Components: OTHER FACTORS

Clinical Experience (a.k.a. exposure to medicine and evidence of your service orientation)
- While in college, how thoroughly have you tested the decision to be a physician?
  - Meaningful community service AND strong medically-related exposure
- Have you volunteered consistently for at least a year?
- Have you checked med schools for their expectations of service/medically-related exposure?
  - For example, Rush now requires 150 hours of community service and 150 hours of medical observation/exposure
- Have you shadowed physicians multiple times?
  - What did you learn about the realities of medicine?
- Have you reflected on both kinds of experiences to understand what it means to be a physician?

Research
- Have you engaged in research experience or any scholarly activity outside of the classroom?
- Do you have an understanding of how good research is conducted?
- Did you engage in research that was interesting to you (part of your major/minor or focused clinically in an area of interest)? Med schools have a broad view of research and non-lab research will also “count” for most med schools.
- If you plan on applying MD/PhD, have you had at least a full year’s worth of research experience?
- For some schools, summer experiences may be sufficient for research activity and some schools may not require any research experience (check MSAR – Selection Factors).

Recommendation Letters
- Have you developed good professional relationships with at least 2 science faculty professors and one non-science faculty professor who have taught you in a class?
- Have you developed good professional relationships with supervisors who know you through your non-academic experiences?
- Do you plan on opening your Recommendation Letter File during the winter quarter of the year you plan to apply?
  - Review UAAC Recommendation File Service section on the UAAC website
  - Complete online form to start process; only need agreement of one recommender
  - Can add more recommenders later after you have talked with them
  - As a guideline, aim for 2 science faculty, 1 non-sci and 1-2 recommenders from prominent activities (max of 6 letters allowed). DO programs may require a DO/MD shadowing letter

Interests/Activities/Organizations
- What are your interests? What are you passionate about?
- What sets you apart from others?
- Have you worked with others in a team/organization? Have you been a leader/contributor?

Timing
- Do you plan on submitting your primary application in June/early July?
- Do you plan on returning secondary applications in July/August?
- Taking a mid-late summer MCAT will delay the review of your application.
Medical School Application Components: OTHER FACTORS continued

Reflections / Personal Statement / Secondary Application Questions / Interviews
- Have you thought about why you want to be a physician?
- Have you written your personal statement, work/activities descriptions and most meaningful essays by the spring of the year you apply?
  - Attend a UAAC Personal Statement workshop in winter or spring quarters
  - Personal statement feedback appointments available
- Have you put as much time and thought into the school-specific secondary application questions as you did the personal statement? Common secondary application questions:
  - Why did you apply to our school?
  - How will you contribute to the diversity of our class?
  - How have you coped with a stressful event / an ethical dilemma?
  - UAAC will provide an updated excel sheet with past questions by med school in 2015
- Do you feel comfortable talking about this decision and your qualities/experiences in interviews?
  - Interviews begin as early as September; most schools interview October-February, a few schools may continue to interview in March/April.
  - Attend a UAAC Interview Preparation workshop or discuss prep in an appointment
  - Practice with a UAAC mock interview
- How will the following core competencies be reflected in your application?

AAMC Committee on Admissions Endorsed Core Entry Level Personal Competencies
https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/admissionsinitiative/competencies/

Interpersonal
- Service Orientation
- Social / Interpersonal Skills
- Cultural Competence
- Teamwork
- Oral Communication

Intrapersonal
- Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others
- Reliability and Dependability
- Resilience and Adaptability
- Capacity for Improvement

Financial Aid Information Resources
- AAMC Fee Assistance Program: https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/
- AACOMAS Application Fee Waivers: http://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor/financial-aid

Medical School Selection
- Make an excel sheet using your information and MSAR information for your selected schools
  - https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/ Online
  - 10% - 90% range for science gpa and MCAT scores (MSAR Selection Factors tab)
  - In-State and Out of State matriculated information (MSAR Acceptance Info tab)
  - Review mission statement / curriculum
  - Review past secondary application questions (UAAC will send out excel file in 2015)
  - Review 3 year Accepted / Matriculated handout (available at UAAC)

11/2014
MED SCHOOL APPLICATION TIMELINE – This timeline represents the ideal time periods

**FALL/WINTER**

- **ASSESS THE STRENGTH OF YOUR APPLICATION**
  - Science GPA / MCAT / Clinical Experience / Research / Organizations-Interests / Timing
- Apply for AAMC Fee Assistance Program (FAP) if you qualify (January)
  - Reduced MCAT / free Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR) access
  - Can apply for free to 15 MD programs
- Access MSAR online database to research schools
- Set up UAAC Recommendation File (after January 1st)
- Design MCAT study schedule;
- Register for April/May/June MCAT in February
- Write first drafts for personal statement, work/activities descriptions and your three most meaningful essays; allow plenty of time for multiple drafts/revisions
- Meet with a health professions adviser

**SPRING**

- Take MCAT (April/May/June); talk with us if you take an MCAT in July or later
- In May, access 2016 primary applications: AMCAS (MD); AACOMAS (DO); TMDSAS (TX)
- Send official transcripts from the Registrar Office of every U.S. post-secondary school you attended
  - AMCAS: Send transcripts in May if you are **not** including spring quarter grades
  - AMCAS: Send transcripts in mid-June if you are including spring quarter grades
  - AACOMAS: Send transcripts in mid-June; must include spring quarter grades
  - TMDSAS: Send transcripts in May; allowed to send updated transcripts later
- Finalize personal statement and list of medical schools to 11-15 (can vary)
- Conduct a final assessment of your application
- Submit AMCAS and AACOMAS in **June/early July**
- Start writing drafts for secondary/supplemental application questions

**SUMMER**

- Complete secondary applications within 1-2 weeks of receiving them
  - No applicant will receive MD secondary applications until after July 1st; AMCAS does not start sending verified applications to MD schools until July 1st
- Request that the UAAC Letters of Recommendation Packet be sent to schools when you start receiving secondary applications
- **VERY IMPORTANT!** Your application is not considered to be “**Ready to be Reviewed**” by a med school until **ALL** of the following components have been received:
  - Verified primary application
  - Completed secondary application
  - UAAC Letter of Recommendation Packet
  - Latest MCAT Score

**FALL/WINTER/SPRING**

- Interview
- April 30th – if holding multiple acceptances, an applicant must choose one school
- If on a waitlist, most schools start moving down list in late May, even through the summer