PRE-HEALTH ADVISING

Planning to apply to professional school in the upcoming application round

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http://www.du.edu/nsm/premed/
## Who can help?

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General timeline... 3rd year

Winter of 3rd year

• Start planning your application; start working on your personal statement
• Continue searching for a school that is a good fit for you
• Begin talking to potential references
• Determine application deadlines for applications and entrance exams
• Consider summer plans
• Address the holes/weaknesses in your transcripts and resume
• Continue with self-assessment
Spring of 3\textsuperscript{rd} year

- Work on your application: finalize your personal statement (continue with self-assessment)
- Continue serious prep/study for your entrance exam
- Address the holes in your application
- Make sure you are reading: journals, books, news about medicine: daily newspapers, weekly magazine (what’s happening in the world around you, outside of DU and medicine)
General timeline... 3rd year

Summer after 3rd year

• Submit your application as soon as possible (but not until polished and as strong as possible)
• Complete secondary applications as soon as possible
Fall of 4th year

- Review your curricular/extra-curricular plan for the rest of the year (graduation requirements and deadlines)
- Confirm with schools have received your application if not confirmed by them
- Continue working on secondary applications
- Prepare for interviews… practice, practice, practice!
- Continue reading and ‘broadening you world’
- Consider your parallel plan
- Do some self-assessment: review your transcripts and resume; address the holes/weaknesses in your application
General timeline… 4\textsuperscript{th} year

Winter/spring of 4\textsuperscript{th} year

- Continue with your awesome plan that got you this far
- Prepare for graduation
- If waitlisted, send a letter confirming your interest
- Write thank you to your references (let them know what the outcome was)
- Consider your parallel plan
Self-reflection and self-assessment

- What gaps exist in my knowledge (coursework or studying)?
- How do I need to strengthen my application?
- Do I know why, and have I demonstrated that, I want to pursue a career in…? Why not…?
- Have I researched different types of schools, curriculum and programs?
- Have I determined a realistic timeline for my application preparation?
- Am I aware of current issues, concerns and trends in healthcare?
Be organized!

- Keep a notebook just for your professional schools information and application materials
- Health Portfolio and Self-Assessment Guide (and core competencies)
  - Activities
  - Awards
  - Research
  - Leadership
  - Shadowing experiences
  - Internships
- Personal statement thoughts and drafts
- Information for letter of recommendation
- Information from your research on different professional school programs
What Is Holistic Review?

[https://students-residents.aamc.org/choosing-medical-career/article/holistic-review-medical-school-admissions/](https://students-residents.aamc.org/choosing-medical-career/article/holistic-review-medical-school-admissions/)

- Holistic review is a flexible, individualized way for schools to consider an applicant’s capabilities, providing balanced consideration to experiences, attributes, and academic metrics. These factors are considered in combination with how the individual might contribute value as a medical student and physician. The use of holistic review by schools has increased in recent years and is becoming more and more common.
More about holistic review…

How Do Schools Use Their Mission in Admissions?

- Mission-based admissions means that a medical school’s admissions policies and procedures are set up specifically to align with the mission and goals of the institution. Each medical school’s mission statement can be found at the Medical School Admission Requirements website. By reading these statements, you can figure out if a school’s goals align with your own. You can use this information to prepare your application and help you highlight how your experiences make you a good fit for a particular institution.

What Do Nonacademic Experiences and Information Communicate About an Applicant?

- On your application, it’s important to convey a full picture of who you are, even the parts not related to medicine, because your life’s details and anything that demonstrates your character and values matter. Medical schools consider a concept they call “distance traveled”: where you’ve come from to get where you are now. They want to know about the challenges or constraints you’ve faced and what you’ve done to persevere. What about you illustrates resilience, drive, passion, and commitment? Beyond what you’ve accomplished academically, schools want to know what you will contribute to their institutions. One of the main goals in the admissions process is to make sure students will succeed in medical school and contribute positively to their future patients and the medical community.

https://students-residents.aamc.org/choosing-medical-career/article/holistic-review-medical-school-admissions/
What Makes a Competitive Applicant?

• Good time-management skills. Are you able to balance many competing deadlines, keep focused, and prioritize when necessary to complete tasks on time?
• Evidence of leadership. Are you able to demonstrate that you can lead a project or team?
• Exposure to medically related environments. Do you have meaningful and sustained volunteer experience in a medically related setting, such as a clinic, nursing home, or physician’s office?
• Exceptional communication skills. Are you articulate and able to communicate information clearly to people regardless of their backgrounds or experiences?
• Evidence of compassion and respect. Can you point to experiences that show you are empathetic and caring?
• Interpersonal skills. Medicine today relies on skilled people from numerous health professions. Can you demonstrate that you’re able to work well in groups and teams?
• Interests outside medicine and personal background. What are your qualities, hobbies, passions, and other personal attributes that will contribute to the medical school community and enrich its diversity?
Work on the Pre-Health Portfolio and Self-Assessment Guide, if you have not already

Complete (or work on completing) the guide and email a copy to me when setting up an appointment.

The guide will help in organizing all your application information and help you see ahead of time how you could further strengthen your application.
Core Competencies for Entering Medical Students (but relevant for all health professional students)

Four categories of competencies:

- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Thinking and Reasoning
- Science
Interpersonal Competencies
- Service Orientation
- Social Skills
- Cultural Competence
- Teamwork
- Oral Communication

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

Thinking and Reasoning Competencies
- Critical Thinking
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Scientific Inquiry
- Written Communication

Science Competencies
- Living Systems
- Human Behavior
Keep a journal!

- You think you will remember, but you might not (probably not)
- Journaling about experiences will make you reflect and think deeper about what you can take from that experience
- Information about your activity/experience
  - Type
  - Name
  - Dates
  - Total hours
  - Organization name
  - Contact information
  - Experience description
  - Was this one of your most meaningful experiences? Why?
  - What interactions were memorable? What competencies did you demonstrate?
Plan your application (and preparation) timeline:

• When do you want to start professional school (matriculate)?

• Decide when you want to start medical school and work backwards
Application timeline

• What is the application deadline?
  • not so important for rolling admissions- you will want to apply as close to the start dates as possible

• When is the earliest you can submit the application?

• When can you access the application and start filling it out?

• Rolling admissions?

• Plan on the school not receiving your application for 4-6 weeks after you hit the submit button (with a completed application)…Now when will the school see your application? How many interview slots do you think will be available at this time?
It is a long… long process!

The application process starts about 15 months before you want to start medical school

Apply early! Start preparing even much earlier than you think you will need!

The general timeline for medical school, for example:
• April-June: take the MCAT if you have not already done so
• May-July: work on online primary application
• Early June-early August: submit primary application
• Late July-September: complete secondary applications
• Mid September-March: interviews
• Late October-day before start of medical school classes: hear about acceptances
Start exploring the application service

• What information will you need for your application?
• Review any instructions
• FAQs
• Review dates and deadlines
Deciding to what schools you will apply

- Do some research on schools
- Decide to how many schools you will send applications?
  - average student submits applications for 15 different schools
  - start with a list of 10-20 schools (consider applying to 6-12 schools)
  - ‘dream’ schools, schools you fit their average criteria, schools that you feel you surpass the average applicant
- What criteria are important to consider?
  - Medical School Admission Requirements® website
    - school profiles
    - missions statements
    - admissions requirements
    - applicant and acceptance statistics
How do you decide which schools to consider?

Do your homework! Match schools with your goals, interests, and strengths.

- Mission statement and focus
- Programs offered (research, dual degree, focus programs)
- Curriculum and teaching methods
- Support structures in place for students
- How does the school prepare their students: pass rate on USMLE? Where students go after graduating? Residence matches?
- GPA/test score expectations
- Specific/unique prerequisites
- Public or private
- Location
- Size and demographics
- Cost to apply and cost to attend
Would your application be competitive now?

• Consider:
  • GPA
  • MCAT
  • Volunteer hours
  • Clinical experience/exposure
  • Research experience
  • Have you/your experiences demonstrated some core competencies?
  • Have you done some self-reflection?

• What could make your application more competitive?

• What is your parallel plan?
Do you (and your application) fit the school’s mission?

Will the school fit your interests and passions?

Are these reflected in your application?

- Personal Statement
- Work Experiences
- Extracurricular Activities
- Reference Letters

AAMC webinar on mission fit:
https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/435214/missionfit.html
**Standardized exams**

- Plan on your scores not being available for your application until 4-6 weeks after taking the exam.
- What is the last test date available to meet your application goal? What would be your preferred test date?
- Determine registration information and testing dates.
- Test preparation- will your prep be completed by that test date? Plan on needing 10-15 hours a week for 2-4 months to prepare well.
- Financial planning for test registration (Fee Assistance Programs)
Exam preparation

• Should you take a preparation course?
  • Depends on your personal study skills and commitment
  • Depends on your standardized test taking abilities in general
  • Commercial courses, commercial review book, online resources, etc
  • Explore ‘What’s on the MCAT Exam?’ See how comfortable you feel with the material in general: [https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/whats-mcat-exam/](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/whats-mcat-exam/)

• Should you take a text for ‘practice’?
  • Plan on taking a practice exam, but not an actual exam for practice.
  • Will your practice exam be an accurate reflection of your score on the actual exam?
  • Would your score be likely to improve if you retake the exam?
Personal statement

• What will make your application unique?
• Know character limit (this includes spaces and punctuation)
• Utilize the character limit
• Plan on spending 5 weeks to complete your personal statement…. Plan on many drafts
• Have people read your statement… people who know you and people who do not, but make sure they are people that will give you honest feedback
Evaluation Letters
(Letters of Recommendation)

• Review schools’ information for # and types of letters they prefer
• Consider who can write you a meaningful letter? Who can speak to your competencies?
• Ask recommenders a quarter ahead
• Follow up with your personal statement, resume, transcripts, standardized test scores, and any other information you think is pertinent
• Ask the letter writer if he/she would be willing to meet with you briefly
• Provide your submission goal date
Who should I ask to write a letter in support of my application?

- At least 2 faculty members with whom you have interacted (not just sat in class, even if you earned an ‘A’ in that class)

- Non-faculty referees with whom you have worked (clinical, volunteer, or job experiences, etc)

- Things to consider, can these people speak to my skills related to:
  - ability to learn
  - problem-solving and critical thinking
  - interact with others (teamwork)
  - professionalism
  - leadership
  - communication
  - personal skills
  - self-awareness
  - cultural knowledge and comfort
What information should I provide to my referees?

- APR/ unofficial transcript
- Major, minor(s), concentrations
- Academic awards
- Resume
- Clinical experiences (paid, unpaid, for credit, etc)
- Research experience (paid, unpaid, for credit, etc)
- Community service
- Personal statement
- Standardized test scores (including dates taken)
- Other relevant information
- Offer to meet with the referees to discuss your ‘application’ and to answer any questions they might have for you
Letters of Recommendation

- **Individual letters** (number of letters depends on the school)

- **Committee letters**
  - Evaluation/summary from the PreProfessional Committee and our recommendation, based on:
    - GPA and courses completed at DU
    - MCAT score
    - Specific comments from your evaluators (faculty and non-faculty referees)
    - Other input we can provide
  - Your original letters of reference will be included and attached to the committee letter.
Committee Letters

The DU committee letter is an overall summary/evaluation of a student and also includes the individual letters written in support of your application.

You need to submit the following items to Margene Brewer (in Olin102 or by email at preprofessional@du.edu):
- completed Applicant Profile and Checklist form
- current resume
- informal academic transcript (recent APR from myWeb)
- MCAT score (or equivalent exam score)
- personal statement (can be a rough draft)

Please send the Referee Form to the faculty referees who are writing your letter of recommendation; your faculty referees should submit the letter and referee form to preprofessional@du.edu. Your non-faculty referees should send a copy of your letter to preprofessional@du.edu. These letters should be signed by the letter writer and on letterhead (if appropriate).
Margene will start a file and begin collecting the letters of recommendation for you. When she has received the completed profile, resume, APR, personal statement and all letters of recommendation, she will inform you that your file is complete and ask if you are ready for a committee letter to be submitted. If so, Margene will forward your file to the PreProfessional/Allied Health Advising Committee.

We will write a committee letter. Your original letters of reference will be included and attached to the committee letter.

When you request a Committee letter through AMCAS or AACOMAS, please include my name and contact information as follows:

Nancy M. Lorenzon Ph.D.
Director, PreProfessional/Allied Health Advising
2190 E. Iliff Ave- Olin 102
Denver, CO 80208
(303)871-2871
Nancy.Lorenzon@DU.edu
Financial planning for applying to schools

• Standardized exam registration fee
• Application fee (initial application and sending the application to additional schools)
• Interview costs (flight, hotel, clothes, other)
• Generally $1000-2000
Parallel plan (backup plan)

• What are your options?
• What could strengthen your current application?
Interviews

- Practice, practice, practice!

- What types of interviews are given at the professional schools you applied to?
  - Multiple Mini Interviews (MMI)
  - One-on-one interviews
  - Group interviews
  - Panel interviews
If you want to practice **PRE-HEALTH INTERVIEWS AND VIDEO YOURSELF DURING YOUR INTERVIEW**, you can create a med school practice interview using **InterviewStream**.

There are a number of sections within InterviewStream which are oriented towards students pursuing medical careers. Within each section are a number of questions. For example, within the *Medicine / Medical School Questions* section there are 39 questions. The sections and the individual questions can be found at [https://daniels-du.interviewstream.com/Question/Create](https://daniels-du.interviewstream.com/Question/Create)

**Sections**
- Medicine / Medical School Questions
- Medicine / Physician Assistant
- Medicine / Vet School Interview

From the homepage, click on the box that says, ‘none of these match my style’, and you will be given a list of others to choose from. It is pretty cool- you should try it!
Do you know what EMPATHY is???? Can you define it? How is it different from sympathy? Do you possess this trait? This is an important characteristic of a health professional, and would be an important quality to be able to discuss in an interview, etc.

Watch these short videos to better appreciate EMPATHY and the importance of empathy in a healthcare setting:
Brené Brown on Empathy
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw

Empathy: The Human Connection to Patient Care
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDDWvj_q-o8
During your free time, read… just a few ideas

General ‘life of a physician’ books:
• *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* by Anne Fadiman
• *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande
• *Mountains Beyond Mountains* by Tracy Kidder

• Healthcare, policy, and issues:
• *The Health Care Handbook* by E. Askin and N. Moore
• *Understanding Health Policy: A Clinical Approach* by Thomas Bodenheimer & Kevin Grumbach
• *Brave New World of Healthcare (Revisited): What every American Needs to Know about Our Healthcare Crisis* by Richard Lamm and Andy Sharma
Contacting Professional Schools with Questions

- **Be professional!** Assume your first contact (even if it is only a brief question you sent in an email) is going to anchor all correspondence from now until you get a final decision on your application (at least)

- Check the website (especially FAQs) to see if the answer should be obvious