April 25, 2023

The Application Series: School Selection
Following this presentation, participants will:

- Recognize there are a variety of factors to consider when selecting where to apply to medical school
- Reflect on why some factors are more important to them than others
- Understand that their priorities in selecting schools may be different than their peers
Choosing Schools: Which Application Service?

• Applicants to medical school need to determine if they are going to apply to MD, DO or MD & DO programs
• MDs and DOs complete similar training
  • Both complete a similar undergraduate medical education (medical school), go on to residency training and can practice in the same settings in the US
  • Graduates of MD and DO programs must pass the same board licensing exams to practice
  • Graduates of MD and DO programs apply to the same residency programs
• Many DO schools like to see students articulate their interest in DO
  • Many successful applicants to DO have shadowed a DO and/or have a LOR from a DO
• MD application service is AMCAS
• DO application service is AACOMAS
  • Keep in mind applying to two services means two primary applications, 2 sets of applications fees, 2 essays, etc.
Location

- **Geography**: Rural or Urban, certain part of the country, proximity to airports, proximity to support system are all a part of the “geographic” factors to take into consideration. *Entering Medical School Questionnaire (MSQ)*, 80% of respondents indicated geographic location was important or very important.

- **Quality of Facilities**: Consider the classroom and lab spaces and how they are equipped to facilitate your learning. Over 80% of MSQ respondents indicated this was important or very important to them.

- **Weather/climate**: Consider preference for seasons or temperate conditions. Do you notice things like sunny days positively impact your wellness?
Personal Factors

• **Family/Partner Proximity**: Consider how important it is for you to have your support system nearby. Is there anyone you need to provide support to that is easier with proximity?

• **Peer Proximity**: Do you want friends from college/other friends nearby?

• **Past Connections**: Will you feel more comfortable if you have familiarity to the area? Have you gotten to know particular schools or locations through internships, family affiliations, or other means that influence your decision?

62% of MSQ respondents considered these factors important
Mission & Values and “Fit”

• **Mission Statement:** Most schools select students with mission fit in mind
  • How do your values align with the schools’ mission?

• **Commitment to Diversity:** What steps has the school taken to serve underserved and underrepresented populations? What have they done to improve access and equity?

• **Student Voice:** Are students involved in policy development or reform? Are students serving on committees? If students have grievances, how are those addressed?

• **Class Size:** Do you prefer small class sizes or larger class sizes? Small classed may mean more individualized attention where large classes mean you have you peers to learn from and more variety in student organizations. Does class size impact your student experience in other ways?

• **Class Demographics:** Is it important to have peers from similar backgrounds as you? How will class diversity impact your experience?

• **Student Vibe or Fit:** Medical school is different than undergrad-peers take most of your classes together, do activities together and support each other. Do you get a good “vibe” from the students at the medical school. 78% of MSQ respondents indicated interviews & meeting with students as important/very important in choosing their school
• **Mentorship:** Do you want formal ways for faculty, administrators and older peers to support entering students?

• **Affinity Group Support:** Is it important for you to see supports and resources for students of color, first-generation or low-income students, LGBTQ+ students, non-traditional students (26+), veterans, students with disabilities? Are there other aspects of your identity that you want to ensure are valued and considered in the school’s policies and resources?

• **Academic Support:** What supports/resources exist to develop learning skills, mastering content, prepping for board exams, etc.?

• **Wellness Support:** What supports/resources exist for helping students develop work/life balance? What is in place to support students if they face any difficulties?
• **Teaching Methods & Curriculum:** Is there more emphasis on learning from faculty or from peers? Is there lecture, or hand-on, or case-based presentation of information? Is the pre-clinical learning the traditional two years or condensed into a shorter time? How do you learn best?

• **Systems of Evaluation:** Grading scales may vary from pass/fail to letter grades to honors/high pass/ pass/ low pass/fail. Some schools rank students. Grading can impact the culture or level of competition in the class.

• **Areas of Concentration/ Tracks:** Some schools offer more opportunities to specialize in a topic through electives and research. These may include global health, public health, rural medicine, medical education, bioethics and more!
• **Early Clinical Exposure:** When will you begin interacting with patients and in what way? Does the school provide learning opportunities with standardized patients or mannikins? How is training for patient care integrated into the curriculum?

• **Variety in Clerkship Sites:** Where do students train during their clinical years? What are the practice sites (public hospital, VA hospital, private practice, international sites, community health centers, etc.)? How much freedom is there to chose where and when you will rotate through different specialties?

• **Patient Populations:** If you know you want to care for patients from certain populations (e.g. people of color, underserved communities, rural, veterans, etc.) does the school provide exposure to these populations and specialized opportunities to learn how to care for them?

• **Support for Primary Care:** If you are interested in primary care medicine, what support is there for you? Some schools offer a 3-year medical school program for those who commit to primary care.

• **Support for Specialty Interest:** If you have some specialties in mind, what support is available for early exposure? A few schools have a 3-year medical school program open to specific specialties.
• **CoCurricular:** If you know you want to pursue research, service or leadership, what support is available to find these opportunities? Are there opportunities to continue with other hobbies or interests?

• **Cost of Attendance:** Tuition, fees and cost of living vary among medical schools, as do their financial aid packages. Although going to health profession programs, like medical school, is still considered a sound financial investment, debt burden and financial support are important factors.

• **Residency Placement & Board Pass Rate:** Where are graduates matching for residency programs? You may want to look at location, diversity of specialties, your specialties of interest and how many students do not match on the first try. Performance on board exams is one factor that impacts residency placement.

• **GPA/MCAT of Entering Class:** This factor is taken into account in the US News and World Rankings. How important is it to you that a school selects for high metrics?

• **School Reputation:** This factor accounts for 30% of the US News medical school ranking. According to the MSQ, 78% of respondents considered general reputation of the school important in their decision making. Does this matter to you?
• Many publicly funded (state schools) have missions tied to serving their state so residents of New York State may not be a good fit for a public school in Montana, for example.
  • In 2022, according to the MSAR, 96% of matriculants to the University of Washington were regional applicants (Washington, Wyoming, Idaho, Alaska and Montana)

• Schools is states with large populations (California, for example) receive large volumes of applications and tend to be more competitive

• You may want to consider political climate of the state or region you are applying to
  • For example, if you want to specialize in OB/GYN, there may be limits on your ability to learn about abortion and reproductive health based on state laws
    • How the repeal of Roe v. Wade will affect training in abortion and reproductive health

• You will likely need to compromise, so think of the things that are non-negotiables and what are things you are willing to compromise on
  • BUT, you should NOT apply to a school you would be unhappy attending!
Other Resources to Use

- **AAMC Matriculating Student Questionnaire**
- **Selecting a Medical School: 35 Questions I Wish I had Asked**
- **US News and World Report**
  - This is always under scrutiny and recently Harvard Medical School has opted out of rankings
  - **USA Today Article- As colleges quit US News rankings, how do you pick a school?**
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Most Cornell Applicants, apply to 16-35 medical schools (MD) programs.

Keep in mind the base application fee is $175 and each additional designation is $45, so applying to 25 schools is $175 + $45 X 24 = $1,255 for primary application fees.

Most schools have a secondary application, and we suggest budgeting ~$100 per secondary application fee.

Grand total in fees could be about $3,755 for 25 schools.