Applying to Medical School: Are You Ready Now?

Rebecca M. Sparrow  
(rms18@cornell.edu)  

Cornell Career Services  
November 20, 2013
Success Factors: Timing

- Timing of application must be as early as possible (i.e., completion of standardized tests and the application itself must be in a timely fashion)

- Timing of application must allow fulfillment of schools’ holistic admissions standards (i.e., applicant readiness suggests whether an application cycle now or later is more appropriate)
Timing of the Application Components

- MCAT or DAT
- Completion of all Incompletes
- Completion of application forms
Success Factors: Readiness for Holistic Review

• Academic Readiness
  – Cornell GPA (overall and BCMP)
  – Standardized test scores (MCAT or DAT)

• Non-Academic Readiness
  – Service to others
  – Exposure/experience in the world of clinical healthcare
  – Ability to communicate well interpersonally
Demonstrating Qualitative Readiness Factors

- Applicant’s writing and interpersonal communication
- Letters of support from supportive recommenders and evaluation services
Readiness Factors:
Core Competencies for Entering Medical Students

aamc.org/initiatives/admissionsinitiative/competencies
Readiness Factors: Interpersonal Competencies

- Service Orientation
- Social Skills
- Cultural Competence
- Teamwork
- Oral Communication
Readiness Factors:
Intrapersonal Competencies

- Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others
- Reliability and Dependability
- Resilience and Adaptability
- Capacity for Improvement
Readiness Factors: Thinking and Reasoning Competencies

• Critical Thinking
• Quantitative Reasoning
• Scientific Inquiry
• Written Communication
Readiness Factors:
Science Competencies

- Living Systems
- Human Behavior
Summary: The Well Prepared Applicant

- “Comfort level”: science GPA above 3.4 (check with advisor on exceptions)
- “Comfort level”: MCAT score above 32; no individual score below 9 (check with advisor on exceptions)
- Primary application complete within a few weeks of earliest submission date and secondaries within two weeks of receipt
- Application to at least 10 schools with matriculated applicant means equivalent to one’s own, and about 15-20 schools total
Summary: The Well Prepared Applicant

- Produces compelling personal written reflections on individual journey leading to application
- Presents references in a timely way from individuals who can speak confidently and intelligently to personal competencies
- Stays in good standing with HCEC (if using) and adheres to its timeline
Challenges to Readiness

- Overall Cornell GPA below 3.3
- MCAT below 30 (check with advisor for DAT and GRE targets)
- No standardized test score available at time of application
- Little if any clinical experience
Challenges to Readiness

- Little, if any, service experience
- Institutional action in academic year preceding the current application cycle
- Incomplete grades on the transcript
- Single-semester GPA below 3.0 within two semesters of current application cycle
If the Timing Is Not Now: The Gap or Bridge Year

- Increasingly common for medical school candidates to take time after college before applying
  - to take a break
  - to allow more time for application process
  - to address readiness factors
Questions?