Keeping Your Medical School Application “Alive”

Updates and Protocols

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Some Basic Premises

• Concerted, well-organized follow-up action is an effective and essential part of the medical school application process.

• It is not common to get into many schools! Nationally, only about 20% of applicants are accepted into more than one school.

• It is very common for Cornell students to gain admission off the waitlist.
The Purpose of Follow-Up Communication

• Communicate with the schools that have not rejected you, to increase your likelihood...
  - to get an interview.
  - to get off “Hold” status.
  - to get from “Interviewed” to “Accepted” status.
  - to get off the waitlist to “Accepted” status.
How Does Follow-Up Work?

• You connect in meaningful ways on a regular basis.
• You help the admissions staff form a more holistic view of you as a candidate.
• You communicate your interest in attending a particular school, indicating the likelihood that you would accept an offer.
How Do You Do This?

- Inform schools of new information about you, directly or through supplemental recommendation letters from new letter writers.
- Pursue a new service or extracurricular activity, to show how you’re developing as a candidate.
- Note accomplishments that show productivity in research.
- Identify activities where you have expanded your leadership skills.
- Send transcripts when new grades come out.
Understand the Context

- Rolling admissions.
- Timing of interview invitations.
  - Sent in “lots” at three different times: late summer, late fall, end of January.
- “Traffic rules.”
The Traffic Rules: Important Dates

- October 1: date by which early-decision applications must be notified of acceptance status.
- October 15: first date on which medical schools may issue acceptances to regular applicants.
- February: Medical schools can see where else their own accepted applicants are accepted.
The Traffic Rules: Important Dates

• March 15: schools must have accepted exactly as many applicants as they have spots in the incoming class.
• April: schools can see where all applicants to their school have been accepted.
• April 30: applicants must relinquish all but one acceptance.
Develop a Strategic Communications Plan

- Consider how the activity generated as a result of the traffic rules affects the action you need to take.
- Conduct additional research on the schools (using MSAR and their websites).
- Develop a system to keep track of what you are doing.
Sample Tracking Spreadsheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School and Contact</th>
<th>Date of Completed Application</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Distinctive Programs/Features</th>
<th>Qualities the School Seeks in Applicants</th>
<th>Follow-Up 1 (What and When)</th>
<th>Follow-Up 2 (What and When)</th>
<th>Follow-Up 3 (What and When)</th>
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Strategic Communications Plan

- Keep your sheet handy and review it at the same time every week.
- Decide on an action plan for the week or two ahead.
- Make extensive notes on every interaction:
  - If you are denied admission, speak with an advisor.
  - If you have an interview, record what happened.
- Decide what the NEXT follow-up is as soon as you complete an action. Pick a deadline for the next update.
Strategic Communications Plan

- After three follow-ups; decide what’s next:
  - Do you need a new letter?
  - Do you need a change of strategy?
  - Do you need to change the mode of communication?
Strategic Communications: Sample Actions

- October 15 to January 31: interview invitations still being extended.
  - Be patient and send updates approximately monthly, avoiding holidays.

- February: schools know their competition for accepted applicants and issue final interview invitations.
  - Write to schools that have not rejected you and ask for their consideration. Communicate your status (e.g., whether you’ve had any interviews or whether you have any acceptances) and inform school of your level of interest.
Strategic Communications: Sample Actions

- Early March: lots of movement happens, as schools make decisions to fill the class.
  - Send updates on your status to schools where you are still a contender.

- March 15: more movement occurs with final acceptances issued to balance offers with class size.
  - Send updates in late March/early April to capitalize on the movement.
Strategic Communications: Sample Actions

• Mid-March – April: schools construct wait lists, given their knowledge about where applicants have acceptances.
  – Follow up with your most desired schools.

• May 1: spots open up as candidates turn down “excess” offers.
  – If on the wait list, communicate your strong desire to have a spot in the class.
  – If still on “hold,” communicate your strong desire to move to the wait list (and then, of course, to a spot in the class).
Strategic Communications: Sample Actions

• Throughout the summer: schools continue to turn to wait-listed candidates, as accepted applicants accept other schools offers from their wait lists or ask for deferrals.
  – Keep your most desired schools informed of your status.
Update “Don’ts”

- Calling/e-mailing to make sure your application is complete.
- Calling/e-mailing to ask about the school’s selection process.
- Following up without a plan.
Create a Back-Up Plan

• Consider other opportunities during the spring:
  - Jobs.
  - Internships.
  - Graduate School.

• Attend the session (or view the slides online) on *Increasing Your Chances of Admission With a Gap Year*, Tuesday, December 2, 5:00 p.m., 122 Rockefeller Hall.
Persistence Is Essential

• To become a medical professional:
  – Sometimes it takes longer than you expected.
  – Sometimes you take a different path than you first considered.
  – Usually it takes more effort than you imagined.

• Discuss your strategy with a health careers advisor before giving up, unless you decide you want a different career.
Questions?