

## Directions for the Background Information Form (BIF)

List activities that have been most significant to your personal and professional development.

**IMPORTANT:** Enter experiences for which you can supply specific contact and date information. We may need to contact the organization to clarify your role. If you cannot include a specific contact for a personally significant experience, simply indicate why on the form (e.g., personal contact left the position). When you have finished, you can request a PDF of your materials, which we call your **BIF**.

- The questions below can guide your thinking as you determine which activities to list. **You do not need** to address each question specifically.
  - Why did you get involved in this activity?
  - If you are no longer involved in this activity, why did you stop?
  - If you have not had any experience in this area, explain why not.
  - How would you assess the depth of your commitment, including leadership, lasting contributions and plans to continue with this activity?
  - Have you received any honors or awards for this work?
  - How did this work help to solidify your post-college career goals/aspirations?
- **Core Competencies Section:** The BIF categorizes your activities by major content areas of interest to admissions committees (service, clinical, etc). Your personal development as you experienced these activities is likewise of great interest to admissions reviewers! After entering the activities in a section, you are to think about how you have developed professionally and personally from doing these things. This is how you illustrate the qualitative factors that have informed your life experience.

Because the HCEC does not know you personally, we need you to tell us about how you have grown as a person and scholar in your post-secondary years. A candidate's possession of the specific qualities ("competencies") listed and defined below have been deemed by the medical school admissions committee as critical to its admissions decisions. To give you the opportunity to portray yourself in a professional way and to demonstrate your possession of these competencies, we ask you to consider them in a brief statement at the end of each section. These competencies are important to all schools of medicine, not just allopathic.

- **Integrity and ethics:** behaves in an honest and ethical manner; adheres to ethical principles and follows rules and procedures; resists peer pressure to engage in unethical behavior and encourages others to behave in honest and ethical ways
- **Reliability and dependability:** Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; takes responsibility for personal actions and performance.
- **Service orientation:** Demonstrates a desire to help others and a sensitivity to others' needs and feelings; demonstrates a desire to alleviate others' distress
- **Social and interpersonal skills:** Demonstrates an awareness of others' needs, goals, feelings, and the ways that social and behavioral cues affect peoples' interactions and behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues and treats others with respect

- **Desire to learn:** Sets goals for continuous self-improvement and for learning new concepts and skills; assesses own strengths and weaknesses; solicits and responds appropriately to feedback
- **Resilience and adaptability:** Demonstrates tolerance of stressful or changing environments or situations and adapts effectively to them; is persistent, even under difficult situations, recovers from setbacks.
- **Teamwork:** Teams are two or more individuals who make decisions, whose members have specific roles, perform specific tasks, and interact or coordinate to achieve a common goal or outcome. They differ from small groups in that teams act collectively due to task interdependency. Team work competency is demonstrated by the ability of members to adapt to one another as they accomplish goals.
- **Oral Communication:** Presents information and explains processes effectively. Senses and understands the perspective of the listener so that one's message will be optimally received. Some activities that develop this competency are teaching, leading an organization, and peer counseling.
- **Cultural Competence:** Has had significant personal experience in a multicultural setting and possesses a working knowledge of disparities in health care. Has had specific formal or informal educational/learning experiences to enable one to know how demographic (e.g., gender, income, race and ethnicity, etc.) and cultural factors (e.g., language, religion, etc.) can influence health, health care delivery and health behaviors.
- **Capacity for Improvement:** Paths taken and methods the applicant used to grow and develop as a scholar, colleague, friend, leader and collaborator. These could include seeking help, acquiring and depending on mentors, independent work, and engaging peers in projects.

➤ **Optional Sections**

- **Evaluating your qualifications:** Help your evaluator by providing the following optional information. Having thought through your background, identify below the stronger or better developed of your qualifications in any of the content areas listed above (service, clinical, research, etc.), for health career school. Do the same for the areas where you think your record shows less well-developed qualifications, or relative weaknesses. Use the space provided to explain your self-assessments. You may include external recognition as evidence, such as awards.
- **Your academic record.** Is there anything you would like your evaluator to know about variations in your academic record? If there are any interesting course clusters, rocky semesters, leaves of absence from school, explain those here. Have you experienced any unusual challenges or obstacles regarding your educational preparation before attending Cornell?
- **Underrepresented in Medicine or Disadvantaged Background Supplement:** If you think you will designate yourself as underrepresented in medicine, and/or as coming from a disadvantaged background, you may (but are not required to) explain here. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) defines “racial and ethnic populations that are underrepresented in the medical profession relative to their numbers in the general population” as “underrepresented in medicine.”