Selecting a Medical School

Once you have determined that you are well-suited to a career in medicine, how should you choose which medical schools to apply to? Programs vary significantly; before looking at specific schools, consider which program characteristics are most important to you. Assessing your desires first will help you identify those schools that best match your needs and professional interests. Factors to consider include:

Academic Program/Curriculum
- When does the clinical experience begin? What courses are required? What are the elective options?
- Are there joint degree options? What are the methods of instruction and grading?

Faculty/Institution
- Does the Institution have specific areas of strength/reputation? What types of research are faculty focusing on?

Student Population
- What is the class size? How large are the lectures, lab groups, etc.? What is the student to faculty ratio?
- What is the attitude of students or the culture of the student body? Is the class make-up diverse?

Campus Life
- What are the academic facilities (such as classrooms, research laboratories, libraries, study halls) like?
- Is housing provided? Guaranteed? What are student impressions?
- What are the non-academic facilities (such as Athletic, Career Services, Counseling, etc.) like?
- Are there extra-curricular opportunities to pursue on-campus or in the neighboring area (e.g., student activities, clubs/organizations, volunteer programs)? Will you have time to pursue these opportunities?
- What, if any, support services exist to assist you as a student? Are there academic support and mental health resources available for your use?

Geographic Location
- How many hospitals is the medical school associated with, and what type of communities do they serve?
- Are there opportunities to study temporarily elsewhere or internationally?
- What is the neighborhood like? (Crime rate, size of community, rural, suburban, urban) How about climate?

Cost and Financial Aid
- What are the costs of tuition, fees (in-state vs. out-of-state tuition, private vs. public), books and supplies?
- What are the typical living expenses (rent, health insurance, utilities, food, cost-of-living) in the school’s area?
- What are the forms of financial assistance offered? Research what types of loans and grants are available.
Strategize your Selection

To maximize your chance of acceptance to one or more medical schools, it is critical to think strategically and practically about the list of schools to which you apply.

- All schools will give you the training required to practice medicine. If you are considering a career in academic medicine, you should give extra consideration to a school's reputation.
- Only apply to schools that you would actually attend if accepted.
- Apply to a broad range of programs in terms of likelihood of acceptance. Do your homework to determine your competitiveness as an applicant. Select only a few schools at which admission may be a long shot and more schools at which acceptance is more realistic.
- Determine if any of the schools in which you are interested consider state residency as a criteria or advantage for admission. Check carefully to see if you meet their residency requirements. Applying to several schools for which you do not meet the residency requirement is not a good strategy.
- Speak with the Prehealth Advising staff and your prehealth advisor for more guidance.

Organize the Information You Gather

It may be helpful to make a school comparison chart to compare basic information about various programs of interest to you. Following is a sample of such a chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Residency requirement?</th>
<th>Tuition/Financial Aid</th>
<th>Size of program</th>
<th>Specialties</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Other</th>
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RESOURCES

1. **The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)** [https://www.aamc.org/](https://www.aamc.org/)
   - *Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR)* - Provides information on application procedures and deadlines, school selection factors such as MCAT and GPA data, class profiles, costs and financial aid options, dual degree options, graduates’ specialty choices and more. This online resource is available for purchase through the AAMC. [https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/](https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/)

   **AAMC Curriculum Directory** [http://services.aamc.org/currdir/](http://services.aamc.org/currdir/) - “The AAMC's Curriculum Directory provides a comprehensive description of medical student education programs... It includes information on curriculum characteristics and current trends and innovations of interest to applicants, faculty and deans. This updated online directory enables searches for instructional and curricular innovations, grading intervals, required courses and clerkships, and combined degree programs.”

   **AAMC FACTS** [https://www.aamc.org/data/facts/applicantmatriculant/](https://www.aamc.org/data/facts/applicantmatriculant/) - The most comprehensive and objective data on U.S. medical school applicants, matriculants, enrollment, graduates, Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) applicants, and MD-PhD students.

2. **First Year Medical Student Surveys**
   These alumni surveys are available through the CareerBridge Resource Library [https://www.myinterfase.com/mit/student/](https://www.myinterfase.com/mit/student/).

3. **Medical School Marketing Materials and Social Networking Options**
   Read through individual schools’ marketing materials such as their website, printed brochures, etc. Be sure to review each school’s mission and vision statements to determine if your values and interests match the school’s stated values and goals. Also, consider joining their Facebook,
LinkedIn, or Twitter groups.

4. **Medical School Visits to MIT**
   These information sessions, held mostly in the fall semester, offer a great opportunity to learn about schools and ask questions. Visit the GECD events calendar for information about these visits.
   [http://gecd.mit.edu/calendar/events](http://gecd.mit.edu/calendar/events)

5. **Campus Visit**
   If possible, visiting a few schools may help give you an idea of what you would prefer in a school. Speak with current students and faculty while on campus. Alternatively, view online virtual tours of campuses if available.

   Use ICAN to find MIT alumni who are enrolled in or who are graduates of the health profession schools. Contact these individuals for in-person or telephone informational interviews to learn about a school from the perspective of the student such as: likes, dislikes, extra-curricular opportunities, location, campus and more!

7. **Minority Student Opportunities in U.S. Medical Schools** [http://tinyurl.com/6f3tcup](http://tinyurl.com/6f3tcup)
   This publication provides up-to-date information and descriptions of programs designed to provide opportunities for racial/ethnic groups underrepresented in medical education to pursue careers in medicine.

8. **Premed Data**
   Log on to CareerBridge [https://www.myinterfase.com/mit/student/](https://www.myinterfase.com/mit/student/) to review the annually updated data in the Resource Library. This data should be used in conjunction with consulting the Prehealth Advising staff and/or assigned prehealth advisor to receive added guidance in developing an application strategy.

**Accepting Offers**
The AAMC has provided Traffic Rules for Admissions: AAMC Recommendations for Medical School and MD-PhD Admission Officers [http://tinyurl.com/6f5dbmg](http://tinyurl.com/6f5dbmg)