

**GUIDE FOR APPLYING TO MEDICAL OR OSTEOPATHIC
SCHOOL**

**FOR HAVERFORD COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES AND
ALUMNI/AE**

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INTRODUCTION

The process of applying to medical school is known for being long, complicated, and stressful. The Pre-Health Office is here to support you through that process. Please read this guide and follow its instructions carefully. By following all the steps accurately and on time, and being conscientious, you will find that the process is easier than you thought.

Reminder:

The Pre-Health Office is located in 208 Chase. It is open:

Monday 8:30-5

Tuesday 8:30-12:30

Wednesday 8:30-12:30

Thursday 8:30-5

Friday 8:30-5

Cheryl Mathes, Administrative Assistant, is available daily, from 8:30-12:30. Her telephone extension is 1148 and her email is cmathes@haverford.edu. **Michele Taylor** is the Pre-Health Advisor and available at mtaylor1@haverford.edu, or can be reached at extension 1151. To make an appointment with Michele, it is best to contact Cheryl who keeps her schedule.

The Pre-Health Office maintains a website at: <http://www.haverford.edu/deptinfo/premed.htm>

Rotating members of the Pre Health Committee in 2008 were:

Michele Taylor, Chair

Jeff Tecosky-Feldman, Mathematics

Fran Blasé, Chemistry

Terry Newirth, Chemistry

Andrea Morris, Biology

Rob Fairman, Biology

Suzanne Amador, Physics

Peter Love, Physics

*Special thanks to Gigi Simeone of Swarthmore College whose own Guide for Applying to Medical School served as template, and often text, for this document.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN PREPARING A CANDIDACY

I. WHEN TO APPLY?

Medical schools are looking for applicants with strong academic achievement and ability, excellent interpersonal skills, a natural inclination to serve others, and a well-informed motivation for medicine. They attempt to discern the best candidates amidst thousands of applicants by assessing grades and course work, MCAT scores, extracurricular, employment and leadership activities, community service, life experiences, personal maturity, and direct exposure to medicine and clinical practices.

If there is a significant weakness in your application, it may make sense for you to wait before applying in order to rectify it. The average age for admission to medical school is presently 24, and increasingly students are applying as alumni in order to take time to enrich their clinical or work experiences, or to boost their academic record, or to ascertain that medicine is what they really want. Even if you do have a reasonable chance of admission but are intrigued by a year or two of work or service, don't rush to apply. You will be a stronger applicant and happier medical student if you take the time to be sure that medicine is the right career pathway for you. A couple of years in a job, or with Teach for America, Americorps or the Peace Corp, could also greatly enhance your application, especially if you have a solid academic record.

II. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

By the time you apply to medical school, **you should have completed the required lab coursework.** As you know, this includes four semesters of chemistry, two of biology, and two of physics. AP credit may only be used to fulfill a math requirement for most schools, but check http://www.brynmawr.edu/healthpro/documents/MedSchoolMath_Requirements_2009.pdf or the AAMC's **2009 Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR)** to ascertain specific individual school requirements. For most schools, it is alright to take your English or math courses during your application year.

For information about which Haverford courses meet medical school requirements, please consult our [Pre Health Manual for First and Second Year Students](#).

III. GRADE POINT AVERAGE

By far the most important factor affecting your application is your grade point average (GPA) calculated by assigning an A value of 4.0, an A- value of 3.67, and a B+ value of 3.33, etc. Medical schools want to be sure that the people they admit can cope with rigorous academic demands, and because there are so many applicants, they choose those with the strongest records. This means that every year compassionate and dedicated people will not get a chance to enter medical school.

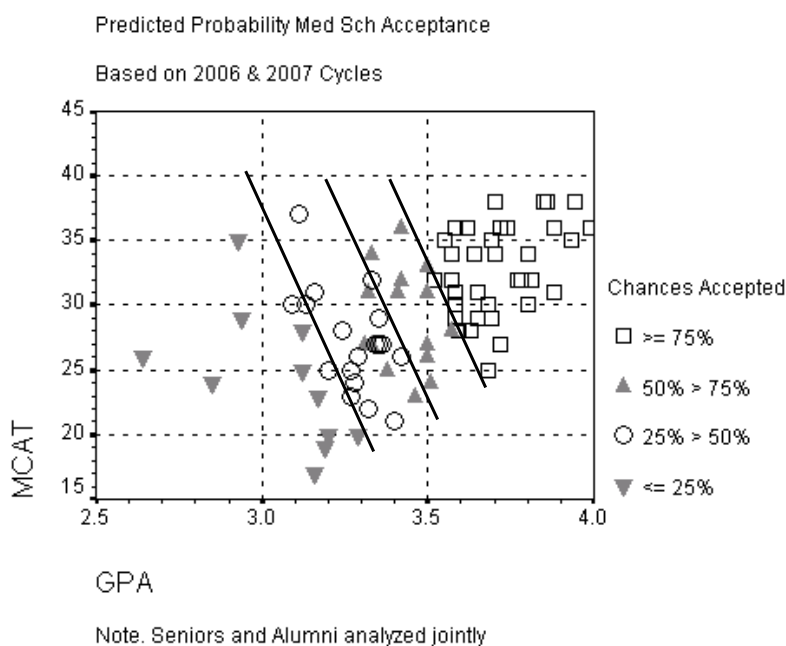
AMCAS (American Medical College Application Service) is the application service you must use to apply to nearly all U.S. allopathic medical schools. (See below) AMCAS computes your overall GPA using all college-level courses taken at any U.S. or Canadian college or university, including summer school courses, exchange and cross-registration programs, and college course taken in high school. Because medical schools are particularly interested in applicants' abilities in the sciences, your BCPM (Biology/Chemistry/Physics/Math) GPA is also computed by AMCAS and includes ALL courses taken in these disciplines.

What grade point average is necessary to become a serious contender for admission to medical school? Nationally, in 2007 individuals with an average overall AMCAS GPA of 3.65 and BCPM GPAs of 3.59 had the greatest chance of being accepted. At Haverford, in 2008, the average GPA of admitted students and alumni was 3.63. In 2007, the average GPA of admitted students and alumni was 3.6, with only six out of thirty admitted students possessing a GPA below 3.4. (See graph below)

With a GPA under 3.3, (below the average GPA at Haverford), your chances of admission to medical school depend on trends in your academic record (college and post-graduate), MCAT scores, state residency, and distinguishing personal accomplishments. In most cases, a GPA below 3.2 makes admission of an applicant less likely at an allopathic school, although some osteopathic schools may consider students with GPAs down to 3.0 if the science grades are B+'s in most cases.

The hard fact is that how well you have done at Haverford College academically is a major determinant of your potential for gaining admittance to medical school.

FIGURE 1 – PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF MEDICAL SCHOOL ACCEPTANCE FOR HAVERFORD APPLICANTS BASED ON 2006 & 2007 APPLICATION CYCLES



IV. MEDICAL COLLEGE ADMISSION TEST -MCAT

The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is a computer-based test which will be offered 25 times in 2009 (<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm>). It is required by both medical and osteopathic schools. The MCAT assesses your grasp of the basic concepts covered in the required premed science courses in biology, chemistry and physics. Thus your prerequisites should be completed BEFORE you take the examination.

The test is divided into four sections: Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Verbal Reasoning, and a Writing Sample. The first three sections are scored between 1 and 15 and the writing section is scored from J to T. Scores are based on the number of correct answers. There is no penalty for guessing.

In 2007, the national average for admitted students was 30.8. For Haverford College students it was 31.76 in 2007 (and) 32.6 in 2008. Medical schools look closely at your test scores because validation studies have shown a correlation between MCAT scores and grades in the first two years of medical school, and on the National Board Exams. A score of 30 or above (with at least 9 in each section) is considered solid. Students are occasionally accepted with lower scores, however, due to other strengths in their applications. Once you have received your scores, please do not hesitate to contact Michele to discuss your circumstances.

V. HEALTH CARE RELATED EXPERIENCE

Increasingly, medical schools are carefully looking at an applicant's health care related experiences. Candidates who have spent time in a clinical setting, either as an employee, volunteer, or intern, demonstrate their motivation to learn as much as they can about the practice of medicine. Also significant, they show that they are making a knowledgeable career choice because they have observed the field first-hand. And they demonstrate compassion and a desire to serve others, desirable traits in future physicians.

Haverford students have worked in public health clinics, emergency rooms, children's hospitals, ambulance corps, doctors' offices, geriatric homes, international clinics, homeless shelters and clinics; shadowed physicians and osteopaths, and more. Medical schools look for individuals who have made a sustained commitment rather than volunteered in the few months before applying to medical school. And they are interested in people who have gained some insight from their experiences.

Our pre health office provides a binder with information about local volunteer opportunities and some contact information. You should check out: www.haverford.edu/deans/prehealth/volunteering.php

See also:

Eighth Dimension (<http://www.haverford.edu/eightd>).

The Pre-Health Society: <http://www.haverford.edu/organizations/prehealth>

Note also opportunities available through the Career Development Office (<http://www.haverford.edu/cdo>) In particular, every spring juniors can apply for the **Jaharis or Primary Care Fellowship** to offset some of the cost of volunteering in a primary care setting as a summer project.

Another rich opportunity to gain exposure to medicine and osteopathy is with our alumni. Haverford alumni in the health professions have been very amenable to being shadowed by our students. They also have provided informational interviews, and occasionally have helped students to set up externships over summer or winter break. CDO can provide you a database to search for individuals in these careers.

Also, be on the alert for emails from Cheryl about summer and post-graduate opportunities.

VI. RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Haverford College provides motivated students with opportunities for research at the College, along with advice about other opportunities elsewhere. If you are very interested in bench science, it can be a good idea to follow up on the chance to deepen your experience in the lab. Medical schools look for intellectually curious individuals and experience with research can demonstrate that.

Research is especially key for individuals applying to MD/PH.D. programs. Go to www.haverford.edu/deans/prehealth/mdphd.php for more information on this educational track.

For a good link to summer research opportunities both local and national, go to:
<http://www.swarthmore.edu/x8853.xml>
www.aamc.org/members/great/summerlinks.htm

If you are a member of an under-represented group, go to: <http://www.naahp.org/resources/minopp.htm>

INTANGIBLE FACTORS

There are some intangible factors that are key to success with the application process. Primary among these is evidence of your motivation.

Small things about the application process will indicate to admissions the degree of your motivation and discipline. **Get your application in early!** AMCAS and AACOMAS go on-line in early June. If at all possible, try to submit your application in June or early July – which will assure you a greater chance of admittance to schools that practice rolling admission.

When you receive a secondary application from an AMCAS or AACOMAS school, give yourself a deadline of completing and submitting it in **two weeks**. Many medical schools note the date that the secondary form was sent to you and, if they do not receive it back within a couple of weeks, they may assume that you are not particularly interested in their school.

VII. STATE RESIDENCY

Even if you are a very strong student, admission to medical school is not a guarantee. (See Figure 1) Where you live is an important factor in the medical school selection process. You should **always** apply to schools within your own state or to schools which give special consideration to residents of your state. In 2008, about 62% of matriculants went to their state medical schools. Note that if you are **not** a resident of a particular state and apply to the medical school there, you may very well not even be looked at if they do not accept out-of-state residents.

It is important to be clear about your state of residency. The term is interpreted variously by different states, and even by different medical schools within a state. It is taken very seriously, so be completely open and honest with admissions on this matter. You can only claim residency in **one** state. Medical schools have sophisticated ways of discovering misinformation and dishonest applicants are likely to be eliminated from consideration by **all** medical schools. If you have **any question** about whether or not you qualify as a state resident, call the admissions office of the medical school and ask for a copy of their guidelines on how residency is determined. That information may also be on the medical school's website.

VIII. AGE

The mean age for accepted applicants nationally over the past few years has been 24. Alumni can be assured, however, that individuals have successfully applied to medical school even in their thirties, and occasionally, forties. For more information on applying several years after graduation, go to:

<http://www.oldpremeds.org/>

Increasingly Haverford students are waiting a year or two in order to be sure they want to pursue medicine, or until their credentials are at their strongest. Medical schools appreciate individuals with the maturity and experience that comes from working in challenging jobs, volunteering with underserved populations, or exposure to clinical settings. These experiences can sometimes compensate for lower grades or MCATs, especially if the individual has taken and done well in some recent science classes (beyond three years out of school.)

IX. MEDICAL SCHOOL DIVERSITY

Increasingly, the Association of American Medical Colleges is alarmed by the under-representation of different ethnic and racial groups in the health professions, especially given demographic trends in this country. Groups that are under-represented include those historically missing from health professions: African-Americans, Chicanos, Native Americans and Puerto Ricans. This grouping has recently been expanded to include a broader range of ethnicities and a greater focus on regional and local demographics so as to improve the cultural competencies of graduating physicians and access to care for underserved

populations. Students from these groups are accepted to allopathic medical schools with a national average overall GPA of 3.54 and science GPA of 3.44, and with MCAT scores in the 26-28 range (but with mean of 9.9 in the biological sciences.) Occasionally their numbers can be a bit lower in one area if strong in another, and an overall application distinguished by service, research or leadership – and a general upward trend in grades. National averages for osteopathic medical schools are a bit lower and may be considered as a fine alternative for medical training. For more information about this issue and resources for under-represented pre-health students, go to:

www.aspiringdocs.org

http://www.naahp.org/diversity_secondPage.htm

<http://services.aamc.org/summerprograms>

X. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT STATUS

It is extremely difficult, although not impossible, for international students (i.e. not U.S. citizens or permanent residents) to be admitted to American medical schools. State schools will usually not even consider international students. Elite private schools may admit individuals who are extremely distinguished academically, but mostly they do not provide financial aid. In many cases, the individual will have to prove that s/he has the means to pay for one to four years of medical school. In 2008, only 160 out of 6,887 first year places across the entire U.S. went to international students. See:

<http://www.aamc.org/data/facts/2008slrmat5.htm>

Some **MD/PhD programs** will accepted extremely talented foreign applicants, but these are programs w/o funding from N.I.H.

XI. CHARACTER & INTEGRITY

Medical schools look for students of high character and integrity, along with academic ability. At Haverford College, with its honor code, we rarely have a problem. However, the Pre-Health Committee is responsible for recommending students to medical school and so each year, the Dean's Office reviews the list of candidates for health professions schools and reports to the committee any cases of disciplinary action taken against an applicant.

If, as usual, there is no problem, a phrase is inserted into the Committee Letter stating: "a check with the Dean's Office files reveals no record of dishonorable behavior."

If there has been a problem with a student, the above statement is not included in the Committee Letter, and the Pre-Health Committee meets to discuss how the case should be handled.

On your AMCAS application, you will be required to state whether you were ever convicted of a felony or the recipient of any institutional action for unacceptable academic performance or conduct violation, **even if it does not appear on your transcript**. If this is an issue for you, be sure to discuss your situation with Michele.

Over the next few years, criminal background checks will become routine after students agree to matriculate into a medical school. This already takes place with medical students doing rotations in hospital settings.

HOW TO APPLY TO MEDICAL OR OSTEOPATHIC SCHOOL LOGISTICS:

I. MCAT

Between January and September 2009, there will be 25 MCAT administrations. If you plan to apply this cycle and have not yet taken the test, ideally you should try to do it by early July. A spring test date also

permits examinees who feel that their scores do not reflect their abilities to retest in the summer or very early fall.

Most medical schools have rolling admissions, filling their seats with applicants whose files are completed first. To postpone taking the test until September delays consideration of your whole application until the MCAT scores are received about a month later. In addition, taking a fall MCAT means that you apply to medical schools before you know your MCAT score. A top score combined with excellent grades means that you should apply to the most competitive schools; a lower score suggests that you should apply to less competitive schools.

You may take the test three times in a given year, but obviously it is easier on you if you only take it once, when you are adequately prepared and can perform well. There is no lifetime maximum on the number of tests you can take. Medical schools, however, treat multiple scores differently: some average them, some take the highest score.

The MCAT is valid, in most cases, for 3 years, but policies vary school-to-school. If you are an alumnus/a who took the test when you were in college, be sure to check out the policies of particular schools of interest.

For a schedule of MCAT administration dates, go to:
<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/mcatschedule.htm>

Registering for the test

You must register through the Association of American Medical School's website:
<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/registration.htm>

It is important that you read **MCAT Essentials** carefully before you fill out the registration:
<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/mcatessentials.pdf>

You should also read **Registration Tips**: <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/registrationtips.htm>

It is strongly recommended that you register EARLY, (8 weeks in advance or more) in order to obtain a seat at a convenient test center. You will have access to the registration system 12 weeks prior to each test date. When you register for the test, you may ONLY register for one test at a time. Contact information, if you have registration questions from AAMC: 202-828-0690 or email mcataamc.org.

Important tips

The registration system cannot handle thousands of people registering at once. When you log on to the registration site, if the system is busy you will be taken to a waiting room with the text: "Welcome to MCAT registration." You may have to wait there for more than twenty minutes, depending on the traffic. When you get to the top of the queue you will be brought to the "Log in" page. Be patient so you don't lose your place.

Opening multiple browser windows or multiple tabs in the web browser decreases the chances that you will get into the system and may actually increase your wait time. Since the registration system recognizes only one connection from a computer at a time, opening multiple browser windows actually works against you. The connections will reset one another, sending you back to the welcome screen. You could therefore never get out of welcome screen to the S&R login screen.

BE SURE THAT the name on your registration matches **exactly** the ID that you will use at the test center or you will not be allowed admittance. For example, if you have two family or surnames on your ID but you enter only one on your registration, you will not be allowed to test. Or if you enter initials in the registration when your ID includes your full name, or enter an "English" version of your name that does not match your ID, you will also be denied admittance.

Ensure that your contact information is always up-to-date and that you are accessible at all times. Sometimes tests are rescheduled. Update email settings so that AAMC and PROMETRIC's messages are not treated as SPAM.

Log into the Registration and Scheduling system the day before your test to be sure that your testing site has not been changed.

Finally, please check the advisor release in "Schools Attended" section when you fill out your **AMCAS** application, so that your MCAT scores can be sent to the prehealth advisor, and we can advise you more effectively.

Medical Minority Applicant Registry (Med-MAR)

Med-MAR was created to enhance admission opportunities for groups currently underrepresented in medicine. Students applying to medical school who self-identify from groups underrepresented in medicine or who are economically disadvantaged and have taken the most recent MCAT can register for the Med-MAR. Your application information and MCAT scores will be passed along to interested medical schools. <http://www.aamc.org/students/minorities/resources/medmar.htm>

Applying for the Fee Assistance Program (FAP)

The MCAT costs \$225.00 this cycle. (2009) The **FAP** was designed for those who would otherwise not be able to afford the MCAT and the AMCAS application. It is for those whose income is 300 % or less of the poverty level – i.e. individuals with extreme need. Tax documentation must be provided, along with parental and/or spousal information. For further information on the program and to access an application form, go to: <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/start.htm>

You must submit your **FAP** application and have it approved prior to registering for the MCAT, or you will have to pay the full fee for the test. If you register for the 2009 MCAT before January 1, 2009, use the 2008 FAP application. If you register for the MCAT after that date, use the 2009 application.

Special testing accommodations:

For information on applying for accommodations for physical, learning or psychiatric disabilities, go to: <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/accommodations/start.htm>
Extensive documentation will be required and you should submit paperwork as far in advance as possible of desired test date.

Preparing for the MCAT

The best method depends on your learning style and work habits. If you are well organized and disciplined, and can plan a study schedule on your own or with friends which you will stick to, you may not have a need for a commercial course. You should give yourself a good three months to review before the exam. Your texts and notes from introductory science courses provide a good foundation for review. In addition, you may find the following links helpful:

<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/preparing/start.htm>

How to prepare for the sciences sections:
<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/preparing/sciprep.htm>

What to expect in the physical sciences section:
<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/preparing/psprep.htm>

Topics covered in the physical sciences section:
<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/preparing/psttopics.pdf>

What to expect in the biological sciences section:

<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/preparing/bsprep.htm>

Topics covered in the biological sciences section:

<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/preparing/bsttopics.pdf>

How to prepare for the verbal reasoning section:

<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/preparing/vrprep.htm>

There is also a writing sample section which is graded with a letter.

<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/preparing/wsprep.htm>

Also look at “Preparing for the MCAT” FAQ: <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/preparing/prepfaq.htm>, and at “The Testing Experience” <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/testexpfaq.htm>

For individuals who prefer the structure and supplementary materials of a commercial course be prepared to spend between \$1600 and \$2000. Please note that Haverford College has set up an agreement with Kaplan for on-site MCAT prep beginning Fall, 2008. Financial Aid is available for those who qualify.

Keep in mind that no class is a substitute for lots of practice with the tests. Prep classes are usually designed in 5- or 10- week periods. It is not clear how much of an advantage they confer on students, since the companies provide the data on improvement rates. The courses are only as effective as the instructors, however. Private tutors are more costly than courses. Here are some well-known and time-tested programs.

Princeton Review <http://www.princetonreview.com/home.asp>

Kaplan <http://www.kaptest.com/>

Examcrackers <http://www.examcrackers.com/>

Berkeley Review <http://www.berkeley-review.com/>

For free MCAT study support materials and study tips, check out: Study Guide Zone

<http://www.studyguidezone.com/>

You may access one free MCAT test on-line, and buy other practice tests from MCAT. Go to:

<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/practicetests.htm> (or www.e-mcat.com) PT 3 is free; PTs 4-10 cost \$35 each)

You may also go to PROMETRIC to check out what the on-line test will actually be like. A demo test is provided. Go to: <http://www.prometric.com/demos/mcat/index.htm>

II. THE COMMITTEE LETTER

What is the Pre-Health Committee?

The Pre-Health Committee is made up of Michele Taillon Taylor, Chair, and rotating faculty from the Psychology, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math, and sometimes other academic departments. (See 2008 Committee on page 1.) In April, after all the information is collected from candidates applying to medical school, the committee evaluates and summarizes each individual candidacy. The summary includes the candidate’s academic strengths and weaknesses, extracurricular activities, character, personal motivation for medicine, research experience, summer or post-graduate experience, if relevant, and anything else that gives a holistic picture of the applicant. Students who miss deadlines for providing us with their materials will miss the in-depth committee evaluation for their committee letter packet.

What is the Committee Letter?

The Pre-Health Committee Letter is a significant factor in your application to medical school. It comprises 4-6 cut and pasted letters of recommendation onto a PDF file, along with a summary Committee Letter written by Michele. The latter is based upon the review of the candidate during the Pre-Health Committee meeting, letters of recommendation, the student's resume, his/her information from the Student or Alumni Data Sheet and the Choice of Medicine as a Career Questionnaire. **Students should complete and deliver to the Pre-Health Office all pre-med application forms mentioned above, along with the confidentiality waiver and list of recommenders by February 27, 2009.**

The Committee Letter follows a general format. It begins with a brief portrait that introduces you and highlights your noteworthy academic and non-academic accomplishments. Unless otherwise advised, we also note that the Dean's Office reports no dishonorable behavior. In the next paragraph we discuss your academic performance in greater detail, including challenges faced, successes, trends in transcript, etc. Research experience is described, followed by paragraphs reviewing extracurricular involvement in sports, service, volunteer work, or anything else that complements your candidacy. Medically-related activities are underscored. We end the letter with an overall review of your candidacy. Our goal is to present you in as positive a light as possible within the bounds of honesty.

Letters are drafted by Michele in May and June, which is why it is important for you to be sure that your letters of recommendation are in the Pre-Health Office preferably by March 30, and no later than **early June**. During that time, Michele may be in touch with you to update or clarify information about your record as she writes the Committee Letter. **Be sure that the office has your contact information for the spring and summer.**

Assuming that you meet the office deadlines and we are therefore able to put together your Committee Letter on the PDF document, it is uploaded onto **VirtualEvals**, a secure, web-based system for transmitting letters of recommendation to medical schools. This takes place once we have received a copy of your **AMCAS and/or AACOMAS application**. The bulk of the letters are posted before the Pre-Health Office is officially closed at the end of June. Please note that AMCAS has begun to process letters of recommendation and you will be advised about new procedures as we learn about them in the spring. (The procedure for **MD/PhD** programs is more complicated, with some letters posted on VirtualEvals, and some mailed at different points in time. The applicant has to check the requirements of each individual school and work closely with Cheryl to let her know how to get the material to the medical schools.)

Please send be sure to update Cheryl and Michele during summer or fall if you add or take off medical schools from your application list so that we make your committee letter available to these schools on VirtualEvals.

One final point on this subject: you may apply to medical school w/o a committee letter from Haverford. Most individuals who do that obtain their letters from **post-baccalaureate programs** in that case. If you want to apply without a committee letter from anywhere and are a Haverford College graduate, however, since we have a committee process, medical schools will assume that you have an academic or honor code violation issue. They will most likely contact the Pre-Health advisor to ascertain if there is a problem.

Letters of Recommendation

You will want to obtain about six letters of recommendation from people who know you and your work well. Please discuss your list with Michele to be sure it is well balanced. **Once you have determined your list of recommenders, it is imperative that you send it to Cheryl so that she can note the names in your file and we can know when everyone has gotten their letter in!**

If you are a student and a premed candidate, try to obtain:

- 2 letters from science faculty (whether or not you are a science major)
- 1 from non-science faculty
- 1 from major

1 from supervisor of research experience (Harvard is now requiring that from ALL research experiences. **MD/PHD candidates should have letters from ALL labs that they worked in.**)

1-2 from work or summer job, or sport.

Not suggested: letter from friend of family, fellow Haverford student, VIP who has not worked with or taught you.

If you are an alumnus or alumna, you may want to obtain at least one or more teacher letters from post-baccalaureate science classes, if relevant, along with your Haverford faculty letters. It would also be useful for you to secure recommendations from supervisors of work experiences. Please discuss your list with Michele.

If you are not planning on applying to medical for a few years, it still makes sense to request faculty letters before graduation. These letters will be kept in your file and can be updated at a later point in time. It is also a good idea to stay in touch with your faculty so that you stay relatively fresh in their minds.

Waiver

Note that you are presented the opportunity to sign a waiver waiving your right of access to your recommendations and your Committee Letter. Whether you waive access or not is up to you, but if you do then Michele can state clearly in your Committee Letter that you have done so. Medical schools have made it clear that they prefer confidential letters because they are more honest, and signing the waiver strengthens your application.

The waiver has a second statement in which you sign to authorize us to release your Pre-Health Committee letter to the medical schools designated by you in writing.

III. PERSONAL STATEMENT

The Choice of Medicine as a Career Questionnaire that you are going to fill out will prepare you to write your personal statement (and for some of the interview questions that you will get.) After laboring through the questions on that form, it should be relatively straightforward for you to write a personal statement. If you would like Michele to review it and give you feedback, be sure to hand it in **before May 30, 2008**.

IV – PRELIMINARY LIST OF MEDICAL SCHOOLS

We ask you to make a preliminary list of medical schools to which you will apply and bring it to your initial premed meeting with Michele, if possible. In selecting schools you should consider: 1. your state of residence and location; 2. your GPA (and MCAT if available); 3. tuition. The most useful and accurate source of information is the *Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR)* published annually by AAMC. It profiles each allopathic medical school and there is a copy available to students in the Pre-Health Office. You can also order a copy from www.aamc.org. After you have determined schools that interest you, you can access their webpages on-line from www.aamc.org.

For osteopathic schools, go to: <http://www.aacom.org/resources/bookstore/cib/Pages/default.aspx> A resource book can be downloaded as a huge PDF file, and there is a map with all osteopathic schools listed.

For dental schools, you may use the latest edition of the ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools and go to: www.adea.org

PREMED INTERVIEW

Once you have completed all of your forms, especially the Student Data Sheet and the Choice of Medicine as a Career Questionnaire, schedule a 45 minute appointment with Michele to review your list of recommenders, your academic record and extracurricular activities, your reasons for going to medical

school, and a tentative list of medical schools to which you would like to apply. All this information will help her write a holistic and personal letter for you. Contact Cheryl to set up an appointment.

HOW TO APPLY TO MEDICAL SCHOOL: PROCESS

I – CHOOSING SCHOOLS

a. Allopathic schools

Medical schools differ in several respects. Some, like Penn State at Hershey, Temple, Drexel, Jefferson, George Washington, emphasize clinical practice. Others, like Harvard, UCSF, Yale and Duke, emphasize research, teaching and academic medicine. Curricula differ a great deal also. Some schools give you exposure to patients from the first year on; others wait until clinical rotations in the third year. Some programs follow mostly lecture-based formats in courses, while others combine that with case studies and problem-based-learning. Schools differ in the extent of their requirements and the number of electives offered. Websites and the *MSAR* handbook can be consulted for this information. An additional resource for curricula and institutional characteristics is AAMC's searchable Curriculum Directory: <http://services.aamc.org/currdir>.

The personalities of medical schools also vary. Most are in urban locations, a few are rural. You will get some feeling for the schools environments when you visit them for your interviews and talk with students.

As mentioned above, when developing a list of schools, first apply to medical schools within your state. These schools are allotted financial support from state legislatures and are mandated to serve their own residents first. If your home state does not have a medical school, medical schools in other states may save places in its class reciprocally for your state's residents. For example, Jefferson Medical College reserves a number of places for Delaware residents, and the U of Vermont and Dartmouth, for Maine residents. U of Washington in Seattle keeps spots for residents of Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho. If you have questions about the determination of residency, call and ask the medical school admissions officer how that works for that institution.

More broadly, consider in what region you would like to attend medical school. Is it important for you to be near your family? Do you want to be in a city? In an area that serves rural populations? Where do you find your social support? Will that be important to you while in medical school?

Secondly, read about each medical school in the *MSAR* paying particular attention to the Overall GPA and to the Science GPA medians, and MCAT scores. In most cases, if your GPA is more than 2/10ths less than the median, you will probably, though absolutely, not be invited for an interview. In 2007, the combined mean GPA of our students accepted at **Harvard, UCSF, Penn and Johns Hopkins**, (top 4 American research institutions, for instance), was **3.86**, and MCAT was **34.1**.) Accepted Haverford applicants's mean GPA for **Einstein** was **3.74**, and MCAT **32**; **University of Pittsburgh** mean GPA was **3.88**, and MCAT **33.5**; and **University of Rochester** mean GPA was **3.74** and MCAT **34.5**. As mentioned above, some state schools have slightly less competitive admissions standards: our graduates admitted to **University of Maryland** had mean GPA of **3.51**, and MCAT scores of **32.5**; at **Robert Wood Johnson New Jersey** had mean GPA of **3.58** and MCAT of **30**; and at **New Jersey Medical School**, mean GPA of **3.65** and MCAT of **30**. Some schools are less numbers-driven and therefore open to interviewing applicants with GPAs and MCATs lower than their norm.

Thirdly, in considering schools, look at tuitions (resident and non-resident) for each school. Many state institutions' tuitions for in-state students are significantly lower, sometimes as low as 25% that of out-of-state charges. Some states tie scholarship support during medical school to commitments to serve in that state. Many state schools accept **few to no** out-of-state students at all. (**MD/PhD** candidates usually have more opportunities to attend state schools even if they are not residents.) Do not waste time and money on schools that will not even consider you!

To help you figure out acceptance rates of non-residents at state schools, look at the number of applicants, number of interviewed, and number of matriculating in the MSAR handbook. This information is on the second page of text about each institution. For example, **George Washington University** in D.C. had 10,095 applicants, interviewed 1,083 (ca. 11%); and matriculated 177 (2%), 174 of whom were non-residents of D.C. On the other hand, **East Carolina University** had only 743 applicants (all N.C. residents), interviewed 432 (58%); and admitted 72 (10%), all from North Carolina. A student from the state of North Carolina stands a better chance of receiving an interview and being accepted at East Carolina University than at another medical school. Even some private schools accept a larger percentage of in-state students, (e.g. Temple).

How many applications does it make sense to file? There is no correct number, but the national average is about 11 per person. Estimate your own chances. Unless you are very confident, apply to 10-14 schools and cover a range of selectivity. A list of more than 20 schools is unnecessary and expensive, and can be counterproductive if it becomes difficult for you to complete and keep track of so many applications.

Check medical school websites early in the cycle and keep your list trim. Don't apply to any place that you would not attend. If your Haverford College GPA (and MCAT scores) are very high and you have had strong health care-related experiences, you need not apply to more than about 10 carefully chosen school since you will be interviewed at most, and assuming you do well in the interviews, should receive several acceptances.

Don't waste your time, emotional energy and money applying to schools that will not accept you, either because their average GPA and MCAT scores are far above yours, or because they restrict admission to state residents and you do not have residency. For example, Haverford College students and alumni accepted to **top twenty** medical schools last year had an average **GPA** of **3.84** and **MCAT** of **34.3**. If you don't have at least a 3.6+ GPA, it makes sense to focus your efforts on other places.

b. Osteopathic schools

Some of you may be interested in investigating osteopathic schools, especially if you are interested in primary care, treating the "whole person" and preventative care. Osteopathic medicine is quite similar to allopathic medicine, with an added emphasis on manipulative therapy and palpatory diagnosis. Osteopathic medical school is a four-year curriculum similar to an allopathic school's. It leads to a D.O. degree and a residency. About 6%, or 50,500 of the practicing physicians in the U.S. are osteopaths, and they are quickly increasing in acceptance throughout the country.

Osteopathic schools tend to be somewhat easier to get into than allopathic schools, and are a particularly good match for students who know that they are interested in primary care. For instance, applicants receiving interviews at **Philadelphia's College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM)** have **GPA**s of **3.0** or higher, and **MCAT** scores of **8** or higher in each section. For further statistical information about osteopathic schools, including MCAT and GPA scores, and number of practitioners per state, go to: <http://www.aacom.org/resources/bookstore/2006statrpt/Documents/ASROME2006.pdf>. DO schools have a separate application process described below.

II. HOW TO APPLY

a. Sequence of events www.haverford.edu/deans/prehealth/timeline.php :

1. Obtain bulk of letters of recommendations (summer/fall/spring/ before application) **Due Feb. 27th. Final Date for letters of recommendation is June 16th.**
2. Pre-health committee meets (April before you submit AMCAS application)
3. Take MCAT (fall/spring/early summer before application, or possibly earlier, if alum)
4. Fill out primary application on AMCAS (early summer optimal)

5. AMCAS verifies transcripts (summer/early fall)
6. Fill out secondary applications sent to you by medical schools(late summer/early fall). Return these within two weeks – optimal!
7. Invitations for interviews (late summer/early winter)
8. Interview (September/February)
9. Admitted (October through April)

b. AMCAS

The American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) is a centralized application system for allopathic medical schools. It is a non-profit organization that only processes applications. It has nothing to do with admissions decisions and gives no advice. One hundred twenty-one medical schools participated in AMCAS last year, and you **must** use AMCAS to apply to these schools. The cost for this service is \$160.00 for the first school and \$30.00 for each additional school. There is a Fee Assistance Program (FAP) for applicants with “extreme financial limitations” who are unable to pay this service fee. An applicant for FAP can be accessed at: <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/start.htm>

The AMCAS application is online at <http://www.aamc.org/students/amcas/start.htm> and must be completed and submitted online. The application is available in early May, and may be submitted in early June. It is important to be organized, pay attention to detail, check carefully and be patient as you fill out the application.

AMCAS provides an excellent help document and this should be consulted if you have any questions about filling out the application. To access the 2009 application instruction manual, go to: <http://www.aamc.org/students/amcas/amcas2009instructionmanual072808.pdf>
The 2010 manual will be available on-line in the spring.

There should not be significant changes in next year’s application and we will email you the website of the help manual when it is available. If you have any questions about reporting grades or courses, you may also call **202-828-0600**, or email **amcas@aamc.org**.

Some highlights of the application include:

- AAMC ID (number identifying your for the AMCAS application)
- Biographical and contact information
- Legal residency and citizenship
- Racial/ethnic self-identification
- Languages spoken
- Disadvantaged applicant (social, economic, educational)
- Work experience/Activities (including employment, community service, research, teaching, honors and awards, conferences, presentations, publications, athletics, leadership, extracurricular activities, hobbies.)
- Personal Comments essay (Additional essays for MD/Ph.D. applicants)
- Schools attended, including study abroad
- Course work
- Medical school designations
- Institutional action
- Felony convictions

For course work:

1. It is essential to have your transcript with you while you complete this section. AMCAS verifies each application by comparing it with official transcripts. It must agree with those transcripts in every respect.

2. AMCAS computes GPAs based on semester hours. AMCAS automatically converts one Haverford College course credit to 4 semester course hours.
3. You must have the Registrar mail your transcript to AMCAS as per the Instruction Manual referred to above. Print out and submit to the Registrar an AMCAS transcript request form.
4. You must submit a transcript from every U.S. or Canadian post-secondary institution where you have taken a course, even if taken in high school. If you are enrolled in a college in the spring before applying, wait until you have your grades before requesting a transcript.
5. You do not need to request a separate transcript from a Study/Abroad institution if it was sponsored by Haverford College. Since semester abroad grades are listed as P/F on Haverford transcripts, AMCAS will not include them in their calculation of your AMCAS GPA. If you go abroad through another sponsoring U.S. institution however, e.g. Temple in Rome, and that school lists your abroad course grades on **their** transcript, then those grades will count towards your AMCAS GPA. For further information on Study Abroad, see the Help Manual.

For the Work Experience/Activities section:

This section requires you to categorize your significant experiences and achievements, and provide a title, start and end dates. It asks for details, such as average hours per week, and the name and title of a contact person. This information is OPTIONAL, so if you don't remember the name of a contact from two years ago, don't worry. Do provide as much information as possible, so that medical schools can the extent of your involvement,(4 hours/week v. 4 hours/year is a big difference!), and the nature of your experience. Be concise and clear.

The AMCAS applications provides a "Personal Comments" section, a one-page essay on what has drawn you to a medical career. If you self-identify as disadvantaged, there are a number of additional questions for you to answer, and you will have a quarter-page opportunity to answer: "Explain why you believe you should be considered a disadvantaged applicant by your designated medical schools." Applicants to MD/PhD programs have additional essays about your motivation for this pathway, and for a description of your research experience and interests.

The completed AMCAS application should be submitted before July 4 if possible, or as soon as you receive spring semester grades and MCAT scores. You should start to fill out the application at least two to three weeks ahead of that to complete the application. The electronic application will give you an AAMC ID and password, which will allow you to work through the application at different sittings before certifying it and submitting it. Be careful and accurate in filling out the application – if there are errors, it could delay your whole application, or present you poorly to admissions committees. Before you submit your application, check it carefully one last time; once you submit it, you may only change your name, ID and contact information, and add medical schools to your AMCAS list.

Because AMCAS is processing tens of thousands of applications in a short period of time, mix-ups do happen. It is up to you to check your transcript and application status on the Main Menu after log onto your AMCAS application, and to follow up swiftly on any problems.

Remember, as the description of your committee letter process details above, your letters of recommendation are NOT sent to AMCAS and this service does NOT accept any supplementary information except transcripts.

c. Non-AMCAS schools.

The main non-AMCAS allopathic schools of interest to a minority of Haverford students are the University of Texas schools that use the Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS). Their website is linked to the AMCAS website (<http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas/>) If you are applying to these schools, you must request that official transcripts and MCAT scores be sent to TMDSAS. Just to confuse things, note that several Texas schools use AMCAS for MD/PhD applicants only.

A very few students also apply to Ontario Schools, and will use their service: <http://www.ouac.on.ca/omsas/index.html>. This is also linked to AMCAS.

d. Osteopathic schools

If you are applying to osteopathic schools, you must go through the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS), which has a centralized application similar to AMCAS. Their application can also be completed online through their website at: <https://aacomas.aacom.org/>. Applications may be submitted in early June. As with allopathic schools, it is very important to apply early.

Be certain to have the Registrar from each U.S. institution you have attended send a copy of your official transcript to AACOMAS. (See their website for rules regarding foreign transcripts.) No forms need to accompany the transcripts. You must also have your MCAT scores sent to AACOMAS by using the MCAT online THx system. As with AMCAS schools, individual osteopathic schools will send you a secondary application to fill out and return with an application fee.

Please note that the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine is the one exception. You submit an application to the TMDAS for entry to this school.

It is very important to osteopathic schools that candidates demonstrate knowledge of osteopathic medicine and commitment to its holistic principles. They are wary of applicants applying to these programs as second choice alternatives to allopathic schools. Many require or strongly prefer a letter of recommendation from a practicing DO, along with the usual Pre-Health Committee letter. (The requirements of each DO school are listed on <http://www.aacom.org/>). If you think that you may be interested in this option but have had minimal exposure to osteopathic medicine, contact a DO and spend some time at his/her work. You can locate an osteopath through www.osteopathic.org, or a Haverford College alum through our Career Development Office.

e. MD/PhD and other Joint Degree Programs

Each school has a different process for MD/PhD and other joint degree admissions. Generally, you will designate on your AMCAS application that you are applying for a “Combined Medical Degree/PhD” for each school for which that is the case. The AMCAS application includes additional essays about your research interests and experiences. Some schools require that the Committee letter be sent to the PhD selection committee as well as to the MD selection committee. Other schools require that you apply to the medical school first and then the PhD program. Work closely with Cheryl Mathes to let her know exactly what each school requires of you.

MD/PhD programs are offered at most medical schools and typically offer financial support for the PhD portion of the program. Links to these programs are available at: <http://www.aamc.org/research/dbr/mdphd/programs.htm>.

The National Institute of General Medical Sciences financially supports a combined MD/PhD program, known as the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP), at 41 medical schools. Duke, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, NYU, Penn, Rochester, Yale, Washington U, Columbia, Mount Sinai, Einstein, SUNY Stony Brook, and Cornell are some of the schools offering the MSTP. (For the entire list, go to: <http://www.nigms.nih.gov/Training/InstPredoc/PredocInst-MSTP.htm>.)

Applicants should have a GPA of at least 3.6, and an MCAT score above 30 (preferably in the mid-30s), along with an extensive science background, (typically a science major), and approximately two years or more of lab research experience, in order to be competitive.

There are other types of joint programs offered at medical schools, e.g. MD/MPH and MD/MBA, or MD/JD. Joint professional degree programs usually do not offer financial support.

III. WHEN TO APPLY

a. Apply early!

It is very important to apply EARLY to medical schools. AMCAS and AACOMAS applications optimally should be submitted by July 4, or as soon as you receive your MCAT scores. Even if you plan on taking or retaking your MCAT in July, August, or September, you should complete and submit your application by mid-summer. You can list a small number of top-choice schools on your application and add more later, once you have the results of your MCAT and can gauge what a good range of schools would be.

Check with the websites of non-MCAT schools to see when their applications become available and the earliest date you can submit them. Medical schools look favorably on those students who are motivated to complete their applications at the earliest date. Although regular deadlines for most schools are not until October and November, the sooner you apply, the sooner you will be interviewed, the last step in the admissions process.

Send back secondary applications no later than two weeks after receiving them. Medical schools with rolling admissions begin sending out acceptances as early as October, until the class is filled. Submitting materials late in the process may mean that you will be interviewed at a time when few places remain open in the class.

b. Early decision

Please see Michele if you are thinking about applying Early Decision. It does NOT give you the same advantage as for undergraduate admissions. Early decision plans generally have an August 1st deadline, and notification of early decision is not sent out until October 1st in most cases. If you are turned down, then you have a very short amount of time to get everything together for other applications. It is wisest to go the regular application route unless you have a very strong undergraduate record, very high MCAT scores, and unique experiences particularly suited to the school in question.

c. Deferments

Schools have different policies on deferment. They have a variety of approaches to deferred admission ranging from liberal to not at all. Consult with Michele if you think you may want to defer. If you are certain that you do not want to attend medical school next year, it is generally wiser to hold off on applying, rather than counting on deferring. (This also gives you an extra year to strengthen your application portfolio.)

4. Application Process Suggestions

When you apply through AMCAS, AACOMAS, or TXDSAS, you should make copies of everything you submit. You will want to consult with this paperwork in preparation for interviews, and if something happens to get lost in the mail or in the files of the admissions office. You can then forward another copy to a school without delay.

Keep careful records, with dates, of everything you submit. Think of yourself as the overseer of the process. After submitting your AMCAS application, check the status of your transcripts and your application by viewing the status information on the Main Menu page that loads after you log into your AMCAS application. After you submit your secondary and you are notified that your committee letter has been sent to X school, check to see if your file is complete at each medical school. Because of the huge volume of applications, parts of your application can potentially get lost. This could result in hundreds of other applicants being considered before they get to you. It is your responsibility to check with AMCAS and with individual schools to make sure that everything is in order. For that reason, it may not be wise to travel abroad for a long period after submitting your application.

Nearly all schools request a passport-style photograph in their secondary applications. Get enough of them initially to meet your needs. One way to reduce costs is to take your initial set of passport photos to a printing facility such as Kinko's and have a color copy made and replicated to fill a single page. Then, ask for a few copies of this multiple image page on "hardstock" paper. Present yourself professionally and dress up nicely for these pictures.

5. The Interview

The interview is an extremely important part of the application process. Medical schools interview applicants in order to find out if they really know why they want to go to medical school and have a realistic understanding of what that career pathway involves. They attempt to assess if the applicant will fit in with their particular school's culture, and if s/he has the requisite social skills, maturity and personality for medicine. Admissions interviewers also consider candidates' communication skills, extracurricular activities, empathy, social awareness and self-awareness; along with health-related and clinical experiences, coping skills, leadership, deportment and appearance.

In the fall of the application cycle, Michele provides an interview workshop, and you may also schedule a mock interview with a Haverford alumnus by calling Cheryl Mathes.

a. Types of Interviews

Different schools give different types of interviews. Remember, however, that you are actually being judged as a candidate from the moment you walk on campus. It is important to be pleasant and professional with everyone, from your medical student guides, to the administrative assistant informing you of the day's events.

Medical school interview formats include:

1. Informal Interview – feels more like an informal conversation than an interview.
2. Informed Interview – in this type, the interviewer has reviewed your essay and committee letter and will use this information to direct questions. Harvard Medical School uses this format.
3. Blind Interview – the interviewer has not read your folder and has no prejudged opinion. Penn uses this format. Some schools have two interviews, one blind, one informed.
4. Group Interview – You may be interviewed by several interviewers at once, or there may be several candidates interviewed at the same time.
5. Pressured Interview – some interviews are set up to see how you act under pressure. These are extremely rare. Mostly, if you experience an uncomfortable interview it is because the interviewer does not have particularly strong interpersonal skills.

Almost every applicant feels that at least one interview did not go well, but may not actually be able to judge how she or he came across. S/he may get into that school anyway.

b. Preparation

Prior to your interview you reread your AMCAS application and be prepared to expand on any activity or research experience listed. Don't ramble when responding to questions, but provide examples and anecdotes that illustrate strengths that you want to highlight. If you discuss time spent in a clinical setting, it will help if you can cite compassionate exchanges that you had with patients, or observations of effective interactions between patients and physicians. In other words, be prepared to be specific in your answers.

You should also carefully study the school's website and entry in the MSAR, and prepare questions about their program that are not answered in those sources. In addition, now is the time to be informed about current events, health care, medicine, etc., so that you can be conversant about the major issues affecting your future profession and society in general. For current information about medicine and health care check out the following websites linked to our own website: www.haverford.edu/deans/prehealth/news.php

One way to prepare is to think of three or four points about yourself and your background that you hope to get across. That way you will have a ready response for open-ended questions and won't waste the chance to provide important information about yourself.

Finally, when responding to the question, "Why do you want to become a doctor?," you must have an alternative to "I have always wanted to be a doctor, ever since I was very young." That statement is an expression of a desire, not a rationale. In making a case for a career in medicine, you must refer to your strengths, interests, abilities and experiences.

c. Presentation

Dress appropriately. For men, that means a suit, or sports coat with dress slacks. For women, a suit, dress or skirt with blazer. Make sure your clothing is a conservative color, (i.e. black, navy blue and grey are safe bets,) and style, i.e., medium length skirts, no plunging necklines. Avoid perfumes, keep piercings to a minimum and hairstyles that are restrained.

Remember that body language is a powerful communicator. Start and end the interview with a good handshake and maintain eye contact throughout the interview. Be conscious of gestures and postures, i.e. slouching can connote boredom, playing with a pen can suggest nervousness, etc.

d. Questions that have been asked

- Tell me about yourself (guaranteed question)
- Why do you want to be a doctor? (guaranteed question)
- Why do you want to come to this school? (guaranteed question)
- Why did you major in xxxx?
- What do you think of stem cell research?
- What is the biggest problem with the health care system?
- Have you been accepted or are you interviewing elsewhere? (be honest)
- What will you do if you do not get admitted to medical school ever?
- Discuss your extracurricular activities?
- Explain a particular research or service activity listed on your AMCAS application
- Tell me about a book that you have read recently.
- What was your favorite course in college?
- Describe your weaknesses.
- Describe your strengths
- What do you do for relaxation?
- How would you handle xxx stressful situation?
- How do you intend to finance your medical education?

e. Questions you might want to ask.

Remember that all interviews are two-way streets. You will also be given the opportunity to ask questions. During the formal interview, your interviewer will evaluate you on the questions you ask as well as the answers you give. Save informal, lifestyle questions for your conversations with Haverford alumni.

The following are types of questions that are reasonable to ask in the formal interview:

- If I want to do research, will I have enough time to complete it given the demands of the four year medical curriculum here?
- How does academic and career advising work? Who are the advisors?
- Where do students do their clinical clerkships? How do students divide their time between the primary and affiliated hospitals? What opportunities are there to do a clerkship in a primary care practice?

- Could you expand on programs for students to do community service?
- Can you give me more information about students' opportunities to do clinical rotations abroad?
- How do you structure a second degree, e.g. MPH, within the medical school curriculum?
- How much NIH grant support does the school have? (for those students interested in research)
- Does the school provide guidance to students on debt management?

At the end of the interviewing day, jot down your impressions. It will be useful down the road, when you are trying to make a decision on which school to attend.

6. MD/PhD Interviews

If you are an **MD/PhD** applicant, your interviews will be structured differently from those of MD candidates. Most schools schedule 5 or 6 interviews, one of which is designated as an MD interview. In some cases the schools allow the applicant to choose some of their interviewers. (The MD/PhD interview is a two-way process: the program is evaluating the applicant and the applicant is evaluating the researchers at the program to determine whether the work being done at that school is of interest.) Some schools throw in an interview with the entire MD/PhD committee, with one person being interviewed by as many as 10-12 individuals. Other programs have the director, or a couple of the MD/PhD committee members meet one on one with the candidate. At some programs, the MD/PhD committee has final say on who is admitted; in others, the MD admissions committee has final veto power.

The best advice for MD/PhD applicants is that you should know your science inside and out, and have a lot of practice talking about it, particularly with people who may not be in the same field. Presenting papers or posters at conferences is a valuable experience in this regard. You should know not just the data, but be able to explain why the work matters. Be able to answer questions like, "Why did you do that experiment?... If you did X and achieved the result Y, how would you interpret that?... What would your next step be?" Be aware of what is going on in the larger field, and be able to relate your work to the bigger picture. You should also be aware of the limits of what you know, and not try to bluff your way through an interview.

Somewhere around 1700 individuals apply to MD/PhD programs yearly. About half of them are interviewed by at least one program. Two-thirds of those interviewed will be accepted. MSTP programs, for the reason that they involve full funding for both medical and PhD training, are the most competitive.

7. Multiple Acceptances

When you receive your first acceptance **in writing**, look at your list of medical schools and withdraw from those lower on your preferred list. It is a courtesy to other candidates and to the medical schools themselves to cancel scheduled interviews at schools you know you would not choose over the one where you have been accepted.

When you receive two acceptances, choose between the two and withdraw from the one you like less. An exception would be if you are waiting for financial information, or if you are gathering information to help make your decision. It is customary for schools to return your deposit if you withdraw before May 15.

As of May 15, you must not hold more than one acceptance. However, you may remain on wait lists of other schools until you begin orientation at the school where you have been accepted. If you withdraw from a school after May 15 to accept a position from a wait list, you will lose your deposit at the original school.

For more information on this, see AAMC's policies for applicants:
<http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/policies/applicants.htm>

8. Financial Aid

In general, medical schools do not consider ability to pay when selecting applicants. They expect each student to manage his or her tuition costs with help from parents, spouse, other family members, and loans. (Even older, independent students must provide parental financial information to medical schools.)

As you complete the application process, your main source of information about financial aid will be the financial aid officers of the medical schools which you are interested in attending. Interview day often provides a financial aid presentation. Even if you are **not yet** in a medical school, begin to fill out the Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA) available on line (<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>), in January or February.

Be sure that your credit rating is good, so that you will have no problems obtaining a loan. If you have credit card or consumer debt, be sure to pay it off regularly and keep it low. You can request a copy of your personal credit report for a small fee from:

Trans Union- www.transunion.com (800-916-8800)
Equifax www.equifax.com (800-685-1111)
Experian www.experian.com (888-397-3742)

The AAMC website contains a comprehensive guide to financial planning at www.aamc.org/students/financing/md2. MSAR also contains an excellent chapter on financing a medical education.

If you are interested in practicing medicine in rural or severely underserved areas, you may want to look into the National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program. This is a small federally-funded program, but is a potential option for those who have really demonstrated their dedication to disadvantaged populations. For more information, go to: National Health Service Corps (<http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov>)

For more information on scholarship and loan repayment programs, go to:

National Institutes of Health Loan Repayment and Scholarship Programs (800-528-7689) or www.lrp.nih.gov

State and Other Loan Repayment/ Forgiveness and Scholarship Programs
<http://www.aamc.org/students/financing/repayment/start.htm>

Post-baccalaureate options

If you applied once and were not accepted to medical school because of a low GPA, MCAT score or lack of clinical experience, it may be possible to take some time off to strengthen your candidacy. Some do this by simply taking advanced undergraduate-level science courses at a nearby college or university. (You can get a job at a university and take courses at a reduced rate.)

Other students enroll in one of the formal postbaccalaureate programs offered around the country. If you get A's in such a program, and strengthen your candidacy in other areas, with volunteer work, or retaking the MCAT, you may have a better chance of getting into medical or osteopathic school second time around.

Post-bacc programs generally fall into four categories:

1. For those who have completed few or none of the premed requirements, i.e. career changers
2. Non-degree granting programs for applicants needing to improve their grades in science to be successful
3. For under-represented groups

4. Degree-granting programs that differ from standard graduate programs in university science departments.

You should discuss with Michele which program would suit you the best. For a searchable database of all types of postbacc programs, go to: <http://services.aamc.org/postbac>

Non-medicine alternatives

If your GPA is below a B, and you did not do well on the MCAT, or you are lukewarm about science, or the challenging lifestyle of physicians, you may want to think of an alternative to medical school. Medicine may not be the best match for your talents.

Here is a partial list of other interesting and rewarding areas of health care, and check out our website for more.

- Genetic counseling
- Public health
- Neuropsychologist
- Physician Assistant
- Clinical psychologist
- Pediatric neuropsychologist
- Nurse practitioner
- Nurse midwife
- Faculty in a nursing school
- Dentistry
- Pharmacology
- Podiatry
- Optometry
- Biomedical Engineering
- Medical Science Writing
- Health Administration
- Nutritionist
- Medical Social work

For more information on these and other allied health professions, go to:

www.haverford.edu/deans/prehealth/alternative.php