

CHOOSING WHERE TO APPLY



By: The Office of Pre-Professional Programs & Advising

Updated Spring 2024

As you prepare to submit your application, you should carefully and strategically consider the schools to which you will apply. This is a fun and exciting step in the application process, but it is also one that should be completed with a good deal of research and self-reflection. Please note that this document will discuss allopathic medicine ,dental , and osteopathic medicine programs, but the tips shared can be used over all other professional health interests.

The following guide is broken into pieces below:

- Resources to utilize while building your list
- General information to know before building your school list
 - Number 1 rule to lead with while building your school list
 - Specific Factors to consider while building your school list



RESOURCES

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has developed a worksheet ([Factors to Weigh Before Applying](#)) to help you navigate things to consider when looking at specific programs.

The Medical School Admission Requirements ([MSAR](#)) for is where you can find detailed information about each U.S. and Canadian medical school.

The [ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools](#) consists of a one-year subscription to the online directory of dental schools (the ADEA Dental School Explorer) and a PDF publication that has been consistently updated over the last five decades.

[Choose DO Explorer](#) allows students to compare schools side by side and provides further admission information about osteopathic medicine and the AACOMAS application.

Always visit individual school websites, which provide more information about their programs & list contacts of students or staff who may be able to answer your questions.

Pre-Professional Advising also has recorded workshops and professional school presentations on our [Youtube channel](#) that can be used as an aide in researching programs and creating a school list.

If you are an avid podcast listener, check out Case Western Reserves School of Medicine's [All Access: Med School Admission Podcast](#).



GENERAL INFORMATION TO KNOW BEFORE BUILDING YOUR SCHOOL LIST:

1.

GPA & MCAT/DAT STATISTICS

The MSAR contains annual admissions statistics, including each school's median GPA and MCAT for accepted applicants, as well as the GPA and MCAT ranges for accepted applicants. Using this data, you can assess whether your academic profile is a good fit for specific schools. Since getting into medical school is difficult and based on many different factors, there are no "safety" schools for medical school. However, be sure to have a good mix of schools with different score ranges. Watch [this video](#) as a resource to learn more about the ranges and metrics of medical school acceptances.

Dental school applicants should reference the ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools, which lists the admissions requirements for all U.S. and Canadian dental schools. Follow the same advice above and select schools with median GPAs and DAT scores close to yours.

2.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

According to the AAMC, applicants nationwide apply to an average of 16 medical schools. JHU's Pre Professional Advising Office recommends that medical school applicants apply to approximately 20 - 25 schools.

When an applicant applies to more than 25 schools, it may imply that 'fit' has not been prioritized when creating the list. In addition to reviewing metric measures, Pre-Prof advises applicants to research the school mission and vision to better strategize in school selections (read more about this later in the guide).

Applicants should also consider that applying to over 25 schools will require more secondary essays, which can sacrifice quality and increase the cost of applying. Remember, don't sacrifice the quality and proper timing of your application process by not prioritizing fit. Pre-Prof recommends approximately 10 schools for Dental school applicants.



3.

STATE OF RESIDENCY

Public medical and dental schools typically give preference to in-state residents in the admissions process. Many public schools accept less than 15% of their classes from outside of their state. In-state tuition also tends to be lower. Conversely, some public schools admit over 20-25% of their students from out-of-state – you may wish to consider these schools even if you are not a resident, particularly if you have some connection to the state. The MSAR allows you to view MCAT and GPA statistics for both in-state and out-of-state applicants, which may influence your decision to apply as an out-of-state resident to a state school. In general, be thoughtful and judicious when choosing public schools for which you are not an in-state resident. In some cases, it will make sense for your application, but in other cases, it might not be a good fit. It is important to note that residency rules vary by state. If you have a question about state residency, please contact an official at the medical school in question; usually, the admissions office can direct you to the appropriate person or office.

Other important residency considerations:

- You can only be a resident of one state. The state you list as your home state on your application is the state that medical/dental schools will consider as your choice of residence.
- If you are included as a dependent on either parent's tax return, then you are a resident of that parent's state.
- If you have graduated and are claiming residency in a new state, then you should not only have a permanent address, driver's license, and voter registration card in that state, but you should also plan to work in that state and file state taxes. Some public medical schools require this last item.
- Residency rules vary from state to state, and how residents and non-residents are defined by an admissions committee varies from school to school. Public medical schools within the same state sometimes vary in terms of these rules. Your first step when considering a change in residency is to contact a residency official at the school(s) in question. Reference the MSAR to review acceptance data for "resident" and "non-resident" applicants, interviewees, and matriculants at each institution you are considering

4.

INTERSTATE AGREEMENTS

Some states that either do not have medical schools or have very few medical schools have created special interstate agreements so that their residents have in-state privileges at institutions located in other states. These agreements include:

- **WICHE.** Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education operates an exchange program for students from 13 western states that gives them preference in admission and reduced tuition in selected out-of-state medical and other professional schools.
- **WWAMI.** The University of Washington School of Medicine serves as the public school for Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho.
- **FAME.** Finance Authority of Maine's Access to Medical Education Program gives Maine residents preferred access to Dartmouth, Vermont, and UNECOM.
- **DIMER.** Delaware Institute of Medical Education and Research, which has Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, serves as Delaware's medical school.



5.

TEXAS RESIDENTS

If you are a Texas resident, you will use TMDSAS to apply to most Texas medical and dental schools. Applicants who are not residents of Texas rarely apply to Texas medical and dental schools, unless they have a connection to the state.

The MSAR is a great place to find more information about the number of applicants that are interviewed/accepted with in state vs. out of state residency status for every medical program.

For more information on the TMDSAS, please visit <http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas>.



NUMBER 1 RULE TO LEAD WITH WHILE BUILDING YOUR SCHOOL LIST:

Try not to fixate on the reputation of a medical school.

Prioritize selecting an institution where you can genuinely flourish, assume leadership roles, and, above all, fulfill your personal mission in medicine.

In navigating the medical school application process, the paramount consideration is finding a school that aligns with your individual needs and aspirations rather than succumbing to the allure of prestige. The key is to think critically about what is essential for your success as a medical student.

It's not just about gaining admission to any medical school but choosing one that resonates with your purpose. Reflect on your "why" in medicine and evaluate how it harmonizes with the ethos of each school. Seek institutions that support your aspirations and genuinely care about your unique motivations. The emphasis should be on finding a school that not only grants entry but becomes a nurturing environment that propels you towards realizing your passion, dreams, and the profound "why" of your journey in medicine.



SPECIFIC FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHILE BUILDING YOUR SCHOOL LIST

There are countless factors to consider when picking a school list. We encourage students to think about what is meaningful for them to consider during this process rather than prestige, as previously mentioned. Here are some school-specific factors that you might consider when creating your list:



- *Curriculum*
- *Grading Policy*
- *Admission Requirements*
- *Career Goals and program's alignment*
- *Dual – Degree Programs*
- *Location (urban vs. rural; weather; geography)*
- *Culture/Student Body*
- *Support System Proximity*
- *Cost of Attendance*
- *Political climate of state*
- *Mission, Vision, and Values*

MISSION STATEMENT:

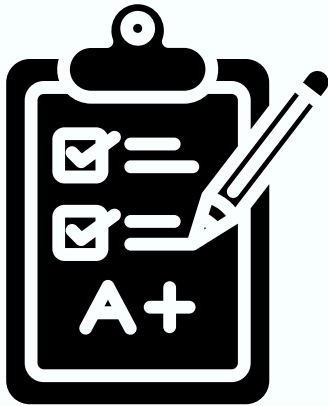
While it may seem that all medical/dental schools have the same basic mission of helping train compassionate physicians who can care for patients, mission statements can vary dramatically between schools. Some schools emphasize research, while others may focus on public health, religious principles, or social justice. While you can read each school's mission statement in the MSAR or ADEA Guide, you should also carefully review your schools' websites of interest. They often feature more in-depth information about the school's philosophy. You should identify schools with missions parallel to your professional goals and values. In summary, when selecting schools, try to find schools where your experiences and personal statement fit in with their values (i.e., it would be difficult to convince a medical school that you fit in with their community service-oriented mission if you have minimal community service experience).



CURRICULUM:

As you review medical school curricula, consider your learning style. In college, did you learn best in lecture-based or more hands-on and interactive classes? These types of questions can help you establish whether medical schools with a more traditional lecture format, problem-based learning (PBL) approach, or a combination of the two styles would be best for you. In addition, some schools provide recorded lectures while others require attendance in class. Depending on your study habits, one approach may be better for your learning. You may also want to consider the length of the pre-clerkship curriculum, which varies widely among different schools (e.g., 1 year, 1.5 years, 2 years), and sites of clinical rotations (e.g., all at one hospital, at different hospitals in one or different systems, etc.).

GRADING POLICY:



Think about how the grading policy will affect your time in medical school. Some schools rely entirely on a Pass/No Pass grading system in pre-clinical years because they feel it fosters a spirit of cooperation rather than competition between their students. A variation of this system is using Honors/High Pass/Pass/Fail distinctions, which is similar to letter grades.

ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS:

Each school will have different admissions requirements. For example, some schools require a certain number of humanities credits or upper-level biology courses. It is important to review each school's website to make sure you are eligible to apply before applying. If you have any questions about eligibility for a specific school, contact the school's admissions office.



CAREER GOALS:

Consider your personal goals for a career in medicine or dentistry, and the resources each school will provide as you pursue that path. For example, some schools focus on primary care skills, and many of their graduates will ultimately decide to pursue primary care residencies. Others may focus more on specialties and/or have more opportunities to be exposed to sub-specialties. Investigate the clinical rotation opportunities. Consider the diversity and quality of clinical sites and the potential for early patient interaction. Research the residency match rates of each medical school. Higher match rates may indicate the school's effectiveness in preparing students for their chosen specialties. As you apply for residency, you may want to consider a school's match list and how it fits your interests. Other schools may emphasize research, with a requirement for all students, or they may offer the option to take a year off from medical school to pursue research. As previously mentioned, some schools also offer dual degrees (e.g., MD-MPH, MD-MBA). Additionally, if you are interested in global health, make sure to check specific schools' global health programs/opportunities.

LOCATION:

You will be spending four years of your life in medical/dental school, so you want to make sure it is in an environment you enjoy. Questions to consider: Where have you lived before and what did you like about those places? Are you a city person, or do you prefer a more rural setting? What climate do you prefer? What is the cost of living like? What cultural and recreational factors are important to you? Assess the quality of facilities, libraries, laboratories, and other resources available to students.



DUAL-DEGREE PROGRAMS:

If you are interested in medical schools that have combined degree programs (e.g., MD-PhD, MD-MPH, MD-MBA), consult the MSAR. Each of these programs may have different requirements, lengths, and associated scholarships, so you must research these opportunities to determine which ones best fit your career goals.

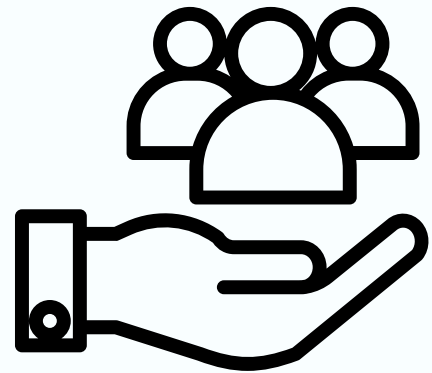


COMPOSITION OF STUDENT BODY/CULTURE:

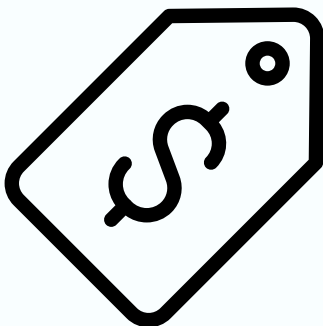
Do you prefer a smaller or a larger class? How diverse is the class? What is the male/female ratio? Think about your preferences in these areas when selecting schools. Consider the diversity and inclusivity of each medical school, including the student body, faculty, and support services. Consider the extracurricular activities, clubs, and student organizations available at each school. Choose a school that aligns with your personal and professional interests.

SUPPORT SYSTEM:

Are you close to your family and want to be at a school near them? Do you have a significant other who needs to stay in a specific location? During medical school, you will probably be too busy to travel great distances to be with loved ones and friends. What kind of support and well-being services does the medical school offer? Look into the strength of the alumni network. A robust network can provide valuable mentorship and networking opportunities.



COST OF ATTENDANCE:



Medical/dental school tuition varies greatly based on factors including in-state residency, availability of scholarships, and others. While nearly all medical/dental students graduate with some debt, the amount of debt can range from a few thousand dollars to upwards of \$200,000. The MSAR and ADEA Guide include information on financial aid, and you can also contact schools directly to determine their policies. If you are fortunate enough to qualify for a medical/dental school scholarship, you will need to weigh the financial benefits carefully to see how well that school matches your needs.

**BEST OF LUCK
ON YOUR
JOURNEY!!**

