Hello!

With the end of Year Three approaching, I wanted to share some tips/advice/perspective as you get ready to apply for residency this summer. I know that there’s lots of uncertainty right now with summer schedules as you wait for news about away electives----and I know from classes in years past that this can be a source of considerable stress----but please be reassured that despite this -- in the end-- it consistently works out for all of our students to have excellent summer/fall experiences that build towards their preparation for their residency application.

In the note below, you’ll find general advice about various features of the application process. Please know that there’s often individual variation so I’d be happy to go over any specifics of your application. I’m easily accessible via e-mail (susan.harper@dartmouth.edu) Just e-mail me directly and from there we can set up meetings/phone calls to go over your questions.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Susan Harper

MOCK INTERVIEW COURSE
The Mock Interview Course is an optional course that offers the opportunity to practice interviewing with faculty in your specialty of interest. This year’s course is scheduled for June 21 and June 22. During those two days you’ll have the chance to practice interviewing with one-two faculty in your specialty of interest. In addition, I’m going to speak to the class as a whole on June 21 at 8am to present residency interview tips and then again on June 22 at 12 noon to go over a general approach to the residency application process. Also during those two days, I’ll be available to meet individually with anyone who’s interested-- so just e-mail me in mid-June if you’d like to set up a time. The week prior to the course you’ll receive your interview schedule as well as more detailed information about the format. If you have any questions about the course, please feel free to contact me (susan.harper@dartmouth.edu)

PROGRAM INFORMATION
An efficient --and excellent way --to learn about various residency programs is through the AMA website FRIEDA: https://freida.ama-assn.org/Freida/user/viewProgramSearch.do It offers a direct link to specific programs, offering detailed information about the program, including interview dates, deadlines, size, etc  Careers in Medicine (CiM) also has a treasure trove of information/links and throughout the application process, it should also be a great resource. When choosing programs, I urge students to initially cast a large net. My general advice in choosing programs is to apply to ANY program of interest to you and to aim for programs in geographic areas that are desirable to you. Most students apply to about 20 programs but there is considerable variability with that number for lots of reasons (competitiveness of programs,
competitiveness of specialty, geographic constraints, etc). I’d be happy to review your initial list. Once interviews are offered, you can be more discerning about your choices.

**ERAS**
(Electronic Residency Application Service)
The Office of Clinical Education is the central hub for the ERAS materials connected to your application---with the exception of your USMLE scores. In July, Elizabeth Johns will distribute the ERAS tokens which will enable you to access the ERAS application. During the summer, she will also hold several sessions on an approach to the ERAS application. The dates/times of these sessions will be forwarded to you in the early summer. I strongly recommend that you attend one of those sessions but also know that if you can’t or if you have additional questions, Elizabeth is available to meet with students individually during the summer/fall.

**PERSONAL STATEMENT**
This is consistently a stressful project for students---but it doesn't need to be---since the goal is to write a focused essay which gives reader a sense of you ---and everyone always finds excellent material for the content. Don't feel pressured to write a spectacular essay---that's really hard to do. I suggest that it's concise yet sprinkled with good supporting personal experiences that offer evidence of a well thought out decision to pursue your specialty. I'd be happy to look at a rough draft --it can be very rough-- to help get you pointed in the right direction----or I can brainstorm with you if you're having difficulty getting started.

**CV**
This is a nice addition to your application preparation for several reasons. Letter-writers really appreciate it as they enjoy getting to know more about you. It's very helpful for me as I compose the bio section of your MSPE. It's a useful worksheet for you when you start working on the ERAS application as you've already developed concise descriptions of your activities and also sorted out the dates. For those applying for away electives through VSAS, the CV is needed as part of that application. If you have a CV and you haven’t had the chance to send it to me and/or Polly Moran, it would be great if you could e-mail it to us by the early summer.

**LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**
Most programs require 3 letters of recommendation. In general, I recommend that students aim to secure 2 letters of recommendation from their specialty of interest but sometimes that's not feasible so if you're struggling with sorting out letter-writers, please contact me for suggestions. Also know that students have always been able to obtain the requisite number of letters so don’t be worried if at this stage you don’t have any. Most letters arise from the Year Four summer/fall experiences

The letters of recommendation should be from attending physicians (an exception to this are the Medicine chief residents at the VA-- who are good choices-- so talk to me if you choose one of them) and ideally, faculty that you've worked with in Years Three and Four . Also---once in a
while a program will ask for a specific letter—ie Medicine letter for an OB program; Ortho chief resident, Chair's letter etc—so pay attention to those details. If there is an unsolicited offer by a faculty member to write you a letter, my suggestion is to take that offer—no matter what specialty. In terms of requesting letters, I recommend that you wait until the end of a rotation and then e-mail faculty with a request. They most likely will agree so then follow-up with your CV as well as the instruction letter/waiver (enclosed—also I strongly urge you to waive your right to see your letters). If by chance they don’t respond to your initial e-mail, just follow-up in a week or two—since most likely the request got lost in the shuffle.

Many of the letter writers will send the letters to the Office of Clinical Education for uploading---so letters will collect in our file. New this year though is direct uploading of the letters by faculty to ERAS----this is in the process of being worked out---and by this summer we will have more specific information for faculty available if they opt for that route. For letters sent to the Office of Clinical Education, they are uploaded onto ERAS as soon as possible, where you can track them via your ADT (Applicant Data Tracking) through ERAS.

Often students have collected more letters than needed---so if you need help choosing which letters to use I’d be happy to give advice. I don’t look at the content of the letter—but by reviewing the experiences that led to the letters along with the specialty of interest, I can usually help narrow down the choices.

Please note that there are 4 slots allowed for letters of recommendation, so many students choose to send 4 letters (optional though). There's lots of variability in terms of how that's handled. Sometimes students like to wait to see if they can get a letter of rec from a later (Sept/Oct) clinical experience after they've submitted their application and if so, they'll update their application with that 4th letter. Sometimes students have used the 4th spot for a meaningful faculty interaction---ie research mentor.

**TRANSCRIPTS**

There is a form on the Registrar's Office webpage that allows for the release of your official transcript for your ERAS application. Once that's completed, your transcript will be delivered from the Registrar's Office to the Office of Clinical Education. On that form, you can designate when you'd like the transcript released to the Office of Clinical Education and also if you'd like it released after the receipt of specific grades (usually a sub-internship during these months). Also, you can always re-send a transcript after you’ve submitted your application, if an additional grade arrives that you'd like to share with programs. Many students opt to include an updated transcript with the release of the MSPE.

**USMLE STEP 2---CK/CS**

Our internal deadlines for the completion of the two components of USMLE Step 2 are November 15th for CS and December 15th for CK. Adherence to those deadlines will ensure that programs have the results from these exams before the close of the applicant ranking period (February). There are stringent state licensing regulations related to residency training licenses so
most programs will need these results from applicants to ensure that those on their rank list can be licensed.

For CS----my suggestion is to schedule that ASAP if you haven’t already, since there is limited availability for certain sites (particularly Philadelphia which is often of interest for our students). For CK, there’s lots of variability among students as to when to take it since that’s dependent on many factors, including summer/fall clinical schedule, Step 1 score, specialty of interest etc. For general advice though I recommend that if possible, allow about 2 weeks for studying and try not to take it in the midst of interviewing (early –mid Dec as that’s a lot to balance). Please know that I’d be happy to go over the specifics of your plan. In general, in years past, most of our students have taken the CK exam after they have applied to programs and then updated programs with their scores. This update has provided a nice way for applicants to reconnect with programs during the interview or ranking periods. Even though Step 2 results often arrive after application deadlines---programs have been more than willing to receive these results.

**MSPE**
(Medical Student Performance Evaluation)---aka Dean’s Letter
The MSPE is a required component of all residency applications. It mirrors the official transcript. The letter is primarily a chronology of your clinical experiences from Years Three and Four and it is composed of narrative from your final clinical evaluations (with editing) which results in a very comprehensive presentation of your work/accomplishments during medical school. There is an opening section “Unique Characteristics” which describes biographical information related to medical school which I write based on the CV and other supporting materials that you’ve supplied. The MSPE will be released to programs on October 1st. We try to include every grade that’s pertinent to your specialty of interest up until as late as possible. Faculty have been tremendous about completing grades so they arrive in time for inclusion in the letter ---so the week---even up to the final hours-prior to the release of the MSPE ---there’s a flurry of activity as we work on this. You can view/have a copy of your MSPE---but due to this consistent last minute work on many of the letters---the MSPE will be available to you after the official release date. Please know though, if you have any questions/specific concerns related to this, talk to me.

**ADVISORS**
Each specialty has designated faculty to serve as the student advisor for that specialty. The faculty advisors have consistently been very approachable, supportive and dedicated, offering valuable specialty specific advice. Most students work with their advisors during the summer of Year Four through February when the Rank Order list is submitted. The advisors can offer advice about the personal statement, program selection, specialty interviewing, ranking etc. In some instances, they write letters of recommendation for the specialty (ie internal medicine). They can also direct you to other faculty in the department for guidance. We’ll be forwarding an updated list of residency advisors to you soon as there are a few changes that need to be settled. I’ll be meeting with the residency advisors this month and each advisor will receive a list of students interested in their specific specialty (based on the specialty preference sheet). Please note, that the advisor will receive only the name of those in their specialty of interest. For those who designated more than one specialty, you’ll have an advisor for each specialty of interest who
will be happy to guide you about the specifics of that specialty as you sort out your decisions. If you have any questions about your specialty advisor, please contact Elizabeth Johns or me.

WHEN TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION
Students often ask when they should submit their applications through ERAS for the NRMP programs. Each year, there has been a small handful of students who have been ready to submit their application on the opening day of the ERAS post-office (this year Sept 15th) and some specialties seem to be demanding an early submission based on the earlier dates for interviews (ie OB/Gyn). In general though, most students aren't ready to send in their completed application upon the opening of ERAS as they're in the midst of sub-i's in the summer and early fall ---so it's tough to focus on their clinical work and complete the application. Additionally, letters of recommendation are often in flux during this time since these experiences usually provide at least 1-2 letters of rec. Also---the content of the personal statement is often centered around the summer experience so it often can't be written until those rotations are in progress or complete. In years past, most students have submitted their ERAS application during the 4 week period after the ERAS post office opens. The history for nearly all of our students is that they have been offered an excellent number of interviews---usually many more than they can handle during the interview season.—and the number of invitations seems independent of the application submission date. Please note--you don't have to wait until the letters of recommendation are uploaded to submit your application—you just need to list the name of the letter-writer. My advice is to not rush your application by trying to submit it when in the midst of a demanding clinical rotation---as both the application and the experience may not be up to par in this circumstance. Again--our students consistently receive lots of opportunities for interviews---even those who submit near the final deadline.

PROGRAM DEADLINES
Ensure that you're aware of your program deadlines---they vary among institutions and specialties. In years past, most NRMP programs have had deadlines of November 1st but there were a few that closed in mid-October. Some programs have had deadlines as late as the end of December. Deadlines mean that all application materials need to be received by the program by that date with the exception of the MSPE, which can't be released until October, 1st. Also---programs usually accept Step 2 scores after the deadline so you can update your application after you receive those scores.

INTERVIEWS
Typically the interview season extends from early November through late January. Some specialties (internal medicine, family practice to name a few) offer lots of interview dates over those months. Other specialties offer only a few very specific dates with limited scheduling flexibility. As the interview season nears, I’ll be sending out more information on how to approach scheduling and follow-up.

COMMUNICATIONS
If you'd like to meet or set up a time to talk to me on the phone---just e-mail me. (susan.harper@dartmouth.edu) I'm on e-mail consistently throughout the day. If by chance I don't respond within a day or two, it may mean that I opened it at home or in the midst of clinical work and it got lost in the shuffle---please don't hesitate to send me a reminder. Also---I can be reached at home in the evening and on weekends at 603-643-9339. Please don't be shy to call my house as it's absolutely not an imposition as I know that with sub-i's and time zone changes, it often works best to talk off hours. I'm usually at DHMC on Tuesday and Thursday and I tend to meet in the early afternoon but can sometimes adjust if that works better with schedules.

CHECKLIST OF IMPORTANT DATES
ERAS tokens distributed by Office of Clinical Education---July 2012

ERAS post-office opens-September 15, 2012

NRMP registration-9/1/12-11/30/12 (late fee after that date)

USMLE Step 2 CS-complete by November 15, 2012

USMLE Step 2 CK-complete by December 15, 2012

In the Fall, I’ll be following up with more information discussing the interview season as well as the ranking process.