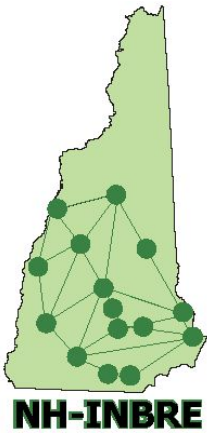


Medical School Mentoring



Session 4: Letters of Recommendation, Making Your School List,
& Secondary Applications

Presented by: The NH-INBRE Alumni Network
April 20th, 2023

About Us - NH INBRE Alumni Network & Mentoring Programs

New Hampshire INBRE (IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence) is a program funded by the National Institutes of Health to develop a coordinated network of biomedical research and research training in New Hampshire.

In 2021, the NH INBRE Director of Biomedical Workforce Development implemented a [one-on-one mentoring program for INBRE students](#) to be paired with INBRE alumni.

Alumni mentoring provides career and academic guidance to current students on a volunteer basis.

In 2022, following the INBRE annual conference, two INBRE alumni recognized an urgent need to provide mentorship support for the numerous pre-med majors at the partner schools.

In 2023, the Medical School Mentoring program was launched for all pre-med students at the partner schools.

Medical School Mentors are current medical students that are either INBRE alumni or volunteers from the lead partner schools.

Lead Partners:

Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth
University of New Hampshire at Durham

Partner Institutions:

Colby-Sawyer College
Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH)
Franklin Pierce University
Keene State College
New England College
Plymouth State University
Saint Anselm College
University of New Hampshire at Manchester

Associated Members:

Rivier University



Program Directors



Haley Zanga

MS1 Loyola University of Chicago
Stritch School of Medicine '26
Keene State College '18



Somer Matar

PhD Candidate in Molecular Biology
Dartmouth College
Keene State College '15

Medical School Mentoring Program: Goals

- Provide resources, information, and support to students who are on their journey to become physicians.
- To **supplement** the pre-med advising at the NH INBRE partner schools.
- Establish more networking relationships within the INBRE community and beyond.



Mentor Introductions



Abby: 4th year in the MD-PhD program at Dartmouth College
Endicott College '19



Catrina Hood
Soon-to-be Pediatric Resident!
MS4 UVM Larner College of Medicine '23
Colby-Sawyer College '17

Letters of Recommendation

Types of Letters

- **Committee Letter:** may or may not include additional letters of support
- **Letter Packet:** does NOT include evaluative letter from pre-health committee or advisor
- **Individual Letter:** written by and representing a single author

- If you already included an individual letter within a Committee Letter or Letter Packet, DO NOT also send it to a program as a separate “Individual Letter”

Letters: How many? Who to ask? When to ask?

HOW MANY & WHO TO ASK

Bare minimum 3: 2 science professors & 1 non-science professor OR supervisor

Committee Letter: Determine if your Undergrad or Post-Bacc program has a formal process for obtaining a committee letter

Up to 10 letters associated with AMCAS Application*

WHEN TO ASK

If anticipating gap year(s), may decide to ask BEFORE graduating or AFTER

→ Can always opt for BEFORE & have them update once you're ready to apply

Give writer plenty of notice (with gentle reminders) to ensure timely submission

Adding Letters to your Application

- Upload/Submission process directly to application system
 - AMCAS provides form with AAMC and Letter ID #'s to provide to letter writer

OR

- Third-party system such as [Interfolio](#)

Making a School List

Why a school list is important

You spend a lot of time, effort, and money on your undergraduate education, MCAT scores, personal statement, and other parts of your application...but all that ultimately only matters if you apply to the right schools!

- In 2022-2023 cycle, average medical student applicant applied to 16 schools
- Medical schools DO NOT see where else you apply
- Similar to undergraduate, you should have a mix of “safety,” “target,” and “reach schools”
 - Safety schools= Your grades/scores/qualifications are better than average qualifications of matriculating students in recent years
 - Target schools= Your grades/scores/qualifications match average qualifications of matriculating students in recent years
 - Reach schools= Your grades/scores/qualifications are not as strong as average qualifications of matriculating students in recent years

What to include on your list:

- Basic information (School name, location, program type)
- School admissions/matriculating data
 - Average GPA
 - Average MCAT
 - Some schools may have GPA/MCAT score cutoffs ← check for this before applying
 - Some schools may provide basic demographic data
- Admissions requirements (Letters, prerequisites, due dates, etc.)
- Basic curricular structure
- Research/extracurricular opportunities
- Tuition
- Other unique things or factors that matter to you
 - School mission statement/values ← can be helpful for secondary applications
 - Class size
 - Health Professions Scholarship Program (Military)
 - Pathways/concentrations available
 - Distance to family
 - Residency match results

Balancing your school list

- Classify schools as “safety,” “target,” or “reach” based on admissions/matriculating data
 - There are some resources/services that can help (most cost money):
 - MSAR: <https://mec.aamc.org/msar-ui/#/landing>
 - DO Explorer: <https://choose.do/explorer/>
- Safety schools
 - Only apply to a couple
 - These actually aren't a sure bet to get into because these schools may not offer you interviews if you're too overqualified and they feel you're unlikely to matriculate
- Target schools: should be the majority of schools you apply to
- Reach schools
 - Only apply to a couple
 - Confirm school doesn't have GPA or MCAT cutoff that will automatically block review of your application
 - You will need a very strong application (beyond scores) to get interviews (extracurriculars, unique experiences, compelling personal statement, etc.)

Examples:

Example template:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1gwtg4R5gYAz9bXeLnWZf4mKa46qy8Xb1Osd_TVzt4n4/edit#gid=2023487176

Article that walks through school list process well:

<https://elitemedicalprep.com/getting-into-med-school-how-to-create-a-school-list-for-amcas/>

Secondary Applications

What are secondary applications?

- AKA supplemental applications
- School-specific applications sent to an applicant after the primary application has been submitted
- Focused on the interests of that particular school
- Usually 2-7 short answer questions

How much does it cost?

- Varies from school to school, but secondary applications are about \$100 on average.
- Fees can range from \$30-\$200
- See if you qualify for the AAMC's Fee Assistance Program (FAP) to help reduce the cost of applications.

Will I get a secondary from every school I apply to?

- Short answer-yes
- Very few schools pre-screen before sending out their secondary applications
 - Why?
 - Schools can collect a fee
 - Admission committees want to see which applicants are truly interested in their school*
 - Timing of submission can give admission committees an idea on priority level
- Example: Loyola University of Chicago*
 - 2021-2022 cycle
 - Received 13,335 primary applications
 - Completed secondaries applications 8,522

What are common questions on secondary applications?

Essay prompts/Short answer questions:

- Diversity essay (How would you add to the diversity of our school?)
- Adversity/ Challenge essay (Describe a significant challenge you overcame and what you learned from it.)
- Why us? essay (Why do you hope to attend [our school]? Or Why are you interested in our medical school specifically?)
- Gap year essay (If you have already graduated, what have you done since undergrad?)
- Leadership essay
- Anything else you'd like us to know essay

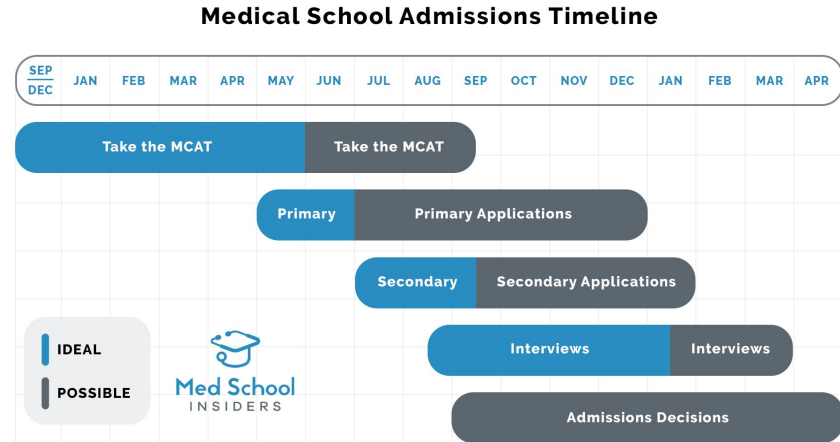
Examples/Resources:

- <https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/medical-school-secondary-essays>
- <https://www.medschoolcoach.com/tips-and-examples-of-medical-school-secondary-applications-secondaries/>

Secondary application deadlines

- Most medical schools have standard deadlines for secondaries in December or January
- Other schools will give you a deadline based on when you received the secondary (for example it might specify that you have two weeks to complete it)
- **BUT try to work on turning in your secondaries as quickly as possible (within a two week time frame ideally) since medical schools are on a rolling admissions basis.**

Complete secondary list of deadlines for MD schools:
<https://students-residents.aamc.org/media/7011/download>



<https://medschoolinsiders.com/pre-med/secondary-application-guide/>

Secondary Applications Do's and Don'ts



DOs



DON'Ts

DOs:

- **Do** make each essay specific to the prompt
- **Do** proofread your essays
- **Do** use a spreadsheet to organize which essays go to which schools
- **Do** draft secondaries in a advance
- **Do** focus on characteric limits
- **Do** focus on new material
- **Do** answer the question

DONTs

- **Don't** just cut and paste parts of other essays without ensuring your essay makes sense
- **Don't** simply repeat information from primary application
- **Don't** forget to include payment if one is required
- **Don't** write the same response or story for different prompts

Tips to manage secondary applications



How to Order Secondary Applications



TOP CHOICE FIRST

COMPLETE YOUR TOP CHOICE OR BEST FIT SCHOOLS FIRST TO OPTIMIZE INTERVIEW CHANCES.



MOST COMPETITIVE FIRST

COMPLETE THE MOST COMPETITIVE SCHOOLS FIRST TO OPTIMIZE INTERVIEW CHANCES.



LOWER RANK FIRST

COMPLETE LOWER RANKED/LOWER PREFERENCE SCHOOLS FIRST FOR PRACTICE.



MOST QUESTIONS FIRST

COMPLETE SECONDARIES WITH A LOT OF QUESTIONS FIRST FOR MORE CONTENT TO WORK WITH.

- **Make a plan** and prioritize your secondaries
- Organization is KEY
- Create a spreadsheet that includes: essay topics, due dates, relevant websites, login information
- Submit promptly- to do this prewrite your secondaries if possible
 - Secondary Database link: <https://medschoolhq.net/medical-scholar-secondary-application-essay-library/>
- Set priorities (see the diagram to the left for ideas)



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**Send us your suggestions for future topics in the chat box or email us!
See you next school year!**