Application Seminar:
Feb 9, 2016

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Appointments and general questions:
hpp-office@andrew.cmu.edu
Some perspective

2014 AAMC data:

• **20,343**: Total # of students who enrolled in US medical schools for the first time in 2014 (*new record high*).

• **49,480**: Total # of applicants to med school (*new record high*).

• **36,697**: First time applicants (*important indicator of interest*).

2015 AAMC data:

• **20,627**: Total # of students who enrolled in US medical schools for the first time in 2015 (*new record high*).

• **52,536**: Total # of applicants to med school (*781,600 applications*)

• **38,449**: First time applicants.
Outline

- Evaluating the strength of your application
- MCAT
- Letters of recommendation
- CMU committee process
- Personal Statements
- School Selection
- Application services
- Secondary apps
- Interviews
Outline

• **Evaluating the strength of your application**
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Questions to think about:

- Why do I want to be a healthcare provider?
- What makes a good clinician?
- Am I a strong applicant?
- When should I apply?
Who is a strong applicant?

- Grades: total, science, all other, year by year...
- Standardized Test Scores (MCAT, DAT, GRE, etc)
- Exposure and commitment to the field of interest
- Extracurricular involvement → depth + leadership
- Research experience
- Work experience
- Community service & volunteerism
- Communication skills (written & verbal)
- Professionalism
- Academic/Integrity violations???
When should I apply?

• Am I ready?
  – Physically
  – Emotionally
  – Psychologically

• If I take a gap year(s), what should I do?
  – Research: NIH, individual labs…
  – Boost GPA: https://services.aamc.org/postbac/
  – Master’s degree: MPH, MSHCPM, MBA, MS
  – Work
  – Medical Scribe: https://www.scribeamerica.com
  – Service: http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps
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When to take the MCAT:

2016 Testing Year

Medical College Admission Test® (MCAT®) Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Date</th>
<th>Score Release</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>January 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>February 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 1</td>
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<td>September 9</td>
<td>October 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 10</td>
<td>October 12</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*All exams begin at 8 AM

MCAT® is a program of the Association of American Medical Colleges
When to take the MCAT (DAT):

- Depends on when you want to apply
- Goal: take once
- New MCAT wipes slate clean of # of previous attempts

MCAT Policy Update

New attempt limits starting with the April 2015 exams

- 1 year
  - Up to 3 attempts in a single year
- 2 years
  - Up to 7 attempts in a lifetime
Registering for the MCAT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gold Zone</th>
<th>Silver Zone</th>
<th>Bronze Zone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approx. 1 month or more prior to the exam*</td>
<td>Approx. 3-4 weeks prior to the exam*</td>
<td>Approx. 1-2 weeks prior to the exam*</td>
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<td><strong>Initial Registration</strong></td>
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<td>$305</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

MCAT 2015

Four sections:
- Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems
- Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems
- Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills
- Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior

Design:
- Focus on health disparities & pop health
- Emphasis on scientific & critical thinking skills
- Think like a scientist → natural & social sciences
- Reason about research designs & results, interpret data, draw conclusions
- Underscore role of behavioral & sociocultural factors in health & disease
What if I need accommodations?

https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/accommodations/

Extended time over two days will be offered
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<tr>
<th>Test Section</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tutorial (Optional)</td>
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<td>10 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>95 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems</strong></td>
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<td>95 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>95 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Void Question</td>
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<td>5 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction Survey (Optional)</td>
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The new score report

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<tr>
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<th>Confidence Band</th>
<th>Percentile Rank of Score</th>
<th>Score Profile</th>
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<td>124 - 126</td>
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<td>Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>123 - 125</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>118 - 125 - 132</td>
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</table>

**MCAT Total Score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Percentile Rank of Score</th>
<th>Score Profile</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>506</td>
<td>504 - 508</td>
<td>76%</td>
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</table>

**Notes:**

1. Test scores, like other measurements, are not perfectly precise. The confidence bands around test scores make the ranges in which the test-taker's true scores likely lie. The diamond shapes and shading indicate that the test taker's true score is more likely to be in the center of the confidence bands than at the ends.

2. The percentile ranks of scores are the percentages of test-takers who received the same score or lower scores.

3. For the four sections, the score profile shows a test-taker's strengths and weaknesses.

[www.aamc.org/mcat](http://www.aamc.org/mcat)
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Letters of Recommendation

- Typically 3-5 (minimum 3 → max 10)
- Recommended list (as per CMU HPP):
  - 1-2 science faculty
  - 1 humanities faculty
  - 1 research letter
  - 1 volunteering/service/leadership letter
  - 1 clinician letter (MD, DO, DDS/DMD, Vet…)

- Remember to ask for strong, supportive letters!
- Committee letter + LoRs = ONE committee letter
- Additional letters can be tailored to specific schools
Letters of Recommendation

• Due to HPP office at least 2 weeks before committee meeting

• Should request about 1 - 2 months before due date

• Must be accompanied by a signed waiver form

• Provide recommender with:
  1. Résumé / CV
  2. Draft of personal statement (if you have one)
  3. Waiver form (letter guidelines!)*
  4. Any other materials letter writer requests

• http://www.cmu.edu/hpp/apply-to-schools/lor/index.html
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Elements of the (rolling) application

- GPA/transcripts
- Tests
- Committee Interview
- Personal statement
- Letters

- Primary Application
- Secondary Applications
- Interviews

Timeline:
- May-June
- June-July
- July-Aug
- August-March
The CMU committee process

• Simulates the admissions interview
• You and 3 interviewers
• 2 hour time slot: ~45-75 minute interview + ~15 minutes of feedback
• Video recorded and available to you
• Addresses “holes” in your application, and offers insight about you and your qualifications
• Provides both evaluation and mentoring
• Generates committee letter of recommendation that medical/dental schools prefer (Vet schools do not ask for CL)
• You will have one letter, a “Committee” letter. The author of this is Dr. Jason D’Antonio.
• Pre-Vets: enter individual LoRs
The CMU committee process

How to schedule:

• Typically late April – July
• Required materials:
  – All LoRs + signed waiver forms
  – All non-CMU transcripts (unofficial OK)
  – Personal Statement
  – Résumé / CV
  – MCAT/DAT/GRE score report (unofficial OK)
• Invite a faculty member you feel will contribute to the interview.
• Email hpp-office@andrew.cmu.edu with the desired date and time, and name of faculty member to serve on your committee.
• Wear what you would wear to a real interview
  – Conservative! I.e. cover tattoos, no piercings other than ears.
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“I would prefer to just look at your resume.”
Personal Statements:

• AMCAS; TMDSAS; AACOMAS; VMCAS
• ADEA AADSAS
  http://www.adea.org/dental_education_pathways/aadsas/Applicants/Pages/PersonalStatement.aspx

• How to write an effective personal statement:
  – http://www.thedoctorjob.com/blog/
  – Why you wish to become a clinician?
  – How you handle difficult decisions/challenging situations?
  – Personal experiences that shaped you.
  – Your personal philosophy and goals.
  – It should be well written and interesting to read.
  – There must be NO errors!
Personal Statements:

- **AMCAS**: 5,300 characters (includes spaces & returns)
- **AADSAS & ACOMAS**: 4,500 characters (including spaces, etc.)
- **VMCAS**: 5,000 characters (including spaces)

- Prepare before writing: reflect on significant experiences that shaped your path toward pursuing a career in healthcare.

- Allows you to promote yourself beyond the numbers.
  - Highlight personal attributes: creativity, communication skills, problem solving, team work, critical thinking, cultural exposure…

- Make a case for you as a qualified applicant worthy of an interview at all schools where you are applying.

- Address “fit” in secondary applications and interviews.
Personal Statements: do’s

- Prepare **before** writing (**self exploration and reflection**!)
- Consider your audience, but write what you want
- Be positive about the career
- Give a sense of your personality, priorities and interests → distinguish you from the rest of the applicants
- Use a **few** illustrative points
- If you begin with a thesis, refer back to it in your closing
Personal Statements: don’ts

• Do NOT plagiarize!
• Avoid:
  – being too creative
  – controversial topics
  – trying to sound too perfect
  – redundancy
  – exotic vocabulary
  – preaching to doctors about doctors
  – using “I” too much

• It is NOT a prose résumé → save this info for your list of 15 experiences on the primary application
Personal Statements: revision

- Revise and check for errors/misspelled words?
- Have a friend read it to you out loud
- Use specifics to illustrate your PS rather than general statements
- Check formatting / correctness once you have pasted into the web form!

- Career Center or Global Communication Center at CMU
- Set up an appointment and we can review the statement together
- Work with Calvin Pollak for review and critique: cpollak@andrew.cmu.edu
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School selection

- MSAR (Medical School Admissions Requirements)
  - https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/
  - Selection factors such as MCAT and GPA data
  - Medical school class profiles, application procedures and deadlines
  - Costs and financial aid packages
  - M.D./Ph.D. and other combined degrees

- Osteopathic: http://www.aacom.org/about/colleges/Pages/default.aspx
- Dental: http://www.adea.org/dental_education_pathways/aadsas/Pages/PDS.aspx
- Veterinary: http://aavmc.org/College-Specific-Requirements/College-Specific-Requirements_College-Specifications.aspx

- Individual school websites → most updated admissions info
- Geography; cost; reputation; research; primary care; family…
School selection: what criteria matter?

- Location (*cost of living*)
- Residency
- Public or Private
- Teaching / grading style
- Mission
- Cost
- Citizenship
- Hospital network
- Primary care focused
- Research focused
- Ranking

<table>
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<th>High</th>
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<tr>
<td>NonResident</td>
<td>$33,765</td>
<td>$62,700</td>
<td>$54,936</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Dental** – on avg are more $$$$  
- **Vet** – very expensive so apply in-state

School selection: how many?

- The right number depends on you!

- **Med school**: Primary application is $160 for 1 school + $37 for each additional
  - Secondary applications are typically $25 - $100
  - Assume $50/secondary, 15 schools = $1428 total, not considering travel to interviews ($2298 for 25 schools)

- You should apply to schools where you want to attend!
  - Reach schools (*beware of filter!*)
  - Schools where you are a good match for the typical student
  - Schools where you would be a highly desirable applicant
School selection: how many?

Dental school:
- $245 for 1st school
- $93 each add’l school
- 3 schools: $431
- 5 schools: $617
- 10 schools: $1082
- 15 schools: $1547
- 20 schools: $2012
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"I've been here for 30 years. I've forgotten what my exact role is, but I do finally know how to fill out all the forms."
Application Services: read these sites carefully & apply EARLY!

- AMCAS https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/amcas/
- TMDSAS http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas/
- AACOMAS https://aacomas.aacom.org/
- ADSAS http://www.adea.org/dental_education_pathways/aadsas/Applicants/Pages/default.aspx
Applying to Vet school

- Mid-May VMCAS opens (closes mid Sept).
  - e-submit VMCAS application + fee
  - Have 3-6 electronic LoR sent to VMCAS (*no CL needed*)
  - Send ALL transcripts to VMCAS

- VMCAS places completed apps in queue for verification.
  - Once verified, apps are sent to schools

- Send GRE scores directly to schools, not VMCAS.
  - (*VCAT no longer administered & not req’d by any schools*)

- Visit website for each school to obtain special instructions and supplemental app info.
The VMCAS Fee Reimbursement Program

• Program opens June 5\textsuperscript{th}, when cycle opens.

• Reimbursements are granted to financially disadvantaged applicants on a first-come, first-serve basis, and the program will close once the allotted funds are exhausted.

• VMCAS will decide if you qualify for a reimbursement based on your income, or your parent's income if you are claimed as a dependent, as reported on the most recent Federal Income Tax Return.
Applying to Dental school

• **Obtain DENTPIN** → needed for DAT and to apply

• **June 1st:** online AADSAS application system opens
  – Applicants enter personal and academic information
  – Official transcripts must be submitted to ADEA AADSAS (via the HUB)
  – LoR: 4 max (or CL + 1) - Indicate author(s) of LoR (Dr.D if committee letter)

• **Late June:** AADSAS begins transmitting verified primary apps
  – AADASA verifies all documents, imports DAT, processes final application

• **Schools receive primary application**
  – Review complete applications, match to supplemental material, and schedule interviews
  – Review each school for app deadline
The ADEA Fee Assistance Program

- [http://www.adea.org/GoDental/Application_Prep/The_Application_to_Dental_School_ADEA_AADSAS/Fee_Assistance_Program.aspx](http://www.adea.org/GoDental/Application_Prep/The_Application_to_Dental_School_ADEA_AADSAS/Fee_Assistance_Program.aspx)

- Applicants who qualify for Fee Assistance will receive a $441 fee waiver, which will cover the first three AADSAS dental school designations.
  - Must apply for FAP and get approval before e-submitting application.
  - $93 each additional school.

- There is no fee assistance for additional dental school designations.
Applying to Medical school

- **Early May**: online AMCAS application system opens
  - Applicants start entering personal and academic information

- **Early June**: can submit primary application → verification queue
  - Produce transcript request form → the Hub (hold for spring 2015 grades)
  - Produce **ONE** letter request form (*committee letter*) w/ my name & contact info. Give to May Simaan in HPP office. (Bar code and ID #)

- **Late June**: AMCAS begins transmitting verified primary apps
  - AMCAS sends application to schools (+/- MCAT and committee letter)
  - MCAT scores auto-sent to schools and HPP sends CL

- **Schools send secondary applications → complete ASAP!**
  - (1° App + transcripts + CL + 2° App + MCAT) required for application review
The AAMC Fee Assistance Program

https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/

- MUST apply & get FAP approval before using $ → MCAT, apps, resources.
- Can apply & receive up to 5 times.
- Benefits last 2 years, but you can only use FAP once in that 2 year period.

Benefits:
- Reduced MCAT registration ($305 → $115) and prep resources fees
- Free copy of the book The Official Guide to the MCAT® Exam ($35 value)
- Complimentary access to MSAR online ($50 value)
- Waiver for AMCAS 1° app fees for up to 15 medical schools ($678 value)
  - Many 2° app fees reduced or waived
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Secondary apps

- Sent after schools receive verified 1° app
- MUST be well written; no errors; return w/in 7-12 days

- Vet schools: visit website for each school to obtain special instructions and supplemental app info.

- Dental & Medical schools: will send applicants 2° apps
  - Most ask for additional money
  - Many require additional essays (vary in # and length)
  - Challenge essay
  - Diversity essay
  - Why their school
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INTERVIEW

1. DRESS APPROPRIATELY
2. ARRIVE IN GOOD TIME
3. BODY LANGUAGE
4. EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED
5. ASK QUESTIONS
Interviews: what to wear?

**Women**
- Suit (skirt or pants)
- Pantyhose or stockings
- Button down shirt / blouse
- Closed toes, short heels
- Appropriate makeup & jewelry
- Minimal or no perfume
- Professional bag & coat
- Notepad

**Men**
- Suit and tie (*know how to tie*)
- Dress shoes
- Conservative colors
- Well groomed
- Minimal or no cologne
- Notepad

- Cover tattoos
- No piercings other than ear
Interviews

- What is the purpose of the interview?
  1. Compare person to writing
  2. Explore communication skills
  3. Marketing the school
  4. Maturity and motivation
  5. Test your grace under pressure
  6. Assess your professionalism
Interview styles

1. One on one
2. Panel
3. Blind - interviewer is “blinded” from your application
4. Partial blind - interviewer has seen only part of your application
5. Multiple mini interviews (MMI) – see NYU website
Interviews: preparation

- HPP Committee Interview
- Career center
- Faculty
- Fellow classmates/alumni who have interviewed
- Research, athletic, service, clinical, academic mentors
  - Prepare to discuss things you have worked on (projects, research, service, athletics, etc.)
Interviews: follow-up

• Write thank you notes immediately following interview.
  – Email is easy and fast, postal mail is fine.

• Send follow up information as it is available (e.g. after summer / fall grades) unless schools ask you not to.

• Consider writing “letters of interest” and “letter of intent” when appropriate, but not too soon.
  – Letters of intent may be considered legally binding.
  – Both allow you to provide updates on your activities.
  – MUST discuss why you want to attend that school.
April HPP Application Panel Discussion

• Students intending to apply this June will be able to speak directly with students who have successfully been accepted in the current application cycle.

• This provides a chance to ask question to those who have just completed the entire application process, including interviews, waitlist management and acceptances.

• Announcement will be coming out in mid-late March.

Stay tuned…
How to reach the HPP office

• Doherty Hall 1324

• Email:
  – Scheduling/general questions: hpp-office@andrew.cmu.edu
  – Jason D’Antonio: dantonio@andrew.cmu.edu
  – May Simaan: simaan@andrew.cmu.edu
  – Veronica Peet: vpeet@andrew.cmu.edu

• Phone: (412) 268-8494
• URL: http://www.cmu.edu/hpp/