

From Drs. Moeller, Moss and Waidner, as of January 2011:

ATTENTION PRE-MEDICAL STUDENTS:

If you are interested in attending medical school, please consider the following:

1. Keep your GPA up. Most medical schools consider GPA and entrance examination scores before all else. It is good to do volunteer work and to be active on campus, but don't overdo it. If your GPA suffers too much, so will your application. We consider 3.2 a *minimal* acceptable GPA to apply to the SC medical schools, but obviously the higher you go, the better your chances.

2. You will need clinical experience. "Clinical experience" is generally defined as anything where you will observe and/or have contact with patients. So working in a physician's office would count if you're shadowing the doctor, but not if you're working in the business office. Before you can shadow in Spartanburg, there is quite a bit of documentation you must take care of, including a **criminal background check, drug screen, and two-step PPD (TB) test.** Go to the checklist at http://webs.wofford.edu/mossre/hc/pdf/internship_c.pdf. Other shadowing sites may have similar requirements; so investigate early!

If you expect to apply to osteopathic medical schools, some of your clinical hours must be with osteopathic physicians.

Different schools expect different amounts of clinical experience. For the SC schools, 200 hours is a good rule-of-thumb. Interim is a good time to get about 150 hours, but many people choose to work in the medical field over the summer instead. When you do your clinical work, make sure you have your supervisor fill out a "clinical evaluation form" when you're done. You can download the form at:

<http://webs.wofford.edu/mossre/hc/>

Fill out the top of the form COMPLETELY and SIGN the waiver BEFORE giving these forms out. Unsigned waivers do not carry as much weight with admissions committees.

Keep a journal of your experiences during internships [without any patient-identifying information!]. Read through your journal a few days before your interview for medical school. You will make a better impression during the interview if you talk about specifics rather than just the number of hours you spent shadowing.

3. Take the MCAT exam as early as possible.

At Wofford, the relevant coursework to be prepared for the exam includes two semesters of Physics (121 & 122 or 141 & 142), two semesters each of Inorganic/General (123 & 124) and Organic (203 & 204) Chemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology (212), Cellular Biology (214), and if possible, Physiology (342). Biology 150 and 151 will be helpful, but non-Biology majors may be unable to fit these in.

Typically, you would take the MCAT for the first time in May or June after your junior year. This will give you time to take the exam a second time, as needed, before applying. The average score of students getting in to SC med schools ranges from 27-30. It's quite rare for anyone with below a 25 to be admitted, so we consider a 25 a *minimal* acceptable MCAT to apply to the SC medical schools. Admissions directors tell us you should continue re-taking the MCAT until you reach the *average* MCAT at the school you hope to attend. For the SC medical schools, that would be a 29. For Emory, Duke, Wake Forest and other out of state schools, we suggest 31. Your performance on the MCAT is critical to your acceptance! We strongly suggest that as of December 15, studying for a May or June MCAT exam should be your top priority.

You can find the schedule for the MCAT exams at <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/reserving/>.

Be aware of the following:

a. The MCAT exam is computerized and quite rigorous. You should spend lots of time your junior year preparing for the exam. That includes taking practice examinations (!), including at least one timed, online version (free from the AAMC, see www.e-mcat.com). Other practice tests may be purchased for \$35 each from the same site; or a group of 10 students can purchase 10 copies of the same exam through Dr. Moss for \$200 (advisors can purchase the same online exams in packs of 10 at discount). The biology department also has a collection of MCAT study books and flash cards available to sign out. Register to take the exam at least 4 months prior to test date at <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm>.

b. The MCAT **does not allow the use of a calculator!** In order to work general chemistry problems involving pH, you will have to become familiar with logs and how to take the log of a number in scientific notation and how to reverse that process. Also, get yourself to the point that you can round off numbers and estimate your answer ... time is important on these exams.

c. You can learn more about preparing for the MCAT at https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/preparing/85556/preparing_prepfaq.html

d. Kaplan usually teaches their MCAT prep course here on campus, beginning in early February. You can contact them at 800-kap-test, or look online.

4. Check on Other Course Requirements:

Other than the classes required for MCAT preparation, SC medical schools have no specific course requirements. However, most other medical schools do. U of F and FSU require 4 credits of biochemistry for instance.

Most out-of-state medical schools require 3-6 credits of math [including Duke, FSU and U of F, which require 6 credits]. We recommend that you take six credits, to keep your options open: either two semesters of calculus, or one calculus plus statistics (math 140). We also recommend you take statistics early in your career, as it will help you in many of your science classes.

For calculus, we recommend that you take Math 181 rather than Math 160, because the problems and examples use in Math 181 are more geared towards the sciences.

First year students: To qualify for scholarship aid offered by the state of SC, you must take six hours of math during your freshman year.

5. Seek RECOMMENDATIONS toward the end of your junior year (ideally in May as some professors may be away from campus in the summer):

Work to make a positive impression on your professors (and other professionals) throughout your time at Wofford. Show us that you are the type of person that we would want to have as our *own* physician – be curious, study hard, engage in class, support your classmates, work well with others, take responsibility for your learning and your performance, don't whine, etc.

For most medical schools, you have the option of submitting a "letter packet," **which we refer to as a committee evaluation**, or three separate letters of recommendation (see https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/amcas/how_to_apply/130656/letters.html). A Wofford committee evaluation includes evaluations from your biology, chemistry and physics professors, as well as evaluations completed by health professionals from your clinical experiences. Although not required or typical, you may also invite other professors who know you particularly well to write letters for you that will be included in the letter packet.

Some schools, including both SC medical schools, prefer the committee evaluations. Prior to submitting your completed committee evaluation, if we feel that comments made by any professor(s) would be detrimental to your application, we will advise you to seek out individual letters of recommendation.

Even if you are doing the committee recommendations, encourage those professors who know you best to fill out the form for you, as sometimes they may forget to participate. Regardless of which type of recommendation (committee or individual letter) you use, make contact with each professor -- send along a resume and a paragraph or two about the characteristics that you possess that will make you a good physician. We may only know you from our class, so help us get a broader view of you.

All of us take recommendations seriously, and we are honest and candid in our evaluation of you. If one or more professors is likely to give you a poor evaluation (low grade, personality conflict, poor attendance, etc.) you may want to opt for individual letters. Your recommending professors **must** see you as a bright and highly motivated student to optimize your chances of getting into medical school.

Committee evaluation forms can be downloaded from: <http://webs.wofford.edu/mossre/hc/>. Fill out the form, print it, SIGN it and submit it to Ms. Thomas in the biology office, along with the cover letter from AAMC. We will submit your packet for you when it is determined to be complete.

Most medical schools require recommendations to be submitted online, through AAMC. See the AAMC web site at https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/amcas/faqs/146562/letters_questions_landing_page.html

We suggest you submit these forms late in your junior year, but **they MUST be in by September 15** of your senior year.

**** IMPORTANT: **** If you do a committee evaluation, we will automatically include any clinical evaluations and send the packet to the institutions you designate. However, if you opt for individual letters, you must fill out a form requesting that Ms. Thomas send your clinical evaluations to your designated institutions (we will need the AAMC cover letter form for this, as well).

6. Complete your application to medical school EARLY!

AMCAS applications should be completed **before** the fall semester of your Senior year begins! You can find the AMCAS application, as well as lots of info on applying to medical school, at <https://www.aamc.org/>. The new application becomes available each year in May. You can begin it before you take the MCAT. "Rolling admissions" means the longer you wait, the lower your chances, so **TURN THOSE APPLICATIONS IN AS SOON AS YOU CAN!**

Your personal essay is a very important part of your application because it reflects your ability to communicate effectively. This means that it should engage the reader, be free of any grammatical errors, and give the reader insight into your personality and character. Therefore, you should plan on having it critiqued by others – seek out this constructive criticism from various sources (e.g., English professors), and be willing to start over if you don't get a strong positive reaction to your first attempt..

7. Present yourself well in the Interview.

You want to be perceived as knowledgeable about, and dedicated to, a career in medicine. You must show that you are willing and able to communicate with diverse constituencies and handle stress with aplomb. Although you don't want to over-sell yourself, you do want to be open and communicative – so you may have to work hard to overcome shyness! Your interviewer *may*

have no more information than your name and that you are a Wofford College student. This is your chance to let them see who you are. Bring clinical or other internship experiences into the conversation ... also you may find the opportunity to mention travel interims or other service work that you have done. Read national magazine and newspaper stories relating to medicine to “keep up” with topics (even non-medical current events) you might be questioned on.

PRACTICE! Do a mock interview with career services before the real thing.

If you plan on **STUDYING ABROAD the fall of your senior year**, you must make arrangements for interviews, and for completing your application, before leaving. PLEASE SEE ONE OF THE PREMEDICAL ADVISORS BEFORE THE END OF THE SEMESTER PRIOR TO YOUR TRAVEL. If both your GPA and MCAT are significantly above average, contact your premed advisor, as we may be able to get you an interview before you leave.

PRE-HEALTH Career Advisors

Should you have any questions about this or other advising matters, please feel free to contact one of the Health Careers Advisors. For medical school these are Drs. Moss, Moeller, and Bass. Further information on other health careers can be found at Dr. Moss' site, at <http://webs.wofford.edu/mossre/hc/>

Pointers to strengthen your application:

- “Leadership”: Schools do look for leadership; MUSC actually gives ‘points’ for it. If you have served in any position that would be considered “leadership,” you should document that in your application. This is not a major factor, so we don’t suggest going out and doing things you’re not interested in!
- “Clinical Experience”: Schools want to see that you have enough experience shadowing or volunteering in a clinical setting to know what medicine really is, and that it’s right for you. Document this experience with letters from the health care professionals you work with, as described above.
- “Faculty evaluations”: Your biology, chemistry and physics professors will contribute to a “committee evaluation” that will go out to medical schools on your behalf. Doing research with a professor, lab assisting, or working as an office assistant will help us to get to know you.
- “Integrity Matters” Most recommendation forms contain the question: “Do you have *any reason* to question this student’s integrity?” If any professor must answer “yes,” you will not be accepted into any graduate program. So if you are not fully committed to Wofford’s Honor Code as a confirmation of your own moral values, you need to find another career (and a different school).

You can find answers to many of your questions on the FAQ of our premed advising site:
http://webs.wofford.edu/mossre/hc/premed_faq.htm

MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION CHECKLIST: JUNIOR & SENIOR YEAR

Please see Dr. Moss, Dr. Bass, or Dr. Moeller if you have questions about any of these items!

| DATE | DESCRIPTION | CHECK OFF AS COMPLETED |
|--|---|------------------------|
| November Jr year | Register to take Kaplan, if you choose to take it. Also, start cramming! | |
| January JR Year | Register to take the MCAT, www.aamc.org | |
| Immediately after you take the MCAT in May or June after Junior Year | Prepare for your AMCAS application: - View AAMC's advice at: http://webs.wofford.edu/mossre/hc/AAMC_ADVICE.ppt and - View or download the application at: http://www.aamc.org/students/amcas/start.htm for medical school Osteopathic medical school applications use a different application service: https://aacomas.aacom.org/ | |
| | - Write your personal essay. | |
| | - Submit your personal essay to a science professor and English/humanities professor (and others) for constructive critique. | |
| June 1 -> Sept 1 | Submit your AMCAS application. | |
| May 15 -> Sept 1 | - Initiate your committee evaluation OR choose 3 professors to write letters [committee evaluation is preferred, unless any science course grades fall below a B- or you predict a poor evaluation from a professor]. Print out and sign the AMCAS letter request to go with your committee evaluation. Download Wofford's committee evaluation form at http://webs.wofford.edu/mossre/hc/md.htm If using individual letters, submit request to Ms. Thomas that "clinical evaluation forms" be sent to schools. This is automatic with the committee evaluation. The MUSC secondary application for medical school is available on their website; you can start that as soon as you have completed the AMCAS application. | |
| 10/15 | -If you haven't received notification from Wofford that your committee evaluations have been mailed, please check with Ms. Thomas. | |
| 11/1 | - If you haven't received secondary applications from each medical school you listed on your AMCAS application, call the medical school admissions offices. | |
| Upon receipt of sec. applications | - Complete them and submit them ASAP! The longer you wait, the lower your chances become. | |
| 2-4 weeks before your first interview | - Schedule a "mock interview" with career services. | |

Get more details, or have your "FAQ's" answered, at our advising web site: <http://webs.wofford.edu/mossre/hc/>