

Health Professions Advisory Committee Review Information Meeting: Zoom Session 1.22.25

For students and alumni considering applying to professional schools (i.e. dental, pharmacy, medicine, optometry, PT, podiatry) that may prefer committee letters from applicants.



Agenda



- Announcements/opportunities for current students
- Committee Review overview
- Instructions to request/complete committee review
 - HPAC online application
 - References



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- Review weekly Health Professions update emails that go out every Friday with announcements on meetings, internships, research/clinical opportunities prior to making an appointment.
 - Visit Becker Career Center for guidance on internships, jobs, and other healthcare-related opportunities (i.e. networking with alumni). They fund summer fellowships at non-profit agencies that can be healthcare-related.
 - Community Action, Research and Education (CARE) Fellowship (200+ direct patient contact hours as well as research and coursework in end of life care). Funding is provided through Union's Summer Research program; therefore, you must identify a faculty member who will supervise the research. Priority is given to students who have received caregiver training at a care home such as the Joan Nicole Prince Home.

2 Scholarship Opportunities for current students

Obenzinger Scholarship

(must be sophomore or junior premedical student receiving need-based financial aid)

- The amount of the scholarship for the 2025/26 academic year will be approximately \$38,000. Funds to be used toward meeting your financial need as measured by the FAFSA and CSS Profile.
- Any need in excess of the Obenzinger Award will be met with Union College Scholarship, eliminating your need-based loans.
- \$1,000 cash at prize day in 2026 (next year)
- Paid work-study position doing public health-related work at Hometown Health Center, a federally qualified health center (FQHC) in Schenectady.
- Should be either a Sophomore or Junior with strong grades (above 3.2 math/science gpa and competitive standardized test scores) with plans to apply to allopathic medical (MD) schools

Harold and Ellen Nagorsky Memorial Prize

- ***Awarded to the premedical student who is in the junior class and contributes the most to the Union College community through extracurricular activities.***
- Prize (approx. \$1,000) to be awarded this year May 2025 at Prize Day

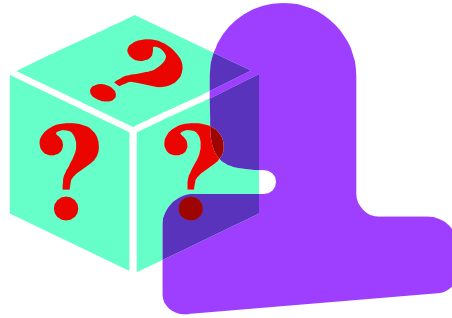
Both Prizes require that you complete an application (see website under student resources)

Goals of Today's Meeting



At the completion of the meeting, you should be able to...

- Articulate what a “committee letter” is and the process required to obtain one in support of your professional school application
- Assess whether you are *ready* to go through committee review this year
- Realistically estimate your “cohort” year (*earliest* year you would likely begin professional school and draft a timeline of necessary steps to launch an application)
- Understand the steps required to initiate committee review and secure your materials in the future



What is a committee letter?

Why do I need one?

Who writes the letter and
how?

What is Discussed in the Committee Letter?

- Motivation for Medicine/Clinical Background
- Involvement in extracurricular activities and leadership roles that you have held
- Interpersonal characteristics
- Academic record

EGL 101	Intro to Study of Lit: Fict A		1.00	1.00	4.00	HUL
						WAC
						HCM
SPN 201	Intermediate Spanish 2	B+	1.00	1.00	3.30	LCSS
						HUM
TERM						GPA 3.433
CUM EARN	11.00	ATT 9.00	QP 30.50			GPA 3.389
Fall Term 2017-18 (09/06/2017 - 11/21/2017)						
CHM 231	Organic Chem 1 W/Lab	C+	1.00	1.00	2.30	
PSY 100	Intro to Psychology	A	1.00	1.00	4.00	SOCS
STA 104	Introduction to Statistics	A-	1.00	1.00	3.70	QMR
TERM						GPA 3.333
CUM EARN	14.00	ATT 12.00	QP 40.50			GPA 3.375
Winter Term 2017-18 (01/03/2018 - 03/20/2018)						
SRS 200	Always Connected: Societal	B+	1.00	1.00	3.30	
CHM 232	Organic Chem 2 W/Lab	B	1.00	1.00	3.00	



Who Writes the Committee Letter and How?

Prof. Weisse, Director-Health Professions Advising

Prof. Beaton, Asst. Director-Health Professions Advising

Prof. Michelle Osborn, Dean of Studies

Prof. Cohen, Biology

Prof. Gasparovic, Math

Prof. Kehlbeck, Chemistry

Prof. LaBrake, Physics

Prof. Shena McAuliffe, English (sabbatical replacement Prof. Stephanie Mueller, Spanish)

Matt Milless, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, Campus & Community Engagement

Health
Professions
Advisory
Committee
(HPAC)
Members

Committee Letter is Based Upon the Following 3 Sources:

- On-line portfolio outlining experiences and goals via personal statement (you provide this)
- Evaluation letters to be submitted to our office (you request these and evaluators provide them)
- Information from 2, 1-hour interviews to be conducted in the spring* (committee members provide this)



*if you plan to be abroad, let us know asap

Health Professions Advisory Committee Evaluation Grid

	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Novice	Unable to assess
Critical thinking					
Scientific inquiry					
Communication skills-written					
Communication skills-oral					
Teamwork and collaboration					
Reliability and dependability					
Resilience and adaptability					
Service orientation					
Empathy and compassion					
Familiarity with field/Clinical Background					

Overall Committee Rating

(these math/science GPA ranges are approximations)

Personal Qualities	Evaluation	Academic Abilities
	Exemplary	3.8+ bcpm
	Proficient	3.5-3.8 bcpm
	Developing	3.0-3.5 bcpm
	Novice	2.75-3.0 bcpm
	Unable to assess	<2.75 bcpm

Are You the Best You Can Be?



Committee Review is Only Done Once.

Requests for review will require completion of a self-assessment with questions like these:


Health Professions Advisory Committee Self-Assessment Tool

What Schools Look For	How I Have Demonstrated this Competency
Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others: cultivates personal and academic integrity	
Interpersonal Skills: adjusts behaviors appropriately and treats others with respect	
Oral Communication: listens, recognizes potential barriers	
Reliability and Dependability: Consistently fulfills obligations	

Program	GPA	BCPM	MCAT	Program Accepted	
MD/DO	3.94	3.89	521	MD	
MD/DO	3.96	3.96	519	DO	
MD	3.83	3.75	518	MD	
MD/PhD	3.91	3.87	518	MD/PhD	
MD/DO	3.74	3.55	518	MD/DO	reapplicant
MD/PhD	3.83	3.81	518	MD	reapplicant
MD	3.52	3.45	517	MD	reapplicant
MD	3.52	3.45	517		
MD/DO	3.89	3.87	517	MD	
MD/PhD	3.99	3.98	516	MD	
MD	3.47	3.27	514	MD	reapplicant
MD	3.63	3.56	514	MD	
MD	3.88	3.86	514	MD	
MD	3.98	3.96	513	MD	
MD	4.00	4.00	512	MD	reapplicant
MD	4.00	4.00	512		
MD	3.66	3.50	511	MD	
MD/DO	3.72	3.76	510	MD/DO	
MD/DO	3.47	3.27	510		
MD/DO	3.49	3.29	510	MD/DO	
MD/DO	3.87	3.80	509	DO	
MD/DO	3.98	3.97	509	DO	
MD/DO	3.9	3.86	508	MD	reapplicant
MD	2.71	2.63	508	MD	reapplicant
MD	2.70	2.61	508		reapplicant
MD	3.58	3.41	507	MD/DO	
MD/DO	3.98	3.95	506	MD	
MD/DO	3.63	3.56	506	DO	
MD/DO	3.83	3.85	505	DO	
MD	3.54	3.32	505	MD	
MD/DO	3.72	3.59	504	DO	
MD/DO	3.65	3.57	504	DO	
MD	3.79	3.61	503		
MD	3.79	3.61	503		reapplicant
MD/PhD	3.39	3.11	500	MD/PhD	
MD/DO	3.54	3.49	500	DO	
MD	3.61	3.33	500	MD	
MD	3.78	3.70	499	MD	
MD	3.14	3.44	497		reapplicant
MD	3.14	2.84	496	MD	reapplicant
MD	3.26	3.26	496		

Program	GPA	BCPM	DAT	Accepted Schools	Reapplicant
Dental	3.60	3.37	19	DENTAL	
Dental	3.59	3.17	21	DENTAL	
Dental	3.55	3.22	19	DENTAL	
Dental	3.52	3.54	23	DENTAL	
Dental	3.42	2.98	19		x

Acceptances by Program, GPAs, and Test Scores with Reapplicant Status

 = no acceptances

How to Calculate Your BCPM

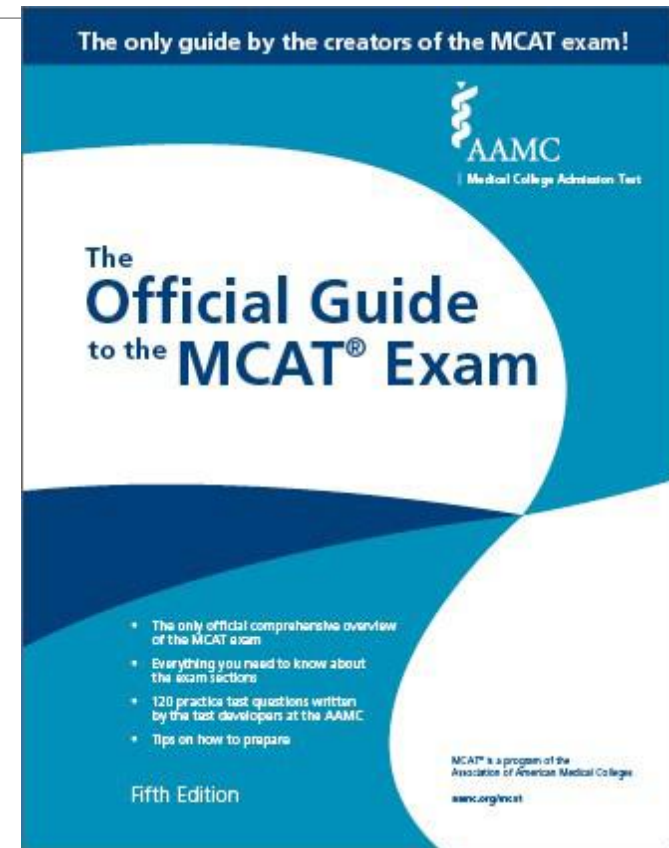
To calculate your math/science gpa (BCPM) and can use the [Course planning guide and gpa tracker](#) on our website

COURSE	Course Title	GRD	ATT	CPT	GRDPT	
CHM 232	Organic Chem 2 W/Lab	B	1.00	1.00	3.00	SCLB
FRN 201	Intermediate French 2	A	1.00	1.00	4.00	LCCF HUM
SOC 100	Intro to Sociology	A	1.00	1.00	4.00	SOCS
TERM						GPA 3.667
CUM	EARN 19.00 ATT 19.00	QP	61.20			GPA 3.221
Dean's List Awarded						
Fall Term 2020			(09/09/2020 - 11/24/2020)			
BIO 205	Topics in Molecular Biology	B	1.00	1.00	3.00	SET
PSC 160	Presidential Elections	A	1.00	1.00	4.00	SOCS
PSY 210	Neuroscience: Mind & Behavi	A	1.00	1.00	4.00	SET
TERM						GPA 3.667
CUM	EARN 22.00 ATT 22.00	QP	72.20			GPA 3.282
Winter Term 2021			(01/11/2021 - 03/24/2021)			
BIO 350	Evolutionary Biology	A-	1.00	1.00	3.70	SET SCLB
CHM 245	Environmental Chemistry	A-	1.00	1.00	3.70	SET
PSC 113	Intro to Political Thought	A	1.00	1.00	4.00	SOCS
TERM						GPA 3.800
CUM	EARN 25.00 ATT 25.00	QP	83.60			GPA 3.344
Spring Term 2021			(03/29/2021 - 06/10/2021)			
ANT 205	Men and Masculinity	A	1.00	1.00	4.00	LCC SOCS
BCH 335	Survey of Biochemistry	B	1.00	1.00	3.00	
REL 260	Zen Buddhism and Meditation	A	1.00	1.00	4.00	LCC
TERM						GPA 3.667
CUM	EARN 28.00 ATT 28.00	QP	94.60			GPA 3.379
Dean's List Awarded						
Fall Term 2021			(09/13/2021 - 11/23/2021)			
BIO 384	Genetics & Molecular Bio W/	A-	1.00	1.00	3.70	SCLB
EGL 100	Intro to Study of Lit: Poet	A-	1.00	1.00	3.70	HUL WAC HUM
PSC 235R	African-Amer Political Thou	B+	1.00	1.00	3.30	WAC SOCS
TERM						GPA 3.567
CUM	EARN 31.00 ATT 31.00	QP	105.30			GPA 3.397



MCAT

- Recommended resources by the makers of the test (AAMC)
- Additional resources are available at the library reference desk under “Weisse” (including Exam Crackers)
- Resources in our office for current students (UWorld)
- Practice, practice, practice



Financial Assistance for Test Preparation

The Health Professions Office has limited funding available to support **currently enrolled students** in need with their preparation for their professional school admission test.

Note: You must have completed the prerequisites for your professional program, be currently enrolled at Union, and be eligible for financial aid to request funding. Application form can be found here: https://union-college.formstack.com/forms/request_for_test_prep_support

If approved, funding can be used to:

- Purchase the Official MCAT Guide plus one full length online MCAT practice test for a total of \$65.00. **OR**
- Purchase DAT, OAT, or GRE test preparation items, and the Health Professions Office will reimburse up to \$65.00.

PLEASE REACH OUT TO THE OFFICE FOR ADDITIONAL MCAT RESOURCES

PREview Exam*

“...take the PREview as early as possible in the cycle, as we do not consider an application as "complete" and ready for review for interview consideration until the score has been released. Scores take about 4 weeks to release, and our office considers applications on a rolling basis.”

Schools Requiring PREview Scores

You may submit your application when you are ready, however, schools may not consider your application complete until they have received a PREview score.

- Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine
- Mercer University School of Medicine
- Saint Louis University School of Medicine
- Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine at the University of Utah
- Thomas F. Frist, Jr. College of Medicine at Belmont University
- University of California, Davis, School of Medicine
- University of California, Los Angeles David Geffen School of Medicine
- University of Hawaii, John A. Burns School of Medicine
- University of Massachusetts T.H. Chan School of Medicine

Some schools will require PREview while others will recommend applicants take the exam. Several schools are considering using PREview, so the list will likely change.

In addition to MCAT/grades...



Genuine, heartfelt, sustained service that includes interaction with patients.



Most applicants have 500+ direct patient care hours

Who Should Seek Committee Review this Year?

- Alumni/Seniors/Juniors with competitive grades and *significant* clinical outreach and service who hope to enroll in fall 2026.
- Sophomores eligible for early assurance programs.

If your math/science GPA < 3.0 or you have not had much patient contact or community service, please set up a meeting to discuss if a deferral of HPAC review makes sense.

What if You are Not Ready to Apply?



- Establish plans for addressing any areas for improvement. For example, if grades are low, consider additional coursework, graduate programs or post-bac programs found at www.aamc.org
- If lacking in clinical experience, consider seeking out clinical work during gap year(s)
- Consider other options (other health professions? Foreign schools?)

...doing a gap year has been a fantastic path to medical school, so far. With all of the travelling and expenses associated with applying, I would have struggled mightily had I attempted to do this during the school year... I didn't really think doing a gap year would be good for me, and neither did my parents. But, that was the way it went and it has been great. ~Union alum

What do Students do When They are Competitive but Have a Gap Year?

- Scribe, Clinical Research at medical centers or [NIH](#)
- Fellowships (Fulbright, Minerva, Watson)
- Service jobs (i.e. <https://www.projecthsf.org/>)





If You Are Ready To
Apply...

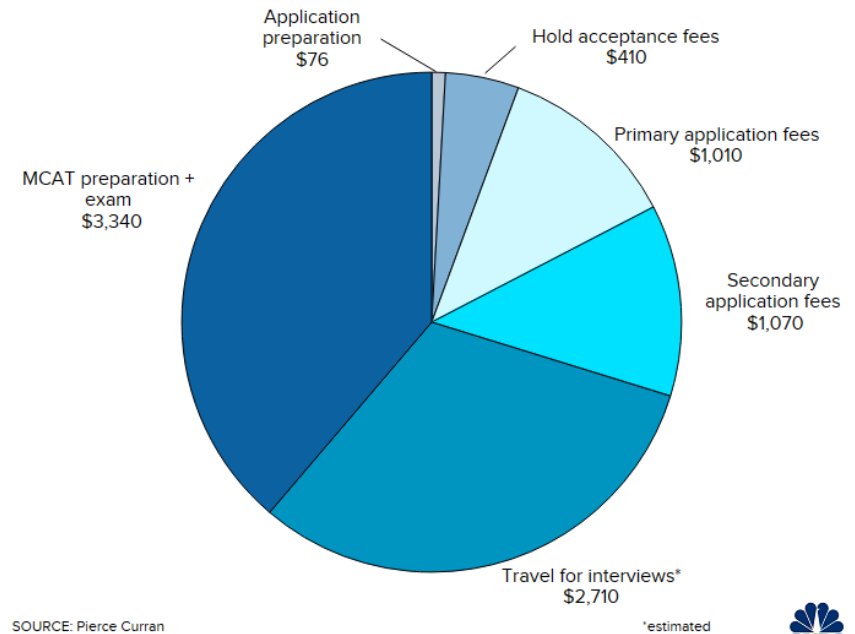
Estimated Average Cost of Applying (and attending) Medical School

According to the Education Data Initiative, average total cost to attend medical school in 2023 was \$230,296.00 (\$57,574/year)

[AAMC Fee Assistance Program](#)

[Health Professions Scholarship Programs \(Military\)](#)

The high cost applying to medical school



The costs of interviews, applications and more can exceed \$10,000 (US News 2020).

Suggested Timeline

Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPAC) Timeline

All of the following steps must be completed before the committee will write on your behalf and release a committee letter to your designated schools. Please pay attention to deadlines.

January

- Attend the informational meeting and submit your [Health Professions Advisory Committee Request for Review Form](#).
- Follow multi-step instructions provided via e-mail from health_pro@union.edu to activate and then begin HPAC online portfolio.
- Complete one [Health Professions Advisory Committee Individual Evaluation Letter Request Form](#) for each evaluation letter to be submitted on your behalf.

February

- Complete HPAC on-line portfolio.
- Evaluation letters are due by **NOON** on the **FIRST MONDAY of March**. You will receive a confirmation email as each letter is submitted to our office.

March

- Submit the completed HPAC on-line portfolio by **NOON on the FIRST MONDAY of MARCH**.
- Sign up for both HPAC interviews following deadlines/instructions provided via e-mail from health_pro@union.edu.

April/May

- Complete both HPAC interviews and take necessary admissions tests (i.e. MCAT, DAT, OAT etc...).

May

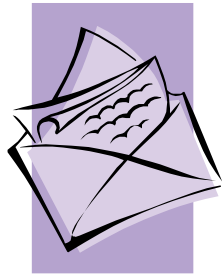
- Attend the informational meeting on the application process. Begin application (i.e. AMCAS, AACOMAS, AADSAS etc...) and make final decision on application after reviewing test scores. Put in transcript requests with registrar's office.

June

- Use health_pro@union.edu for all inquiries to our office and when providing our office with a PDF version of your submitted application. **Note:** AMCAS applicants must also email a PDF of the letter request form along with the submitted application.

July

- Submit all secondary applications.



Evaluation Letters

- For each evaluator who will be writing on your behalf, complete a [Health Professions Advisory Committee Individual Evaluation Letter Request Form](#)
- Individual letter waivers and the Waiver selection made in the Request for Review form must match.
- Only ask people who know you well and whom you think can speak to your suitability for a career in medicine (you may want to consider providing evaluators with relevant information). **Please do not ask us for guidance on whom you should pick.**
- **Evaluation letters are due no later than noon the first Monday of March.** You will receive a confirmation email as each letter is submitted to our office.
- Four total reference letters, including 2 letters from science professors and 2 additional letters, preferably one from a professor from a non-science course or term abroad and one from a supervisor from a substantial activity (i.e. manager/supervisor from a place of employment or volunteer activity, a research lab supervisor etc..). **Note: Evaluators cannot be a member of the HPAC committee.**

NOTE: Evaluation letters and the committee letter can only be sent to professional schools, not other programs (i.e. research, grad school, scholarships, post-bac programs etc.).

Health Professions Advisory Committee Members

Prof. Weisse, Director-Health Professions Advising

Prof. Beaton, Asst. Director-Health Professions Advising

Prof. Michelle Osborn, Dean of Studies

Prof. Cohen, Biology

Prof. Gasparovic, Math

Prof. Kehlbeck, Chemistry

Prof. LaBrake, Physics

Prof. Shena McAuliffe, English (sabbatical replacement Prof. Stephanie Mueller, Spanish)

Matt Milless, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, Campus & Community
Engagement

You may not request letters from these committee members; however, they will provide input during meetings if they know you.

How Do I Initiate Review?

(2 STEP PROCESS)

HPAC Portfolio Only available for limited time

1. Complete the Health Professions Request for Committee Review
2. Within 3-4 business days, you should receive an e-mail from health_pro@union.edu with instructions on how to create an account and general instructions about the application.

Check Spam



Create HP Application

Preview Save

- Personal Information *
- Standardized Tests ⓘ
- GPA
- Work / Activities ⓘ
- Essay
- Acknowledgments

The application has the six sections shown above. Always select the “Save” button in the upper right corner when working in the application.



Create HP Application

Preview

Save



^ Personal Information *

First Name *

Middle Name

Last Name *

Red asterisks denote the two fields required to Save an application to work on it in the future.

Always select the **“Save”** button in the upper right corner when working in the application.

Work / Activities ?

Enter Work / Activities

Experience

Experience Name ?

Experience Type ?

Dates

Dates (value 1) ?

Start date ?

End date

Clicking on a Collapse question mark will provide instructions specific to the field.

Fields with small blue triangles must be completed in order to submit the application.

Always select the **Save** button in the upper right corner when working in the application.

Tips When Completing Online Application



-
- Carefully read/follow instructions
 - Alumni should use permanent, non-Union email (i.e. gmail)
 - Save your information in a separate Text Pad or Word Pad document while you work. Be sure to create a PDF of the final product for your records.
 - Don't wait until the last minute to work on the application.

Institutional Action

An institutional action at Union College includes sanctions for Honor Code violations issued after either hearings or Chair-Dean Reviews as well as policy violation, including a violation of the code of student conduct or Title IX.



Institutional Action



You will be asked to truthfully answer the two questions below in the Personal Information section of the application.

1. Have you ever been the recipient of sanctions as the result of an Honor Code violation? [Explanation of Honor Code Sanctions](#)

(Note: If you are unsure, please contact the Dean of Studies)

If yes, please provide information on the violation and sanction(s) received:

2. Have you ever been the recipient of sanctions as the result of a policy violation, including a violation of the code of student conduct or Title IX? (Note: If you are unsure, please contact the Director of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution)

If yes, please provide information on the violation and sanction(s) received:



Create HP Application

Preview

Save



^ Acknowledgments

I affirm that this application has been completed in compliance with the Union College Honor Code. ▲ ?

I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to verify all of my institutional actions with the Dean of Students & Dean of Studies. ▲



Type here to search



Mix... ^ ☁️ 🔌 🔊

3:00 PM
1/23/2023



A Memorable and Well-Written Essay Takes Time and Reflection...



It should be clear to anyone who reads your essay :

- Why you are pursuing the path you have chosen
- How you have prepared for it
- What you hope to contribute to the profession/your patients/your community

A Memorable and Well-Written Essay Takes Time and Reflection...



- Pull together the highlights of your accomplishments/experiences relevant to medicine over the last 3-4 years before drafting your “story”
- Make appointments with both Becker and the Writing Center before submitting to HPAC. To book a conference and for instructions on how to access a video conference, please visit <https://union.mywconline.com/>
- Keep in mind that it is not really a “personal” statement where you broadcast your thoughts or philosophical position distinct from experiences

Preparing Professional School Essay-10 Tips

1. Before you begin, consider doing a **40 second self-survey** and asking: *What are my top 5 strengths? What are my top opportunities for improvement? What has been my biggest demonstration of growth?*

2. Be sure that your essay discusses **specific experiences with details**. Do some “pre-writing” to come up with 5-7 stories about each activity in addition to why you engaged in the activity.

3. Keep in mind that the essay needs to be compelling and convey the following:
1. What motivated you to pursue medicine? 2. How are you prepared to enter the medical field? 3. What skills do you have to contribute to your patients, your colleagues, and your community?

4. **Chronological story is not always best**-Open with the image you want the committee to see. It may be that the arm you broke when you were 7 opened your eyes to medicine as a career, but admissions representatives first impression of you will be as a child.

5. While stories about inspirational parents and grandparents may indeed have shaped who you are, **the reader ultimately wants to know about you.**

Preparing Professional School Essay-10 Tips (cont.)

6. **Show, don't tell.** For example, instead of stating you are dedicated or compassionate, weave into your essay stories for which the only conclusion that can be made is that you possess these traits.

7. **Use (without defining) medical terms acquired through your experiences** so that admissions committee representatives can easily imagine you as a dentist or doctor or optometrist because of your advanced vocabulary.

8. **Temper the desire to share philosophical views about the healthcare system**, especially given how little experience you are likely to have had with it.

9. **Think twice before naming doctors or researchers** with whom you have worked unless there is a compelling reason to do so. Always ask yourself-is this detail really relevant to the narrative?

10. **Try and capture the context of your experiences** including setting (small rural community hospital? an inner city clinic? an urgent care office in a suburb? a tertiary care trauma 1 center?) and patient population (Pediatric, adolescents, or seniors? Primary care or specialty? Acute/ urgent care? Hospice?) As in any good story, you always want to set the stage with interesting details.

Next Meeting will be in May

- Discuss how to complete applications (ACOMAS, AMCAS, AADSAS etc...)
- Discuss how to establish a list of schools to which to apply
- Review procedures for ensuring that your committee letter gets sent to schools
- Hear from successful applicants from the previous year

AMCAS Application Cycle Dates

- The AMCAS application opens May 1 with submissions beginning at the end of the month.

Final Questions?

