

# Medical School Application Self-Assessment

This document should be used as a general guide to assist applicants in the self-assessment of the quality of their medical school application. The University of New Mexico School of Medicine (UNM SOM) uses the selection factors listed in this document to evaluate applicants for admission to medical school based on the ultimate goal of helping to alleviate the health care crisis in New Mexico.

## Residency

As a public, state-funded institution, the UNM School of Medicine strives to improve the health care in the state of New Mexico. Thus, the Committee on Admissions evaluates carefully the length and strength of the ties each applicant has to the state.

For admissions purposes, those that have physically resided in New Mexico for at least 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the submission of their application will be considered residents.

### Self-Assessment:

UNM SOM requires that all applicants to the regular admissions process satisfy one or more of the following residency criteria in order to be eligible for admissions consideration:

- A resident of the State of New Mexico at the time of application
- A graduate of a New Mexico high school in which the applicant has attended at least one year
- A financial dependent of a resident of the State of New Mexico
- A member of a U.S. federally recognized American Indian or Alaska Native Tribe or Village
- An active member of the military that is stationed in New Mexico
- A resident from a WICHE state (UNM SOM participates with Wyoming and Montana only)

Preference is given to applicants that have maintained a long-term presence within the state. Previous residents of New Mexico who have graduated from a New Mexico high school but have been out of the state for the specific purpose of educational enrichment at an accredited institution or active military service will be considered as New Mexico residents for application purposes. Applicants who remain outside the state for extended periods of time for purposes other than those stated above may lose their residency status, resulting in pre-rejection. WICHE applicants must apply through the Early Decision Program (EDP).

## The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)

The Committee on Admissions uses the MCAT score as an indicator of whether an applicant can learn a large body of technical information and successfully apply that information under the stress of an examination. While the Committee recognizes that there is a limit to the predictive power of the MCAT in assessing the quality of a future physician's practice, the score on this exam has been

shown to be a strong predictor of whether an applicant will be able to successfully pass the national licensure board exams required to become certified to practice.

Currently, the Committee on Admissions looks at the best composite MCAT score on a single test taken within the last four years. Scores from MCATs taken more than four years ago from today's date will not be considered. The MCAT score counts for approximately 25% of the final applicant score.

Although the minimum composite MCAT score to be considered for admission is 494, applicants are strongly encouraged to consider retaking the exam if their score is less than 503. The Entering Class of 2022 averaged a score of 505 on the MCAT.

### Preparing for the MCAT

It is recommended that applicants with difficulty performing well on standardized exams consider taking an MCAT preparation course. Applicants are also encouraged to complete all prerequisite undergraduate courses before taking the MCAT or participating in a preparatory program. It is important to remember that MCAT review courses are not a substitute for the prerequisites; MCAT preparatory courses are specifically geared towards a concentrated review of material and test-taking strategies. It is also important that applicants take the MCAT soon after completing the preparatory course. Those who delay taking the exam often score lower than those who take the MCAT immediately after completing the preparatory course.

### Finishing the Test

For those that have trouble finishing the MCAT within the allotted time, it is recommended that applicants check their reading and comprehension speed. Generally, in order to complete the exam, it is recommended that applicants be able to read and comprehend at least 300 words per minute. To increase reading speed, one should consider taking a speed reading course or purchasing a book on the topic from a local bookstore.

### Self-Assessment:

Best MCAT Performance

| MCAT <sup>2015</sup> Section                        | Scores from Best Single Exam |
|---|------------------------------|
| CPBS  |                              |
| BBLS  |                              |
| PSBB  |                              |
| CARS  |                              |
| <b>Total Score</b>                                  |                              |
| 2022 Matriculant Student<br><b>Avg. Total Score</b> | 505                          |

Personal Recommendations:

## Grade Point Average (GPA) and Academic Preparation

The Committee on Admissions uses undergraduate and post-graduate overall GPAs and grades in specific prerequisite courses to assess the academic preparation of the applicant for medical school curriculum. Students must obtain a C or better in all prerequisite courses (equivalent to 2.0 grade points); the grade of C- is unacceptable.

The study and practice of medicine is based on modern concepts in biology, chemistry, and physics, and on an appreciation of the scientific method. Hence, mastery of these basic scientific principles is expected of all entering medical students. Additionally, the **social sciences** provide the applicant with a view of how society works and a context for dealing with behavior and population health issues. The **humanities** provide insight into human expression and offer examples of effective communication between individuals as well as societies. Thus, the Committee on Admissions looks for a well-rounded academic performance in the natural and social sciences and the humanities.

Academic performance is also an indicator of how well applicants balance their time for study with other aspects of their life that are of competing importance.

The minimum cumulative GPA required to gain admissions consideration at UNM SOM is a 3.0. The Entering Class 2022 an average GPA of 3.72.

Through the GPA weighting process, freshman and sophomore year grades count for less than the grades from junior year and beyond. First-year grades are weighted 1X, second-year grades are weighted 2X, and grades from all subsequent years, including post-graduate and graduate school, are weighted 3X.

### Improving Your Academic Profile

#### UNM SOM Recommendations:

Those with GPAs significantly lower than a 3.6 should consider taking some courses in upper division biology, chemistry, and/or biochemistry in order to improve their academic profile. The following courses are examples of such classes offered at The University of New Mexico. Comparable courses may be found at other universities or colleges.

| UNM Recommended Course Listings   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>BIOLOGY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 303L Ecology and Evolution</li> <li>• 304L Plant/Animal Form and Function</li> <li>• 2210/2210L &amp; 2225/2225L Anatomy &amp; Physiology I/II</li> <li>• 351/352L Microbiology</li> <li>• 412 Developmental Biology</li> <li>• 416L Histology</li> <li>• 425 Molecular Genetics</li> <li>• 429 Molecular Cell Biology</li> <li>• 450 Virology</li> <li>• 456 Immunology</li> </ul> | <b>BIOCHEMISTRY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 445/446 Intensive Biochemistry</li> <li>• 463/464 Biochemistry of Disease</li> </ul> <b>BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 507 Advanced Molecular Biology</li> <li>• 508 Advanced Cell Biology</li> <li>• 509 Principles of Neurobiology</li> <li>• 510 Physiology</li> </ul> <b>CHEMISTRY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 421 Biological Chemistry</li> <li>• 425 Organic Chemistry of Biological Pathways</li> </ul> |

#### Self-Assessment:

|                          |                       |        |        |          |          |           |           |         |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Prerequisite Performance | Cumulative GPA: _____ |        |        |          |          |           |           |         |
| <b>Course</b>            |                       |        |        |          |          |           |           |         |
| Biol 1                   | Biol 2                | Chem 1 | Chem 2 | O-Chem 1 | O-Chem 2 | Physics 1 | Physics 2 | Biochem |
| <b>Grade</b>             |                       |        |        |          |          |           |           |         |

Personal Recommendations:

## Clinical Experience

The Committee on Admissions evaluates the applicant's exposure to medicine in health care settings in order to determine if the applicant understands the challenges and complexities of medical practice and is comfortable being around patients with health problems and illnesses.

Direct patient contact is the key to a quality clinical experience. Being a physician requires a strong commitment to patients that brings with it enormous self-sacrifice, often requiring a great deal of time away from family and friends. Without direct patient care exposure in the health care setting, many applicants fail to understand and appreciate these challenges and they are more likely to discontinue their medical training or become dissatisfied with their careers.

In addition, clinical experiences provide the applicant with an understanding of the challenges of dealing with patients who are often experiencing the most stressful time in their lives, and/or may not always be compliant with their physician's recommendations. The applicant is able to determine if s/he has the capacity to deal with patients in an empathetic manner under these difficult conditions.

Most importantly, the Committee on Admissions interviewers will require applicants to discuss and describe physician and patient-related encounters. The Committee will evaluate these experiences based on the length of time invested, depth of the experience, and lessons learned.

### **Self-Assessment:**

Reflection of Clinical Experiences:

Personal Recommendations:

## Community Service Experience

The Committee on Admissions uses the applicant's record of volunteerism as an indicator of the applicant's commitment to the community and to society.

A good physician recognizes the role that local, national and world communities play in the health of the individual as well as the health of the public. The applicant's previous experience in the community provides perspectives on these important interrelationships. The Committee on Admissions takes into account the fact that many applicants must work to support their education, and that volunteer time may be limited. However, holidays and weekends are good opportunities to volunteer despite a busy work and/or school schedule.

### **Self-Assessment:**

Reflection of Community Service Experiences:

Personal Recommendations:

## Health Care Issues

The State of New Mexico is home to many unique health care issues and currently faces a health care crisis due to the fact that much of the state is rural and medically underserved. The ultimate goal of UNM SOM is to train medical professionals that can help to address and alleviate this problem. Therefore, it is vital that applicants have a thorough understanding of the health care issues that face New Mexico. It is also important to be aware of the health care issues that face our nation and the world.

During the interview, applicants will be engaged in discussions on state, national and/or international health care issues. Applicants are strongly encouraged to learn about these issues by reading local and national newspapers, national news magazines, and websites. The following websites may be useful in gaining insight into such issues.

| Local  | National   | International  |
|--|--|--|
| <a href="http://www.health.state.nm.us">www.health.state.nm.us</a><br><a href="http://www.abqjournal.com">www.abqjournal.com</a> | <a href="http://www.nytimes.com">www.nytimes.com</a><br><a href="http://www.cnn.com">www.cnn.com</a> | <a href="http://www.cdc.gov">www.cdc.gov</a><br><a href="http://www.who.int/en">www.who.int/en</a> |

### Self-Assessment:

Reflection of Health Care Issues:

Personal Recommendations:

## Communication Skills

The Committee on Admissions uses the statements on the medical school AMCAS and secondary applications and the answers to questions during the admissions interviews to determine the quality of an applicant's communication skills.

The physician plays a critical role in teaching patients how to make good decisions about their physical and behavioral health. In addition, the practice of medicine requires that a physician function as a member, and more often the leader, of a team of health professionals that must work together closely and effectively. A physician must be able to speak clearly, effectively, and succinctly with a patient, and must be able to listen effectively and ask good questions.

It is important to be able to maintain the correct balance of speaking and listening so that information is transmitted in an accurate and efficient manner. The physician is also required to keep accurate and precise records of patient encounters that will be used by different components of the health care system. A physician's writing must have a proper balance of information content, succinctness and clarity.

The medical school interview usually includes a discussion of the applicant's motivation for becoming a physician, academic and clinical experiences, and health care issues. Furthermore, the interviewer may pose specific questions or problems in order to examine the applicant's problem-solving abilities. Interviewers are particularly sensitive to applicants who are too verbose, fail to answer the questions directly, or who dominate the conversation without asking any questions.

### Making a Positive Impression

#### UNM SOM Recommendations:

The Committee on Admissions encourages students to practice their interview skills with their colleagues and teachers. Applicants should pay attention to body language and refrain from nervous habits. Many applicants with outstanding academic credentials and a wealth of clinical and volunteer activities fail to gain entrance to the School of Medicine due to poor interview and communication skills. It is important to keep in mind that each interview should be approached as if it were the first interview. Some applicants who have applied multiple times may feel frustrated, and may express this frustration in the form of anger or resentment in the interview - this behavior does not demonstrate the patience and strength of character required to be a good physician.

#### Self-Assessment:

Personal Recommendations:

## Disclaimer

**Be it understood that this self-assessment form is provided as a tool to assist the applicant in the self-evaluation of the quality of his/her application to The University of New Mexico School of Medicine and that fulfillment of any and all of the above factors does not guarantee admission. Each year the applicant pool contains a large number of highly qualified applicants and there are many more qualified applicants than positions available. Applicants are ranked with respect to each other according to their individual qualities as well as on the experiences and diversity that they will contribute to the entering class.**