



UNIVERSITY
of DALLAS

OFFICE OF
PERSONAL CAREER
DEVELOPMENT

Ultimate Medical School Application Guide

*Recommendations From the Perspective of a UD Student
Who Got Accepted into Their Top Choice!*

Compiled by Alecia Paul, Class of '25

Guide Overview

This Guide was thoughtfully assembled by a UD student while in the throes of applying and interviewing for medical school, and was ultimately successful in being accepted into the school of her choice. The contents are certainly presented objectively, but also very much from an individual student's voice based on their particular experiences. Please keep in mind that a guaranteed formula doesn't necessarily exist for medical school admission, but that there are a number of complex and evolving factors that are considered by admissions committees that vary from school to school. Therefore, let this guide serve as a recounting of one student's journey through the process, and what they believed to be true and effective for them. This Guide can also be useful as a companion piece to other available resources, including the [OPCD website](#), UD faculty experts, and other sources from the web such as the officially-published Application Guides provided by the specific application services (e.g., [AMCAS](#), [TMDSAS](#)).

Also, keep in mind that applying for medical school is not a one-shot opportunity, nor is it expected that you must enter directly following completion of your undergraduate degree. In fact, many medical schools prefer some interim "life experiences" such as work, research, volunteering, and other endeavors that allow you to build more depth and dimension that add to your previous academic and work records. Maturity and character count, as do your preparedness to handle the rigors of medical school, and the many challenges and sacrifices that will require your highest level of resiliency and perseverance. Many students plan to take a "Gap Year" (also called an "Enrichment Year"), sometimes several, so that they can be fully ready for the experience. Even the most motivated and academically-gifted students get accepted only after multiple tries—so don't let any setbacks discourage you!

For additional guidance, including one-on-one application advising, please contact the OPCD office to schedule an appointment.

General Information

1. Terms

a. Primary application

- i. Similar to the Common App/Apply TX for undergrad colleges
- ii. 3 primary application systems:
 1. Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS) - Only Texas medical schools
 - a. See link to see the schools that are in [TMDSAS](#)
 2. American Medical College Application Service ([AMCAS](#))
 3. American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS)
 - a. some DO schools. See the link for schools in [AACOMAS](#)

b. Secondary application

- i. School-specific essay questions

- ii. Usually emailed to applicants ONLY after submitting the primary application

Pro Tip: For Optional/Secondary essays, it is advisable to take full advantage of writing these to supplement other aspects of your application or highlight additional areas of strength that may not be addressed elsewhere. Make sure you fully understand the purpose of the essay prompts, tailor your response specifically, and don't repeat any concepts or themes that you have already touched on.

2. Application Process Overview

- a. The primary application puts you in line to get the secondary application via email.
- b. The secondary application puts you in line for an interview.
- c. The interview sets you up for acceptance.
- d. Even though the primary application deadline is in November, it is best to NOT wait for the deadline!
 - i. Why? Because it's a rolling application cycle
 - ii. A LOT of schools start interviewing in August and end around December.
 - iii. People who submit their primary by June AND secondary by July/August tend to hear back sooner
 - iv. If you submit early, it helps you.

3. Personal Statements

- a. The personal statement, volunteer activities, and secondary essays are like a movie. What is the story you are offering?
- b. When writing, it should be truly about me! Don't change myself.
- c. Ask someone who *really* knows you to read over it (like your mom/best friend). Ask them to question whether it is really "me?"
- d. Are you able to "plain speak" it in an interview, and can you back up what you write with authenticity and conviction?

Pro Tip: Speak in a perspective that refers to your experiences in the first and third person voice, and avoid addressing the audience directly—this is not a letter, so leave out salutations and thanking them for their time, etc. In effect, it should address similar themes that you would in an actual cover letter, such as a compelling backstory about what drives your passion about medicine, healing, human physiology, and meld specific qualities and values that you have developed into who this translates into success as a student doctor, and eventually a practicing physician.

Suggested Application Timeline

- 4. February of junior year/year before applying

- a. Research schools
- b. Look through [MSAR](#)
 - i. Comprehensive guide you can buy for 2 years- \$36
 - ii. Contains schools on the AMCAS and TMDSAS application systems
- c. Explore 15-25 schools you are interested in applying to
 - i. Median [MCAT](#)/GPA is an important consideration
 - ii. If your MCAT score is below their median, it is probably best to choose another school OR retest the MCAT for a higher score
 - iii. Most schools will not even open your application if your GPA/MCAT are around their median
 - iv. Keeping an Excel document is helpful!
- d. Consider state vs private schools
 - i. State schools have more money and resources (generally, but not always)
 - ii. However, private doesn't discredit out-of-state applicants as much as in-state
 - iii. Out of state vs in-state:
 - 1. Texas medical schools are required by state law to provide 90% of seats for in-state residents. If you are not a Texas resident and applying to a Texas school, know that you are working for 10% of those seats.

Pro Tip: If you are a non-state resident of the school to which you are applying but have an overall strong application, you will still be up for consideration. Some good selling points as you are making your case are: 1) What does that school uniquely provide that you want to experience vs. other schools, 2) What unique perspectives and experiences can you bring to the institution that it may be lacking, 3) How will you be a standout leader in the program that will bring notoriety to the institution, and 4) Would you consider staying to complete residency and practice medicine in that state/region/city and contribute to the local medical community for the long run.

5. March-April

- a. Draft **personal statement**
 - i. Focus on my motivation for MEDICAL SCHOOL
 - ii. Answer: How did I want to be a doctor and am I ready for it?
 - 1. It is a process not a one moment thing
 - iii. Start drafting personal statement and finish it BEFORE April 15th
 - iv. See UD writing lab if experience writer's block or OPCD if just need someone to brainstorm with
 - v. On top of the MCAT and grades, the personal statement is one of the first things admissions committees turn to because that's your story
 - vi. Spend significant time (ideally > 1 month) and keep rewriting

- vii. Your first draft will not be your final draft so just get your ideas flowing
- viii. [User friendly guide with more tips/examples of personal statements](#)

b. Application websites (TMDAS, AMCAS)

- i. Familiarize yourself with application, length, and questions
 - 1. [AMCAS Detailed Guide](#)
 - 2. [AMCAS User Friendly Guide](#)
 - 3. [TMDSAS Detailed Guide](#)
 - 4. [TMDSAS User Friendly Guide](#)
- ii. You want to have no big surprises!
 - 1. For example, the AMCAS: limits up to 15 explanations on work and activities section; just 500 characters
 - 2. Vs. TMDSAS: unlimited amount of experiences
 - 3. Also, manually adding in ALL your classes since freshman year takes time
- iii. You will need to budget time for each portion of the application, so get a mental map of the entries

6. Early May

- a. Week after finals: start getting people to edit your personal statement
 - i. Career development is open during the summer
 - ii. Complete draft by the 3rd week of May
- b. Ask **letter of recommendation** from UD professors AND medical doctors
 - i. Ideal letter count:
 - 1. 1 medical doctor you shadowed with
 - 2. 1-2 science professors you are close with
 - 3. Research PI (if applicable)
 - 4. Asking them to have the letters in by the end of June is ideal. Check AMCAS/TMDSAS websites for hard deadlines.
 - ii. Other volunteer coordinators/non-science professors could attest to your character if you are close to them. But if you are pushing it, it's best to stick with the ideal count
 - iii. Note: doing the HPAC (Committee Letter) might be easier because all letter of rec writers email Dr. Stenesen, who then compiles and uploads all the letters
 - iv. OR you can have the letter writers individually upload their letters directly into the application system.

Pro Tip: Your letter-writers should know your academic/clinical abilities as well as your work ethic and value system first-hand so that you can avoid generic-sounding letters of recommendation, or those that imply that the author wrote it indiscriminately because “I like this person and am being nice because they asked.” Generic letters that lack first-hand accounts and examples of your performance are virtually meaningless. Consider conducting an interview, questionnaire, or brainstorming session with your letter writers to ensure that they truly capture your essence and can provide specific, relatable examples of your strengths. Keep in mind, too, that you generally waive your right to view the letter, so you won’t see the finished product when uploaded into your application.

7. Middle of May

- a. First week: Submit primary!
 - i. Though the application is due in October, it is a rolling deadline
 - ii. Most of the interview spots are filled by mid-July and September
- b. Request **official transcript** from [Office of Registrar](#)/any other community colleges you attended
 - i. Note: TMDSAS does not want your transcripts unless they request it
- c. For the work and activities section, this [document from the AAMC](#) can be used
 - i. It is recommended to go through each of your shadowing, volunteering, clinical, and research experiences and ask what Core Competencies were met with this experience.
 - ii. The goal is to meet all the Core Competencies across your application (personal statement, meaningful experiences, and secondary applications)
 - iii. Medical school committees look at the applicant through the lens of Core Competencies.
 - iv. Core Competencies are also known as Premed Competencies per the AAMC, and can be found here:
<https://students-residents.aamc.org/real-stories-demonstrating-premed-competencies/premed-competencies-entering-medical-students>

8. June: verification process

- a. Can take a break
- b. Get an excel to organize favorite things for each school and start mentally prepping for secondaries
 - i. Usually **secondary application prompts** are on school websites

9. Secondary applications (July-August)

- a. Unique to each school → a LOT of writing (see Secondary Essay tips above)
- b. Submit by August
- c. Sooner rather than later is better because these are on a first come, first serve basis

- d. Not a comprehensive website where you can submit all
- e. There is an additional fee!
- f. Don't start with your favorite school's essay first: The first essay may not be as strong, and could improve in quality with practice
- g. Ideally, consider applying to schools that are lower in priority first. Then, after "getting the hang of it," apply to schools that are higher on your preference list.

10. Waitlist/interview

- a. From October-February

11. Interview Prep

- a. Scheduling a mock interview with an [OCPD Advisor](#) is a great strategy to conquer your interview.
- b. This team offers great advice and will even do a mock interview for you!
- c. Please see OCPD MMI prep and other Interview resources online:
 - <https://udallas.edu/life-at-ud/student-support-resources/personal-career-development/graduate-school/professionalschool.php>
 - <https://udallas.edu/life-at-ud/student-support-resources/personal-career-development/student-resources/interview-preparation.php>

Pro Tip: Multiple Mini Interviews (MMI) are growing as a popular interviewing format in US Medical Schools, and new schools are added each year (<https://bemoacademicconsulting.com/blog/medical-schools-that-use-mmi>). These are much different than "traditional" interviews and therefore require a different approach to prepare for success. Generally, medical school interviews along won't "make or break" a candidate; however, it can move a marginal candidate up the ranking list if these are performed well and a strong candidate down in ranking if poorly done. Don't let poor interview preparation be the reason why you don't get accepted!

References/Resources

- <https://www.shemmashianconsulting.com/blog/medical-school-application-timeline>
- <https://www.accepted.com/medical>
- <https://www.studentdoctor.net/profession/medical/>