New College of Florida

Pre-Med Handbook

2012-2013

A publication of the Center for Career Education

New College of Florida Pre-Med Handbook

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USING THE HANDBOOK

Through the years students have helped develop the handbook, providing insight and corrections and making recommendations to include certain new materials.

A common remark is that the handbook is "too dense" and should be more compact and readable. Thus the 2012 – 2013 guide has been edited to some degree, to correct the imbalance. Still it must be said that applying to medical school is a long and seldom easy process. It is a detail oriented, time consuming, complex process, and shall we say, dense? Thus, we hope you will be grateful for the opportunity to test your persistence (a trait highly esteemed by medical schools) as you wind your way through the Premedical Handbook. It is an overview of the process from the New College perspective.

The companion to the guide is the indispensable *Medical School Admission Requirements* (MSAR) guide published by the American Medical College Application Service (www.amcas.org). The MSAR provides admissions requirements of all medical schools, along with timelines and a concise overview of the admissions process. An online version is available for a small fee; a hard copy reference is available in the Career Center, HCL-4.

Getting started

- Review the med school application timetable to keep on track through the (sometimes) hectic application process.
- Use the self-evaluation of progress chart at the end of the guide to evaluate your preparation.

Here is the basic overview of the expectations and the steps to consider in support of medical school admissions:

- Immerse yourself in the culture of medicine through health-related field experiences. Examples might include working with the indigent; volunteering in social-services settings; working at hospice (death and dying); "shadowing" physicians; volunteering at a local health clinic, or any other opportunity to demonstrate commitment to service and/or research. Volunteering doesn't necessarily have to take place in a medical clinic – all volunteer experiences working with people – especially people in need – are ones that demonstrate commitment to service. Colleges of medicine take great interest in a commitment to service that follows similar strands and themes, and experiences that demonstrate *sustained* interest over a period of a few years or ISPs. They're looking for depth of interest and the staying power that's demonstrated by ongoing research or volunteer work within a defined and focused field (versus "trying on" many experiences.) Persistence!
- Examine with sharp focus your motivations for becoming a doctor. The answers you develop will help sustain you through the difficult parts of preparation. Your insights will inform the required medical school admissions essay and provide a framework for your responses during the medical school admission interview.
- Work on becoming a well-rounded person.

- Take a single semester filled with demanding courses. Successful completion of such a semester will demonstrate that you have the mettle to succeed while taking a demanding course load – foreshadowing your ability to handle the extremely demanding workload of medical school.
- Prepare for the required, standardized admissions test, the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). If you're seeking admission in the fall that follows New College graduation, take the test at the end of your third year.

SECTION I: Medical school requirements

A thorough *mastery* of modern concepts in biology, chemistry, and physics is required. *Table I* equates standard entry requirements to New College course offerings.

TABLE I **BASIC PREMEDICAL ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**	
General Requirement	**New College Equivalent**
Biology Introductory Biology or Zoology with laboratory, two semesters	Biology General Biology I General Biology II
Chemistry General Chemistry with laboratory, two semesters Organic Chemistry with laboratory, two semesters	Chemistry General Chemistry I and II, General Chemistry Lab Organic Chemistry I & Inquiry Lab; Organic Chemistry II & Organic Chemistry Lab
Physics Two semesters with laboratory	Physics Physics I & II with Laboratories
English Two semesters	English Two English or American literature courses; Senior Thesis provides a foundation for English competency.
Mathematics Varies by school	Mathematics Calculus I, II

Medical schools that do not explicitly require mathematics assume you will take college mathematics. Plan to take math at least through to calculus. And note that there are 15 schools that require humanities and biochemistry. (See the MSAR.)

Selecting an Area of Concentration (AOC)

The majority of pre-med students that matriculate to medical school have majored in a natural sciences discipline. In the past decade, about three-fifths of applicants reported their undergraduate majors were biological sciences. Medical schools welcome other areas of concentration, as well. Admissions committees are interested in candidates with intellectual curiosity and academic efforts that are both persistent and disciplined. Choose an area of concentration of deep interest, one that motivates you to excel. It should enrich you in ways that will contribute to your medical interests. The utility of a natural sciences discipline or divisional major is obvious. Less obviously, other disciplines can serve medical interests, too. For example, a languages major would involve mastery of vocabulary and grammatical structure

analogous to mastering the vast anatomical and chemical data required of medical students. It would give you the potential of serving non-English-speaking clients and of acquiring research and clinical information available only in other languages. With an increasing interest in culturally relevant medical care, language and humanities backgrounds are increasingly important. An art history major deepens observational tools and ability to think spatially, skills that enhance medical research and practice. Sociology and anthropology majors explore the physical health of populations, patterns of response to medical treatment, and the culture of medicine itself. One New College M.D. framed the "question" of choosing an AOC this way: "I tell people that first they need to be interesting people before they can be good doctors."

Meeting requirements of specific schools

The Association of American Medical Colleges publishes the Medical School Admissions Requirements guide book, otherwise known as the MSAR™. **Consult the current MSAR for school-specific requirements. Always consider applying to the schools in your state of residence.** Most schools are state-subsidized and enroll in-state students almost exclusively. For perspective, *Table II* gives a numerical distribution of the *most common* entry requirements. Data are for 2012 – 2013 admissions requirements of accredited U.S. and Canada medical schools. (N = 151)

***TABLE II* SUBJECTS REQUIRED BY TEN OR MORE U.S. MEDICAL SCHOOLS**

Required Subject	Number of Schools Requiring (N=151)
Physics	122
Chemistry — Inorganic (General)	122
Chemistry — Organic	124
English	85
Biology/or Biology/Zoology	92
Calculus	20
College mathematics	32
Biochemistry	15 (UF and FSU require Biochemistry)

Source: 2012-2013 Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR) guide

SECTION II: Recommended Curriculum, First Through Fourth Years

The overview that follows is one that assumes admission to medical school in the fall immediately following New College graduation. However, if you can wait a year or more to apply, the process will be much less stressful and your application will not suffer by waiting a year or (even more) after graduation to apply. In fact, as long as the time after graduation is used wisely, whether a year or three years, it may serve to effectively improve your application and chances of admission.

FIRST YEAR

1. Take General Chemistry I and II with lab (during spring semester) and biology. These courses are the foundation disciplines of medical science. If you find no enjoyment in this coursework, or lack aptitude for these subjects, it's time to reassess your goals.

2. Take at least two courses of interest outside science. Explore a variety of areas to prepare for selecting an area of concentration in your fifth semester. The New College Liberal Arts Curriculum (or LACs) are good guide posts for choosing some of these courses. If possible, select courses that help fulfill LAC requirements.

3. Develop an Independent Study Project (ISP) that will involve social or medical services and/or health issues. Consider working with underprivileged populations. The important point is to work in a serving or helping capacity and to demonstrate a commitment to working with people. Mere encounters with these populations will not convince medical schools of your genuine desire to serve the underprivileged. A consistent track record is the only thing that will. Colleges of medicine also like to see persistence in a single are of research. Three interrelated ISPs that build upon a single foundation for example, are valued highly. Why? They demonstrate persistence and depth.

Writing Skills: Develop writing skills by taking courses that requires essay writing or short research papers.

Math: If you are uncertain about your proficiency and the courses to take, the mathematics faculty can provide readiness assessment and other resources. They can also help you to overcome math phobia. Visit the Quantitative Resource Center in the library for additional tutoring and resources.

Thoughts On Surviving

Maintain balance and manage stress by exercising in the campus fitness center and/or making use of the professionally staffed campus Wellness Center. Remember that the demands on your time may be greater than your peers. Attend time-management workshops as offered.

Summer After First Year

Find a meaningful internship in health-care setting or volunteer at an area clinic, soup kitchen or department of public health. Working on a research project or gaining experience in service to those in need are two qualifying criteria for evaluating meaningful summer experiences. Think forward to the possibility of finding a research experience such as the *Research Experiences for Undergraduates* (REUs) provided through the National Science Foundation. Take time during the summer following your first year to research REUs for the summer of your second or third year. REUs are prestigious positions and highly competitive. Alternately, search for paid or volunteer work in a hospital or other social service agency. Possibilities include non-profits and private organizations such as treatment facilities or hospitals. All will yield insight into the work of being a doctor and working with people across all walks of life. As you develop relationships with healthcare providers, keep in mind that you'll need to cultivate relationships with persons qualified to write letters of recommendation for medical school admission or related recommendations for jobs or research.

SECOND YEAR

Keeping your curriculum on track

Take your third (required) foundation science course, usually physics, and pursue the next level of chemistry. A second-year program might look like this:

- Organic Chemistry I and Inquiry Lab; Organic Chemistry II & Organic Chemistry Lab;
- Physics I and II with Laboratory;
- Behavioral or other social science course;
- A course in each discipline of your prospective area of concentration;
- An ISP in a prospective area of concentration or a laboratory or field research experience under faculty supervision;
- Calculus I and II (if you haven't already reached this level);
- Take a semester or year-long field activity - whether internship or volunteer or both - that provides health-related service experiences in the community (this could even be a formal tutorial).

The current edition of the MSAR should be very familiar to you by now. Review medical school requirements.

Summer activities

Seek opportunities to demonstrate a commitment to public health or find a research experience such as the *Research Experiences for Undergraduates* (REUs) provided through the National Science Foundation. As you develop relationships with healthcare providers, keep in mind that you'll need to cultivate relationships with persons qualified to write letters of recommendation for medical school admission.

Reality check

Meet with your faculty sponsor near the end of the second year. Be prepared to discuss why you want to be a physician, and to name the medical schools emerging as your top choices.
By now, some faculty member(s) should be familiar in some depth with your academic work and aspirations. If no faculty members have more than cursory, "one course" awareness of you, this has to be addressed. Otherwise, a faculty member will be uncomfortable writing a strong letter of recommendation on your behalf. By the end of your fall semester during second year, develop a mental list of faculty who might be able to write recommendations supporting your applications.

THIRD YEAR

This may be the busiest year of your life (until you reach medical school of course). Follow this checklist:

Fall semester/January Interterm

- File a Provisional Area of Concentration Plan (end of first module);
- Prep for the MCAT (can be deferred to January/early spring, depending on your needs);
- Carry out a medically relevant ISP in your area of concentration;
- Identify the medical schools to which you want your MCAT scores sent;
- Take at least one advanced natural science course, normally in biology or chemistry, and/or other advanced course(s) recommended by the schools to which you'll apply.

Spring semester

- Begin or continue a disciplined program of preparation for the MCAT;
- Continue taking your med school recommended advanced courses;
- File a Thesis Prospectus/Area of Concentration (end of first mod);
- Discuss letters of recommendation with faculty, medical researchers, physicians, and others who might be prepared to write on your behalf;
- Become familiar with the AMCAS application and secure applications from any non-AMCAS schools to which you might apply;
- Have a plan as to how you will finance medical school and the timetable for aid applications.

The summer following your third year should find you seeking a challenging medically-related placement. (Again, REUs are ideal.) Consult with professors for ideas and leads. Get immersed in the local medical community. Consult the *New College Pre-Med Volunteer Guide* on the Career Center web portal for ideas and internship locations.

TABLE III **WHAT MEDICAL COLLEGES LOOK FOR** **A Summary of Factors in Your Control**	
Item	**Comment**
Strong basic science coursework & labs	Standard courses, not summer courses. Go beyond the minimum.
Competitive MCAT scores	In Florida schools, a composite score of 32 or better will assure competitiveness.
Extra- and co-curricular work in medical settings	Reality testing of your interest in medicine is essential. Consistent record of volunteerism.
Consistency and reliability in performance	A record of drop-adds, probation, or last-ditch rescue — no matter how brilliant the final result, will not fare well.
Breadth of curriculum, wide range of skills and problem-solving ability	Admissions committees may view an all- or almost-all-science curriculum as too narrow.
Meet all curriculum requirements	Consult the MSAR to determine the requirements.
Emotional health and balance, multiple interests, ability to withstand stress	An unbalanced physician who fails under stress is a danger to patients.
Ability to work with others, accept responsibility	Co-curricular activities and letters of recommendation should confirm these traits.
Enthusiastic support from those writing letters of recommendation	Affirmative, specific letters speaking to your achievements and competence will be necessary for admission.
Solid interpersonal skills, good presentation of self	Reflected in the medical school interview (which is the number one deciding factor of admissions according to AAMC).
Knowledge of each school to which you are applying	You'll need to demonstrate this in the interview and secondary application.

Summer after third year

- Take the MCAT for admission to medical school if you plan to begin med school the fall after your fourth year
- Complete the AMCAS application
- Attend summer school if necessary
- Familiarize yourself with the AAMC Recommendations for Medical School Applicants document

Selecting schools and pathways

The MSAR has introduced you to the accredited U.S. and Canadian medical schools. But you may want to consider medical schools abroad and *osteopathic* schools of medicine, chiropractic, or naturopathic schools. Osteopaths or D.O.s adopt an holistic approach to medicine. Training is identical to that of an allopathic physician or M.D., but with additional requirements for licensing and the hands-on, patient manipulations and physical adjustments performed by D.O.s that traditional M.D.s do not perform.

Review the application timetable

TABLE IV MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION TIMETABLE		
Third-year checklist		
When	**What**	**Remarks**
☐ Fall and/or Jan. Interterm and Spring First Module	Prepare for the MCAT	Take online MCAT practice tests; buy study guides; connect with peers and form study groups on campus.
☐ January	Prepare resume, review your transcript(s). Ask faculty, others if they'll write letters for you	Use Career Center materials and workshops on resume writing.
☐ February, prior to registering for the MCAT	Decide which medical schools will receive your MCAT scores.	AMCAS forwards scores to schools
☐ By early-March	Register online for the MCAT	Test is offered 20 times annually
☐ April	Review AMCAS guidelines at www.aamc.com. Begin writing application essays	Essay guidelines and personal statement samples available in Career Services
☐ April	Visit the New College Registrar's Office and inspect your transcript for accuracy	Attend to any corrections (if any)
☐ Late April, early May	Advise letter writers what you'll be requesting, and when.	Make appropriate arrangements if a writer will be unavailable during June-July when letter is needed.
☐ May	Discuss MCAT results with your science advisor	
☐ May	Begin AMCAS and other applications	Get feedback from your science advisor and career coordinator on your essays.

Applying to public schools in the state of your state of residence is advantageous because the public schools generally exercise preference for in-state residences. The best strategies for applications is to select two or three "reach schools"; two to three mid-ranges schools, and two to three schools that you would gladly attend if accepted.

FOURTH YEAR

Fall

- Complete supplementary application materials for schools applied to
- Continue participation in pre-med activities, internships, volunteering
- Stay thesis focused

Spring

- Make interim and final decisions about med school choice
- Ensure that all IRS forms are submitted as early as possible for financial aid consideration

A YEAR OFF BEFORE MED SCHOOL?

Medical schools do not frown upon taking a year or a year or two or three off between graduation from New College and the start of med school. Some schools may even prefer applicants who have taken the time to mature and develop their medical careers and interests. There is no disadvantage to taking time off. For some, it is the ideal way to balance an extremely hectic and busy fourth year with the taxing demands of AMCAS, MCAT and crafting the perfect personal statement. A year off is a good choice if:

- You're too overwhelmed to study for MCAT
- Feeling so stressed out that you're compromising your applications with a lack of thoroughness or other detail that could keep you out of med school
- You've found a great summer or year-long research opportunity in your field of interest
- You simply need, want and deserve a break.

Remember, there is no penalty for time off so long as the time is wisely used to promote your medical career and interests. In most cases, "down time" used effectively for preparation and rejuvenation could actually improve your applications.

PREPARING FOR THE MCAT

The Medical College Admissions Test or MCAT is required for admission into most of the 151 accredited U.S. and Canadian medical schools. MCAT performance is a primary indicator of your likelihood to succeed in medical school. It is a high-stakes, standardized, multiple-choice examination designed to assess problem solving, critical thinking, writing skills, and knowledge of science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine. Scores are reported for the three sections of the test: Physical Sciences, Verbal Reasoning, and Biological Sciences.
If you plan to take the MCAT exam in 2013 or 2014, please note that the Writing Sample section will no longer be part of the exam. In its place, a voluntary, unscored trial section will be added to the MCAT exam starting in January 2013. These unscored questions within the trial section will test content added to the MCAT in 2015, including psychology, sociology, and biochemistry. The trial section will consist of 32 questions and will be administered in a 45-minute time period after all three operational sections (Physical Sciences, Verbal Reasoning, and Biological Sciences) have been administered. Including the trial section, the 2013 and 2014 total testing time will not change.

Many alums have recommended taking MCAT prep courses offered by Kaplan or Princeton Review or other organizations that specialize in test-prep training. They usually rate the usefulness of the courses very favorably.

Test-taking strategies

- Access the e-MCAT practice tests and tools and establish a disciplined timetable to use them
- Try to mimic actual testing conditions when taking practicing tests: arise at an appointed hour and behave as though you are preparing to leave home to test at the testing center. Eat breakfast and dress appropriately
- Purchase study guides and take tests online
- Define your weak spots and take corrective measures. Access the Official MCAT Assessment Package to assist you in this process

Most medical schools look for a minimum score of 9 on each multiple-choice section, with at least one score of 10 or above. Some medical school admissions committees add the three scores and have a cut off based on the sum of your scores. Others look at each score separately. Scores are on indicator of the likelihood to succeed, others are the ever-important personal statement, extracurricular involvement, leadership positions, letters of reference, and the interview. Because you will be applying without grades, your MCAT score is critical to acceptance. Schools are moving toward more holistic admissions processes, but most remain wed to the idea of linear metrics. Based on admission trends of New College students to medical schools in recent years, a score of 32 or better is competitive for admission to Florida medical schools.

SECTION III. The Applications

There are two parts of the medical school application.

A. The application to American Medical College Application Service or AMCAS application, and
B. The secondary application submitted directly to medical schools.

THE APPLICATION TO AMCAS

- ***AMCAS*** is a centralized, non-profit application service that provides information, MCAT scores, letters of recommendation and applications to the medical schools you select. Set aside several days to create your AMCAS application and allow ample time to proofread and review.
- All coursework attempted – whether passed or fail – must be entered into the AMCAS application.
- Submit the AMCAS application as early as allowed, generally **June 1.** The AMCAS deadline for regular admissions follows the medical school deadlines, using this rule: AMCAS must receive official transcripts for regular applicants *no later than* 14 days after the medical school's application deadline. AMCAS typically requires six weeks to

verify that the academic transcripts and information you have provided is correct. Your application will be reviewed against all official transcripts that you have submitted to AMCAS.

- Keep copies of your transcripts in front of you as you work on completing the AMCAS application. Each item entered must appear exactly as it does on your transcript(s).

The AMCAS application deadline for all Early Decision Programs (EDP) is **August 1** for all schools. *The school deadlines may vary, but the AMCAS deadline for EDP does not.*

Top tips from AMCAS for submitting a successful application are:

- An error free and fastidiously completed application is better than an early application with error.
- Establish a separate email account for all of your AMCAS communications. Never assume your AMCAS application is complete and final *until* AMCAS confirms that it is complete and final by email.

SECONDARY APPLICATIONS are required by medical schools and submitted by you, directly to the school(s). Medical schools send secondary applications to the candidates that are of interest to them, or, they may routinely provide applications to all candidates who apply. Policy will vary from school to school.

TWO MED SCHOOL DEADLINES: TRADITIONAL AND EARLY DECISION

Traditional Admissions Deadline

Individual medical schools set individual application deadlines. The earliest deadline is October 15. The latest deadline is December 15. Many schools have rolling admissions. This means that those applicants who get their admissions materials in the earliest will be reviewed first, interviewed first, and offered admission first. If you delay and submit your applications late in the game, not only could you encounter processing delays and miss deadlines, but some medical schools may have filled all openings.

Early Decision Programs (EDP) Deadline

Each school sets its own deadline for EDP. Bear in mind however, that the *AMCAS deadline for EDP is always August 1 for all schools*, regardless of each school's deadline.

In making application to an early decision program, you will agree to:

1. Apply to only one EDP program
2. Apply to no other programs until a decision is made by the EDP school
3. Attend the school if accepted.

The EDP school(s) agree to:

1. Announce acceptance decisions by Oct. 1, and
2. Roll all unaccepted applications to their regular admission process for consideration.

There are several advantages to early application. If you are admitted, you'll avoid the considerable expense of multiple applications while reducing the anxiety associated with multiple applications. And, you'll have ample time to plan finances and address other aspects of your life and goals.

AMCAS APPLICATION

The AMCAS application consists of eight sections.

1. **Identifying Information** Your legal identify information including your name, social security number, and general contact information.
2. **Schools attended** Includes high school and all colleges, the city and county.
3. **Biographic Information** Place of birth, county and city; languages spoken; citizenship.
4. **Course Work** List all course work taken in all colleges to include title, course number, the year, semester, and grade. You may enter the words "Pass" or "Satisfactory". *GPA's are not calculated until your application is submitted.* AMCAS staff reviews applications to determine GPA status. They are familiar with New College and the absence of a GPA is recognized and understood. Considered strictly as a stand-alone factor, the absence of a GPA should rarely hinder acceptance or impede admission to medical school.
5. **Work Activities** List and describe up to 15 activities that demonstrate your commitment to medicine and service others, to include internships, volunteer positions, publications, research, or any other experience that shows concern and compassion for human kind, supported by action. It would be a wise strategy throughout your academic career at New College to consider gaining as much service-related experience as possible. These experiences do not necessarily have to take place in traditional medical settings. Any experience that demonstrates service to others – particularly service to the poor or underprivileged – is looked upon favorably by medical school admissions committees.
6. **Letters of Recommendation** This section is used to provide information about letters of evaluation/recommendation that will be submitted to schools on your behalf.
7. **Medical Schools** Use a drop-down menu to select all schools to which you want to apply.
8. **Personal Statement**

Be judicious in your choice of words. You want communicate succinctly and clearly the reasons for choosing medicine as a career and life commitment. Your goal is to persuade the medical school admissions committee that you are a candidate worthy of their program.

- Be personal and real. Tell them something about who you are and what you've been doing with your life during the past few years.
- Find an angle and tell a story unique to your situation.
- Disclose information in this section that is not apparent or included within any other part of your application.
- If you've had to overcome a special hurdle to complete four years of undergraduate training at New College, tell them about any special circumstances or hardships that helped shape your life and character. Consider how those circumstances will help mold you into an excellent physician.
- Why have you chosen medicine?
- Make the opening paragraph a sparkling invitation that motivates the reader to learn more.
- Write in your own voice. Don't try to mimic a style or words you think they want to "hear".
- And last but not least, please *do not write about things the committee already knows about its own school.* For example, if you're applying to the number-one ranked immunology program in the nation, do not say "Your school has the best program in the U.S, so I want to attend…" They *already know* it's the best program; don't waste words.

Begin the process by doing soul searching and self-assessment. What do you devote time and energy to? What are you passionate about? Who or what have been major influences on your road to medical school? What is special, unique, or distinctive about you or your life story? What significant choices have you made? You have exactly one page in which to convey to the admissions committee why they should select you for the next entering class. The statement gives you an opportunity to discuss the special qualities of your education at New College, such as the way narrative evaluations and intensive lab or field research and presentations at research conferences contributed to your development.
Don't write a list of all the things you have ever done. That was the purpose of the general information section. Look for recurring themes and ideas in your life. If possible, find an angle and tell a story about yourself. Describe new information that's not in your transcript or general information section. Make your essay pleasant to read — use vignettes, anecdotes, metaphors.

Everything in your essay should be there for a deliberate reason. Remember the rules of good composition: introduction, topic sentences in paragraphs, and conclusion. Editing is vital. Misspelled words, punctuation errors, and grammatical mistakes are not acceptable. Once the application is submitted to AMCAS, you can't retrieve it to make corrections. Start with a draft and work through several versions. AMCAS advises refraining from cut and paste due to potential formatting issues.

9. **Standardized Tests:** This is optional. You may elect to include any scores from standardized tests you've taken. For example, if you have a GRE score that wish to include, or a score from a single section of the GRE – e.g., a high analytical reasoning score – you may include it. You may insert scores here from any recognized, standardized exams undertaken. AMCAS inserts your MCAT score since the score is released directly to AMCAS.

Your New College official transcript does not show incomplete, dropped, or unsatisfactory undertakings. But **the Academic Record section requires that you do show them on your AMCAS application, and you must comply**. Thus, if you started Organic Chemistry, dropped it, and took it again successfully, you must so indicate, using the appropriate codes found in the AMCAS instructions. This applies to **all** attempted, but not completed or unsatisfactory activity in the Educational Activities section and includes all academic Contracts and ISPs attempted.

Narrative evaluations
<u>The Registrar will not send evaluations to any school or organization.</u> It is college policy. If you want to support your AMCAS application with narrative evaluations, it is a personal choice, but send only a few evaluations to AMCAS. The online Interfolio (Interfolio.com) is the most common way to send and upload letters to AMCAS. A representative sampling of four to five for example, should suffice unless you know perhaps that schools want to receive larger packets (most do not and rarely do admissions officers have time to read thick packets of narrative evaluations.)

Submitting your application
Double-check the AMCAS application for spelling errors and correctness. Once you're satisfied that the application is **perfect** and you've requested that transcripts from every school you've attended since high to be forwarded to AMCAS, submit the application and prepare for the next step.

SECONDARY APPLICATIONS

Now it's time to complete the secondary applications, the ones required by the schools themselves. Nearly all schools require secondary applications. Some schools send every applicant a secondary, while others have initial screenings and only send applications to the strongest candidates. *The secondary application allows you to present your reasons for wanting to attend that particular school.*

FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR APPLICATIONS AND SCHOOL VISITS

Regular MCAT registration is around $200+ and if you elect to take a commercially offered MCAT preparation course, it will cost around $1,200. AMCAS fees range from $55.00 and up to $600, depending on the number of schools targeted for admission. Medical school secondary application fees typically are between $25 and $140 per school. You can expect to be applying to four-to-six schools or more; the national average is ten. It adds up quickly, so plan accordingly.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters of recommendation can be uploaded directly to the AMCAS website and the letters are provided to the medical schools you choose. Review the submission requirements of each school and follow directions accordingly.

By the end of fall semester in your third year, you should have a pretty solid idea of who you will ask to write a recommendation. Each school will tell you how many recommendations it requires and provide general guidelines about the appropriate people to ask. Some medical schools also require a letter of recommendation from a campus premedical committee that screens and endorses applicants. New College does not have such a committee. Recommendations are used as outside endorsements of your medical school candidacy. Schools may ask your referees (as reference letter writers are sometimes called) to comment on or rate such things as your intellectual ability, perseverance, enthusiasm, initiative, independence, originality, manual dexterity and laboratory technique, interest in science, personality, dependability, common sense, judgment, emotional stability, reaction to criticism, and integrity.

The following questions for example, are from a medical school recommendation form:

- How long and under what circumstances have you known the applicant?
- What are the applicant's chief strengths and deficiencies?
- How well does the applicant get along with fellow students and faculty?
- In your opinion, is the applicant using her/his full potentialities?
- How does the applicant compare with other premedical students in your institution?
- How strongly motivated is the applicant toward a career in medicine?

So who should you ask to write the letters? The best referees are people who know you well and can honestly give you an outstanding recommendation. People who know your character and academic abilities and your capability to succeed in medical school. Exclude relatives and friends. Don't use politicians and VIPs who know your parents and not you.

- Three is the usual number of required letters
- Faculty are the best persons to write the letters; additional letters could come from people in authority who have had opportunity to assess you in a medical lab or clinic, as an employee, as a leader of a group or a project, or as a contributor to a social service program.
- Always ask the letter writer if he or she would be able to write a *strong* letter of support. If the person hesitates, look elsewhere.
- Provide your referees (letter writers) with a packet containing your resume or CV and a copy of your AMCAS application. This helps refresh their memory of you and makes them aware of aspects of your background that might be unfamiliar to them. Talk face-to-face with each referee about your background and plans before they write the recommendation.
- **Faculty need at least a month's notice** to write letters of recommendation. Six to eight weeks is better.

THE FINAL STEP: THE INTERVIEW

Having been selected for an interview probably means that the school believes you can do the academic work required in medical school. The AAMC reports that the interview is the number one determining factor of admission. Schools seek candidates with high levels of scholastic achievement and intellectual potential, as well as motivation and humanistic concern necessary for success as a physician. Candidates' personal qualities are important factors in selection decisions. Evidence of *maturity, character, integrity, self-discipline, concern with helping others, and leadership are all considered.*

Prepare for the interview by reviewing commonly asked questions, and then rehearse those answers aloud. Familiarize yourself with answers to certain questions so you're prepared to speak thoughtfully on the day of the interview. Admissions committees usually consist of faculty, including clinicians and researchers, administrators, and medical students. They volunteer to be on the committee and must take time from busy schedules to meet with you. Most medical school interviews are pleasant experiences.

Be prepared to discuss a variety of topics from controversial issues in healthcare to why you want to become a doctor. You will probably be asked to comment on a medically-related current event or ethical issue. For instance, "In your opinion, what is the most pressing issue facing health care today?" Or, "What is more important in the battle against diabetes: research or education?" New College alums were asked both of these questions recently. You are not expected to be an expert on these topics, but you should be aware of medically-related issues and be able to converse about them. Follow news and opinion about medicine and health care in newspapers and current periodicals.

Personal questions or topics you might encounter:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you choose New College?
- Tell me about it.
- How would you suggest we evaluate your candidacy without grades?
- Tell me about your research at New College.
- How and when did you decide to become a doctor?
- What is your greatest strength/weakness?
- Success/ failure?
- If you don't get into med school, what will you do?
- What area of medicine are you interested in?
- Where do you see yourself in ten years?
- Where else did you apply? Why did you apply here?

Ethical issues

- What are your views on abortion?
- What is your opinion about stem-cell research?
- What do you think about doctor-assisted suicide?
- How do you feel about treating uninsured patients?
- When should a terminally ill patient be taken off life-support systems?

Health-care issues

- What's the biggest problem facing medicine today?
- What do you think the role of government should be in health care?
- Do you think health care is a right or a privilege?
- How do you feel about managed care?

Before the interview

Use this time to plan practical matters, such as how to get there (clear understanding of place and location); where you'll stay and what to wear. Take a practice drive or walk to the interview location if you can on the day before the interview. You'll be better oriented and more prepared.

Some medical schools have programs that allow you to stay with a current medical student for free. The information gained from students the night before your interview can give you excellent insight into the school, its strengths and problems. Your questions to interviewers will be better, too. However, if sleeping in a stranger's apartment is going to stress you out and leave you sleepless, you'll be better off at the nearest motel.

Dress

Make no mistake: you'll be judged on personal appearance. Choose your clothes well in advance and make sure they're pristine on interview day.

- Men - Wear a suit or slacks and a sport jacket, dress shirt and tie, conservative socks, and leather shoes. Facial hair should be well groomed or better still, absent.
- Women should wear a suit or dressy coordinates (skirt or dress with a blazer), hosiery and leather shoes. Accessories, jewelry, and makeup should be conservative.
- Resist all and any temptation to present yourself as an avant-garde, Bohemian. This approach will considerably dim and negate your prospects of admission.

The day of the interview

If you have prepared for the interview and done your homework (never go into an interview "cold",) the best advice for the day is to take a deep breath, relax, and be your most professional self. Interviewers universally indicate "sincerity" as one of the most valued qualities. Everything you say is worthless if the interviewer doesn't believe you are being honest and straightforward.

Most interview days start with an introduction to the school, followed by a tour, lunch, and two interviews. There's no standard length to a medical school interview. It can be as short as 15 minutes or as long as an hour. Personal questions will probably comprise 80 percent of the interview. It may help you to remember that an interview is essentially a conversation with a purpose and all the rules of good conversation apply.

A few tips:

- Before the interview, review your application and personal statement
- Arrive early. Check in with the receptionist or support staff. Remember, receptionists and support staff are a part of the interview team. Treat them with respect and courtesy.
- Take a few extra copies of your CV and personal statements.
- Treat every person you meet as though they are a member of the admissions committee. The clerical staff and current medical students can pass an opinion about you to the admissions committee. Behave so that if anything is said about you, it will be positive.
- Carry a pen and a small notebook.
- Acknowledge the interviewer by name and introduce yourself.
- Maintain eye contact, avoid fidgeting.
- Think before you speak.

Questions to ask:

- What programs are you the most proud?
- Does the school employ any innovative approaches?
- How does the school assist students who do not pass the National Board Examination? What is your pass rate?
- How is student performance evaluated?
- Tell me about the advising system
- What is the "unmet need" factor in your financial aid budget, and how do students close the gap?
- What committees have student representation?
- Are students involved in community service?
- Where do grads do their residencies?
- How well-endowed is the research budget?

After the interview

Shake hands and say goodbye, and thank the person for their consideration. You may want to write a thank you note as matter of good manners.

AN ALUMNA'S PERSPECTIVE: HOW TO PREPARE

Students tend to make two very common mistakes when applying to medical school:

1) They underestimate the time it takes to prepare for the MCAT
2) They underestimate the amount of time needed to prepare and complete the AMCAS application

Take the good advice of one New College alumna who writes below about the ways she managed both the AMCAS app (she spent a month preparing it) and the MCAT.

> *MCAT: I spent 3 months preparing for the MCAT while working full time. I used the exam krackers books, as well as the Berkeley review for physical sciences. I also purchased the Princeton Review Hyperlearning Science Review book, which is full of*

practice questions. I made my own study calendar after reading some tips on the student doctor network. The calendar I made could be spread over 4 months, but I wouldn't recommend spending longer than that preparing. If you need more time, you have too many gaps in the basic sciences. I started with the Exam Krackers books, in my opinion they are rather superficial so I decided to also purchase the Berkeley review for physical sciences. I would highly recommend these books, they are VERY good. I structured the calendar to first cover basic material, then in the last 2-3 weeks I was only doing practice questions from Princeton Review Hyperlearning. The most important thing is that you get used to the timing and the types of questions. The best way to prepare is to answer as many practice questions as possible. For that reason, I would highly recommend purchasing a review book of questions as well as several practice MCAT exams. You should take them online, just like you would the actual test. In total, I studied about 3 hours 5 days a week. The last month I took practice exams every other week, a total of five practice exams. Every weekday I reviewed the material planned, then took a small practice exam. It is extremely important to carefully review all errors, answering questions incorrectly and then understanding why is the best way to prepare for this test! I recorded all questions I answered incorrectly and why in a document that I could reference. Also, if you are reviewing your incorrect answers and you think "Oh, I know that" you aren't studying correctly! You must attack every single question even when you are practicing, and you have to be your worst critic when you review the questions you missed. Preparing for the MCAT cannot be done passively, you have to take practice tests, you must time yourself and you absolutely must review your mistakes. Also, it's very easy to be intimidated by the amount of information you need to learn, but consider a lot of the material is from basic courses in the natural sciences curriculum at New College. Studying for the MCAT begins when you take these courses. Don't procrastinate, prepare well, take several full length practice exams during the last month of your study time and continually assess your progress. You should walk into the test knowing what to expect, with an idea about how you will score.

AMCAS: I spent about 1 month on the application. Most of the time was spent writing the essays, and reflecting on how I wanted to present myself as an applicant. The day the application opens you should make your account, read the instructions, and begin considering how you will organize your CV. You probably already have a good idea about who to ask for the letters of recommendation, and you should ask at this point to give the letter writers about a month to compose their recommendations. Also, carefully review the types of letters different schools want. You probably will not send the same set of letters to every school. The essay is the most demanding part of the application, and you should spend a lot of time thinking about what you want to write and how to express yourself. I began with two versions of the essay, each used a different life experience to explain why I wanted to attend medical school. The first I edited about three times, and then discarded entirely. The second I edited about six times and am very happy with. You should expect to rewrite your essay several times. You should also show it to a range of people, family, friends, professors... anyone you

think knows you and will give you valuable feedback. Take your time writing, then don't look at the essay for a few days, then edit. When you feel satisfied you have put your best foot forward, paste the essay into the application and print the full application. Go over your application with a fine toothed comb, make any edits, and repeat about three times. This helps you see the essay as an admissions committee member. It is important to stay organized throughout the application process, and get your application in as soon as possible! Remember the application has to be verified, which can take several weeks from after you push submit.

The final cut

If you're in an Early Decision Program, you will have a decision by October of your senior year. If you are a candidate who fits the profile of the student that a particular medical school needs at the particular moment, the admissions committee may accept you right away. The AAMC recommends to its member schools that by March 30 of the year of matriculation, they should have issued a number of acceptances at least equal to the size of the first-year class.

By May 15, an applicant who has received offers of admission from more than one school must choose the one school he/she prefers and withdraw from all other schools to which he/she has been accepted. Acceptances may be offered anytime up to the first day of medical school in late August. As soon as an offer of admission is accepted, it is very important to notify all schools that have made offers, and inform them that you have accepted an offer elsewhere. This will release your slot at the school and make it available to another candidate.

WAITLISTED: YOU STILL HAVE A CHANCE TO SWAY YOUR CASE

Call the admissions office and speak with a member of the professional staff. Ask if there is anything you can provide to supplement your application, and affirm your desire to attend the school. If someone offered to write a letter for you and you didn't take them up on their offer, now might be the time for that letter. It might give the admissions committee information they didn't have before. You might send an outstanding evaluation that you didn't previously include. Other possibilities to consider adding to your admissions folder are information about a new health-related experience you've acquired a successful thesis defense, a publication, and a prize or honor received. At the very least, the fact that you've sent something of substance indicates that you have initiative and that you're really interested in that school.

REJECTED? REGROUP AND REAPPLY

Competition for medical school admission is intense. If you don't gain acceptance during your first rounds of application, try again. Make slight adjustments in your strategies. Try to examine what your weaknesses were and then work to resolve them. Call the medical schools that rejected you, particularly those that interviewed you. Ask what you could do to strengthen your application. Most admissions officers will discuss this with you. Once you've identified the problem, do what is necessary to correct it. One New College alum recently related that during his first rounds of applications, no offers of acceptance were forthcoming. He used the next year to examine why he really wanted to become a doctor, and he examined the shortcomings that hindered him during his first-round of applications. He reapplied and was accepted at the University of California San Francisco, School of Medicine. He is now on staff as a researcher and faculty member in the discipline of child psychiatry.

If you had low or borderline MCAT scores, take a prep course or do some serious, structured studying and practice test-taking to improve your performance. If you need improvement in science, take an advanced course in the same discipline. Enroll only in competitive universities whose science curriculum is of recognized quality. Do not enroll in "distance learning", correspondence, weekend, community college or summer non-resident courses. If your application was poorly prepared on the last round, make sure it's perfected. Ask a peer to review your AMCAS application with a fine-tooth comb.

If you don't get in after a second try, you should probably explore other avenues. There are now numerous post-baccalaureate programs for pre-med students. Several are listed on the AMCAS website. You may also consider a Master's program such as Public Health, Human Genetics, Medical Ethics, or Medical Computing, or numerous other growing fields within healthcare.

OSTEOPATHY

Osteopathic physicians use the same tools and technology as M.D.s. They incorporate their training with an holistic philosophy of medicine and hands-on treatments that physically manipulates specific areas of the body. Doctors of osteopathic medicine (D.O.s) receive the same training and schooling as M.D.s, but with approximately 200 additional hours of training in manipulative medicine. Locally, the Bradenton campus of the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) is about five miles from New College. LECOM is a private school, and its campus is state-of-the art. New College maintains liaison with LECOM and regularly hosts their physicians as guest speakers on our campus. Likewise, New College students are encouraged to visit the LECOM campus. Since the college opened a few years ago, four New College students matriculated there.

In addition to its college of medicine, LECOM operates the newest college of pharmacy in Florida and is planning to open a dental college in 2012.

Whether osteopathy or another field of medicine, all sectors of health care are growing. Fields are varied and range from nursing to optometry, podiatry, audiology, pharmacology, physical therapy, radiology, medical writing, medical computing, and medical sciences. Most of these, with the exception of osteopathic medicine, require significantly less schooling than the M.D. Some foreign — or "off-shore" — medical schools offer the M.D. with instruction in English. The AAMC, as might be expected, warns that these schools may have academic standards and clinical training inferior to any accredited U.S. or Canadian medical school, and that graduates may have difficulty obtaining, or be unable to obtain, medical licenses in North America. Offshore schools should be investigated very carefully with special attention to hidden costs, clinical facilities, faculty credentials, graduates' access to the National Medical Boards, and the graduates' pass rate for the Medical Boards. You will have to determine if the education will prepare you for licensure in the U.S. or any other country where you will practice.
Non-clinical professions such as hospital and clinic administration, public health, and biomedical or pharmacological research, among others, provide direct involvement in the medical world, though typically not in patient care, per se. These fields however, can have far reaching impact on patient care.

Medicine as a sector in our society is vast in size and complexity. Members of many, many professions — attorneys, economists, social scientists, entrepreneurs, public policy and public administration specialists, systems analysts and computer engineers, architects, actuaries, demographers — support the clinical professions and help shape the way medical care is delivered. There are many places to work in medicine without becoming an M.D.

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

Chiropractic and naturopathic practice, traditional Chinese medicine, and other "alternative" healing systems are also possibilities. Increasingly alternative therapies are being practiced in alliance with conventional scientific medicine in a way that merges the two. Clinics might often employee M.D.s *and* chiropractors or other alternative healers on their clinical staffs. Among other schools of alternative medicine, Sarasota is home to the East West College of Natural Medicine which focuses on traditional Chinese medicine. And last, there is a branch campus of the Florida College of Natural Health in Sarasota and various schools of massage therapy and oriental healing arts.

OSTEOPATHY, PHARMACY AND DENTAL COLLEGES IN BRADENTON, FL

Lake Erie College of Medicine, College of Osteopathic Medicine, (private)
Medical students pursuing the Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.) degree at LECOM Erie choose from five student-centered learning pathways: traditional Lecture-Discussion courses; small-group, Problem-Based Learning, and Independent Study based on self-directed learning modules. LECOM offers the only three-year medical curricula, the Primary Care Scholars Pathway and the Accelerated Physician Assistant Pathway. And, the Best Medical Colleges listing from US News & World Report ranks LECOM seventh in the nation in graduating the most primary care physicians. At LECOM Bradenton and LECOM at Seton Hill, all medical students enroll in Problem-Based Learning.

College of Pharmacy in Bradenton

Lake Erie College of Medicine, College of Pharmacy (private)
For students seeking the Doctor of Pharmacy (Pham) degree, the LECOM School of Pharmacy offers a choice between a fast-track, three-year pathway in Erie and the traditional four-year pathway at LECOM Bradenton. College graduates requiring additional science training and preparation for medical and pharmacy school admissions can enroll in Lecco's Post Baccalaureate program and continue their studies toward a Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences.

College of Dentistry in Bradenton, opening July 2012

Lake Erie College of Medicine, College of Dentistry, opening July 2012, Bradenton, (private)
Dental students pursuing the Doctor of Dental Medicine Degree follow a unique and innovative curriculum. The School of Dental Medicine prepares students for the practice of general dentistry, specifically for underserved communities.

APPENDIX A

A Self-evaluation of Progress to Medical School Admission

A useful ranking tool to check your progress at the end of your 2nd or 3rd year.

Item	***Proficiency***				
	Excellent	**Good**	**Average**	**Fair**	**Unsat**
General Biology coursework					
General Chemistry coursework					
Organic Chemistry coursework					
General Physics coursework					
"English" (essay writing)					
Calculus coursework					
Other coursework for med school					
Curricular breadth					
Involved in medical settings					
Personal physical fitness					
Financial readiness to apply					
Meeting NC grad requirement					
Complete work on time					
Faculty know me in depth					
Med. professional knows me					
I know why I want to be doctor					
Prepared for the MCAT					
Prepared for the interview					

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B: PREMEDICAL WEB PAGES	
Association of American Medical Colleges www.aamc.org	U.S. & Canadian medical schools; purchase info for: MSAR, MCAT preparation video, practice tests, other AAMC publications.
Association of American Osteopathic Colleges www.aacom.org	U.S. osteopathic medical schools, link to standard application and individual schools.
American Dental Education Association www.adea.org	The leading association for information on dental education.
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges www.aavmc.org	Representing the veterinary schools of the U.S. and Canada.
Association of Schools of Public Health www.asph.org	Representing public health programs of the U.S. and Canada.
Future Doctor www.Futuredoctor.net	Personal statements, the med school interview, admissions tips and more.
Accepted.com www.accepted.com/medical	How to's, personal statements, what it takes to make the cut.
Medical School Admission www.medicalschooladmission.com	The name tells it all.
Kaplan www.kaplan.com	MCAT training courses. Shop other sources too such as Princeton Review.
Student Doctor http://www.studentdoctor.net/	From student blogs to veterinary medicine, covers the medical professions.
Sarasota Campus Lake Erie Osteopathic School of Medicine www.lecom.edu/bradenton	Local college of osteopathic medicine, a private school about five miles east of New College.

APPENDIX C

STATE OF FLORIDA, COLLEGES OF MEDICINE

Florida has six allopathic colleges of medicine. Five are public, and one, University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine, is private. Each college has a unique mission. The two newest colleges of medicine, Florida International University and University of Central Florida, admitted their first classes in fall 2009.

Florida International University College of Medicine, Miami
www.medicine.fiu.edu
Created amid pressing community health concerns and a projected critical shortage of physicians nationally, the College of Medicine is developing a curriculum that reflects an innovative, 21st century approach to health care and medical education. FIU admitted its first class in fall 2009. FIU COM will help advance South Florida's health care dynamic by facilitating improved access to medically underserved populations. FIT will be affiliated with most of the major medical centers and hospitals in South Florida.

Florida State University, College of Medicine, Tallahassee
www.med.fsu.edu
FSU is keenly interested in applicants who have demonstrated commitment to service through their experiences and those who have commitment to practice medicine in service to the medically underserved. AMCAS, secondary applications required. Earliest AMCAS and secondary filing dates are June 1 for both. Admits an estimated 80 entrants annually, five of whom are EPD admissions (Florida residents only). Awards the MD degree; offers no combined degree programs.

The University of Central Florida College of Medicine, Orlando
www.med.ucf.edu
The University of Central Florida College of Medicine is a new school that was established in 2006. The college offers programs in biomedical sciences and doctor of medicine (M.D.) UCF enrolled its charter class in fall 2009. Eventually the program will graduate roughly 120 students each year. The four-year medical program will capitalize on UCF's existing strengths in biomedical sciences, modeling and simulation, optics and photonics. Other programs in materials science, psychology, chemistry, film and digital media, and nursing will support the program.

University of Florida, College of Medicine, Gainesville
www.med.ufl.edu
Applicants are appraised on personal attributes, academic records, evaluation of past activities, MCAT, letters of recommendation. Sixty two percent of the most recent new class reported that having under taken community-service/volunteer work. Personal interview required. AMCAS, secondary applications required. Earliest filing for both, June 1. No EDP.

University of South Florida, College of Medicine, Tampa
www.hsc.usf.edu
Selection based on character, integrity, motivation, academic achievement, emotional maturity, stability, and the applicant interview. AMCAS and secondary applications required. Earliest AMCAS filing is June 1. EDP available for residents and non-residents combined degree programs available including MD/MPH, and MD/PhD.

University of Miami, School of Medicine, Miami (private)
www.med.miami.edu
Selection factors include preparedness to study medicine, diversity of life experiences, meaningfulness of direct patient contact experiences, and quality letters of recommendation. Only those with the highest rating are admitted for interview. File the earliest AMCAS application June 1, and secondary application June 15. No EDP. Combined degree programs offered are MD/MPH and MD/PhD.