Welcome to the 2023 application process! Below is the Applicant Guidelines 2023 resource. Please note that each underlined title allows you to jump to that section of the document for easy navigation. Remember that you must read the document in its entirety and affirm having done so within the “Intent to Apply” section of your Slate Application Planner by December 1st at 5:00 p.m.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ALL HMAP DEADLINES AT-A-GLANCE

INTRODUCTION TO THIS DOCUMENT

EXTERNAL EXPECTATIONS: PREPARING FOR HEALTH AND MEDICINE PROGRAMS

THE APPLICATION PROCESS: BASIC CONSIDERATIONS
  Early Birds: Timing is (almost) Everything
  When to Apply
  Re-Applicants
  Early Decision Program: Medical Schools
  Accelerated Medical Scholars Program (AMSP)

THE CIH HEALTH AND MEDICINE APPLICATION PROCESS (HMAP): OVERVIEW
  Current Students
  Study Abroad
  Alumni
  Statement of Understanding and Applicant Agreement
  Dean’s Certification Form
  Personal Readiness Checklist
  Self-Reflection Assessment
  Mandatory Application Seminars
  Personal Statement Consultation and Tips
  HMAP Letter Packet
  HMAP Waiver of Right of Access

THE PRIMARY APPLICATION: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
  Standardized Exam: MCAT
  Personal Statement
  Activities & Experiences
    Clinical Experiences Abroad
  Letters of Recommendation (LOR)
  Transcripts
  School Selection
  Residency
  Application Logistics & Summary

SECONDARY APPLICATIONS: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL INTERVIEWS

FINANCING YOUR EDUCATION

APPENDIX A: AMCAS QUESTION ON INSTITUTIONAL ACTION AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

APPENDIX B: AAMC GUIDELINES FOR PREMEDICAL AND MEDICAL STUDENTS PROVIDING PATIENT CARE DURING CLINICAL EXPERIENCES ABROAD
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Quarter</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Oct 28/</td>
<td>CIH Application Seminar I: Application Process Overview</td>
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<td>Nov 2</td>
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<td>Nov 9</td>
<td>CIH Application Seminar II: Crafting Your Personal Statement</td>
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<td>CIH: Personal Statement Appointments Begin-Schedule with your regular adviser.</td>
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<td>Feb</td>
<td>Big Interview: Behavioral Interviews Begin</td>
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<td>Big Interview: Behavioral Interviews Begin</td>
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<td>Mar 29th</td>
<td>CIH Deadline: Request all Letters of Recommendation</td>
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<td>May 3</td>
<td>Primary Applications Available (AMCAS usually opens on or around May 1)</td>
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<td>May 2</td>
<td>Big Interview: Behavioral Interview Due</td>
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<td>May 13</td>
<td>Personal Statement Reviews End</td>
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<td>CIH Deadline: All Letters of Recommendation to CIH</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>PUMP Sign-ups Open</td>
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<td>June 13-</td>
<td>PUMP Mock Interviews</td>
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<td>Aug 12</td>
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<td>CIH: Application Seminar IV: Secondary Applications and Financing</td>
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<td>July 2</td>
<td>CIH: Suggested Deadline for Submitting AMCAS Primary Application</td>
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<td>July-Aug</td>
<td>CIH Sends out HMAP Letter Packet beginning first full week of July</td>
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<td>Jul-Sept</td>
<td>Begin Receiving Secondary Applications: Submit Within Two Weeks</td>
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<td>July 23</td>
<td>FINAL day to request HMAP Letter Packet</td>
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<td>Throughout 2022-2023</td>
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<td>Accept Invitations to Interview—Schedule Earliest Available Time</td>
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<td>Immediately Email Personalized Thank-You to Each Interviewer</td>
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<td>Spring 2023</td>
<td>Apr 15</td>
<td>AAMC Deadline: Select Top 3 Schools (if applicable)</td>
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<td>Apr 29</td>
<td>AAMC Deadline: Select Final School (may remain on additional wait lists!)</td>
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<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>Update CIH: Schools Interviewed, Accept, Reject, Waitlisted, Final Decision</td>
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THE INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2023 application process for schools of the health professions! CIH looks forward to working with you over the coming year. Your success is our mission, and we have designed our application-year programs to help you move toward your career goals.

Why the AG-23?
The Applicant Guidelines 2023 (AG-23) is designed to be your primary reference for information and recommendations throughout the professional school application process. We have designed the AG-23 to bring transparency to the process of preparing and submitting applications, and hope that your increased familiarity with admissions expectations and the application timeline will empower you to make wiser, more informed choices, and to move through the process with as much efficiency—and as little stress—as possible. The more closely you follow the recommendations outlined here, the better positioned you will be for success.

The process of applying to schools of the health professions is lengthy and demanding, taking 15 to 18 months to complete. During this time, you will have to attend to many application details in addition to life’s daily demands. While we can support you through this process, and offer reminder emails along the way, you are the owner of your application and are responsible for meeting all deadlines even if you didn’t receive a reminder to do so. It is essential to mark your calendar now with these dates and deadlines so that you can anticipate time crunches (e.g., midterms, finals, full-time job) and still manage all the elements of your application. Given the number of application documents, the range of individuals and organizations managing this information, and your other responsibilities, it is best to anticipate that something will not go as planned. By being proactive, remaining attentive to details, and following up with the various people involved in your application (i.e., faculty recommenders, admissions officers, CIH), you can catch a possible mishap before it affects your application. This document is a roadmap for the coming year—use it to understand what lies ahead, and plan your time accordingly.

The AG-23 complements information presented at our application seminars, and you are responsible for knowing its contents. The AG-23 and the application seminars are designed to present basic, generalized information, so that our time can be better spent when addressing individual concerns and questions. Accordingly, please read the AG-23 carefully, and refer to it before contacting CIH for more information. Additionally, it is best to work directly with your primary CIH adviser throughout this process. There are many details and nuances to each applicant and working with the same adviser consistently allows for the most effective use of your time AND the most knowledgeable and accurate advising on our part. Note, too, that we all speak with each other regularly and have the same training—meaning, we give the same advice. PLEASE DO NOT email two or more of us with the exact same question. This is not an efficient use of our time. If you just want the fastest advice possible, cc us all on the same email and one of us will respond quickly.

Professional and Ethical Conduct
While we appreciate that the application process can be quite stressful, we have a gentle but important reminder: be mindful of how you conduct yourself throughout this process—it reflects your ability to manage uncertainty, your maturity and professionalism, your attention to detail and ability to follow directions, and also your ability to plan ahead, to anticipate and to respond to challenges, and the thoughtfulness and seriousness with which you approach this significant career decision. This is an exercise for what lies ahead. For better or worse, the best predictor of future behavior is often past behavior. Do not underestimate the significance others attach to how you present yourself and treat them. Professionalism is highly valued by the schools of the health professions and it is best practice moving forward to remain mindful of demonstrated professionalism.

CIH is committed to helping applicants present themselves in the strongest way possible. This presentation must be made with integrity, honesty, and in keeping with the ethical standards set forth in the University’s Academic Policies and Requirements (http://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/). We are obligated to report all cases of deliberate falsification in the application process that come to our attention to schools of the health professions. Also remember that anything you state in an application can be subject to verification, and that admissions officers may spot-check an application for veracity and honesty.
Application services also require applicants to state whether they have been subject to any academic disciplinary action, whether or not that action appears on the applicant’s transcript.1 While this demonstrates the seriousness with which professional schools approach the issue of academic honesty, it also suggests the significance and the repercussions of even seemingly minor ethical infractions. Any applicant who has ever been placed on academic or disciplinary probation must meet with a CIH adviser before the end of Winter Quarter to discuss his/her individual circumstances so that we can discuss together the best ways to present and support you in this process.

Social Media, Public Presence, and You
In addition to how you present yourself through your application and through your interactions with representatives of professional schools, admissions committees may search for and consider your appearance in other venues, particularly on the Internet. Your presence in online, print, and other media is fair game—it can and will be interpreted to reflect your potential for professional behavior in the future (by employers and professional schools alike). Accordingly, you should be very careful to cultivate a mature presence in social media, and exercise sound judgment when appearing in any kind of publication. Check your privacy settings for any accounts on sites like Facebook and Instagram, and ensure that no unprofessional photographs or statements are searchable or visible to the public. A good rule of thumb is that you should not have anything online or in print that you would not want your grandmother to come across. It is a small world, and you should never underestimate the ability of an admissions officer to come across anything you’ve done in the past, whether online or not.

Taking Ownership of Your Application
Make sure you are applying for your own reasons—not those of your parents, friends, or others. A support network can sustain you through difficult times, but ultimately you will be the one going through this application process and you will be the one to go through medical school and live your life as a clinician. Please be certain that you have considered this path thoughtfully and are making a sound decision for yourself. Accordingly, your application is meant to reflect your own preparation, and readiness, for professional school—your “voice” should be the only one heard throughout the process. You are asking the health professions schools to accept you as a professional colleague, therefore it is important that you demonstrate your ability to act in a professional way. Asking parents, faculty, or other people to intervene on your behalf will undercut this professionalism.

If you find yourself unable to complete some part of the application process in a timely or accurate fashion, this could be a sign that you might be more successful applying in the future. Successful health professionals are those who learn what is possible and manageable at a given time; you, too, must learn when to take best advantage of your strengths. Health professions schools will be there next year, or two years from now, when your materials are in order, your experiences are in line, and you can present yourself in the best possible light. By applying prematurely, you may be cheating yourself of the future you deserve.

CIH E-mail List
The CIH e-mail list is the most important way we communicate with our pre-health students. Important notifications about events, programs, and deadlines will be sent to your UChicago email account throughout the year. Accordingly, you are responsible for meeting all of the deadlines outlined in the material sent from CIH. Any amendments, additions, or corrections to the AG-23 will also be sent to you by e-mail. Our current system allows us to track when messages were sent, received, and opened. Note: You are responsible for ensuring that you receive CIH messages if you forward your @uchicago.edu e-mail to a different address. Check your spam and junk mail folders and filter settings carefully.

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1 For the AMCAS question on institutional action and academic honesty, see Appendix A.
EXTERNAL EXPECTATIONS: PREPARING FOR HEALTH AND MEDICINE PROGRAMS

The quality of an applicant’s preparation for a career in health and medicine plays a significant role in determining success. There is no “checklist” of items which can simply be completed to ensure strong preparation for professional school. Rather, schools consider the breadth of your academic accomplishments and co-curricular activities, the depth of your intellectual and community engagement, and the ways you tie together your abilities and interests and link them to your career goals.

Many admissions committees think holistically, considering a range of areas when evaluating applicants. Admissions officers look for evidence of a number of academic and personal competencies—a competency being a combination of knowledge and skills which demonstrate ability in a particular domain. Competencies important for success in health and medicine include, but are not limited to, competency in science, leadership, ethical thinking, communication, critical thinking, and altruism. The various elements of your application (e.g., GPA, MCAT, personal statement, activities and experiences) will allow you to demonstrate competency in many of these domains. Thus, it is critical to be mindful of the role each application component can play in presenting you as a well-prepared candidate.

As they engage in a holistic review of an application, admissions committees often consider the following questions:

Is the applicant academically prepared?
Admissions committees want to be certain that their matriculants are prepared to succeed both in the classroom and on standardized exams (e.g., licensing exams and boards). Accordingly, they look for evidence of preparation and competency in previous academic performance, considering GPA, the depth and breadth of coursework (e.g., course difficulty and combination), and standardized exam (e.g., MCAT) scores. Admissions committees consider your overall and cumulative GPA, but also your science grades (Biological, Chemistry, Physics, and Math/Statistics, abbreviated BCPM) and your non-science grades (“All Other,” or AO). Committees also examine research, teaching, tutoring, course assisting, special skills, and attitude towards learning (e.g., intellectual curiosity, commitment to life-long learning) as evidence of your intellectual skill and motivation.

In our experience, medical school applicants from the College who have a BCPM GPA below 3.30 and MCAT sections below 126 often (but not always) struggle to gain admission. Although personal circumstances, special curricula, and other factors can play a role, remember that the numeric metrics are often evaluated first and foremost. For example, an applicant might have had lower grades during his/her first year due to weak high school preparation, but a marked upward trend in that applicant’s grades over the next three years might demonstrate commitment, the ability to use resources, etc., and thus may be interpreted as better reflecting that applicant’s potential. But if the overall GPA or science GPA is not high enough to even warrant consideration, the admissions committees are not likely to take additional factors into consideration.

Like all aspects of an application, however, grades and test scores are not read in a vacuum. Simply put, there is no formula. Applicants with strong GPAs (3.90) may be passed over if they are perceived to lack empathy for others. Similarly, a sterling academic record may be discounted if there is no evidence of exposure to diversity, as the committee might question whether the applicant is able to adapt to new and changing environments. Finally, it is not enough to state that you are academically prepared; your application must demonstrate this and you must confirm it on interview day. Being deemed academically prepared by an admissions committee allows your application to be considered further. If you are not viewed as academically prepared to handle the curriculum of medical school, other aspects of your application do not “make up for” this concern.

Is the applicant personally prepared?
Personal preparation reflects dedication to making an impact, demonstrated longitudinal commitment to something one is passionate about, and the enthusiasm to apply this passion to health and medicine. Evidence of community engagement and the development of personal and interpersonal skills necessary to be an effective caregiver should not be underestimated. Community engagement is linked closely to attributes highly valued by admissions committees, including leadership, empathy, tolerance, communication, and organizational skills. Committees also look for evidence

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of a giving spirit, as well as for significant experiences and evidence that you have grown from them. Committees are attracted by grounded, socially well-adjusted candidates comfortable with unfamiliar situations and with people from different backgrounds. Remember, health and medicine are helping professions.

All of your activities do not necessarily need to be directly or obviously related to health and medicine; what is important is the passion you bring to your pursuits, and your ability to articulate your contributions to the activity, as well as the skills and lessons you have learned from it. Regardless of the type of activity, it is essential that you describe the transferable skills you have acquired—that is, skills learned that can be applied to your chosen profession. For example, tutoring children in an after-school arts program might demonstrate that you have cultivated the ability to communicate with diverse populations, and that you are able to think creatively and expressively (as well as scientifically or logically). Alternatively, taking a leadership role in developing programming and events for an RSO can demonstrate your ability to manage details and deadlines, and to collaborate with a team of people with diverse skill sets.

If an admissions committee interprets your activities as having been chosen so as to “do all the right things” (a.k.a., the “check-box approach”), your application may be viewed with suspicion. Your activities, and your descriptions of them, must be authentic—that is, you should choose your activities based on your interests, values, and commitments, not on the chance to pad your resume. Trust us: it is difficult to fake passion and substance in an application. A laundry list of superficial accomplishments will make it appear that your only true commitment is to doing what might look good on an application. Carefully chosen, meaningful activities, however, will allow you to show admissions committees your actual abilities, commitments, and the contributions you will make to your professional school class.

**It is not enough to say that you are personally prepared; you must provide evidence through your personal statement and activities list. Moreover, your letters of recommendation must also indicate strong personal preparation. The interview must confirm this information.**

Has the applicant made a well-founded decision to embark upon a career in health and medicine?
Translation: Does the applicant know what he/she is getting into? This includes both the good and bad aspects of a profession.

In answering the question above, admission committees consider evidence of significant experiences that would allow you to learn about the health professions as a career choice. They consider evidence that you have tested your decision and have made an authentic commitment. Needless to say, simply stating “I want to be a doctor” is insufficient. The absence of significant exposure to health care environments and consistent engagement with persons in need may be interpreted as insufficient career exploration. Evidence of a commitment to a career in health and medicine includes work or volunteer experience in medical settings or with social agencies, internships/externships, career workshops, shadowing, and thoughtful exploration of alternative and complementary careers, both inside and outside health and medicine. A note on shadowing: while admissions committees do consider shadowing a valuable way to learn about healthcare, shadowing is by definition a passive act. While shadowing can play a meaningful role in providing exposure to a profession, opportunities to integrate yourself into the shadowing experience are limited. Shadowing, then, is most valuable when complemented with other clinical or patient-related experiences.

Understanding why you want to pursue a particular career also involves knowing why you do not want to pursue other careers. Students with especially strong research backgrounds, for example, may need to articulate why they want to pursue a career at the bedside rather than at the bench. Given the collaborative nature of health care and the diversity of professionals that make up a care team, it is also important to understand why you wish to take on one particular role rather than another (physician vs. nurse vs. occupational therapist).

Admissions committees also look for evidence that your decision is authentic; given the vast number of applications they review, they are adept at discerning authenticity. Applicants from UChicago who are academically and personally prepared but who cannot provide evidence of a well-founded decision to enter a health profession are generally not successful. Even if your written application does not provide this evidence, you may still be invited for an interview. However, if you cannot articulate why you want to enter medicine (as well as why you do not want to pursue a PhD, PharmD, etc.), you may struggle in the admissions process.
THE APPLICATION PROCESS: BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

Early Birds: Timing is (almost) Everything
There are two major advantages to being early throughout the application process. The primary reason is to anticipate and take advantage of the rolling admissions process. It is important to act early in the process so that your application file is reviewed by the admissions committee while they still have the greatest number of interview slots and seats available. As the cycle progresses and offers are made, the number of unfilled interview slots and seats dwindles. Thus, later applications are examined more critically. Individuals who might have been competitive applicants and been invited for interviews early in the process can be passed over for more exceptional candidates.

A second reason to be early is to take advantage of the UChicago academic calendar. Professional schools begin interviewing in late August and are fully engaged in the process by September. If you are early with all phases of your application, you will be in a position to complete the written aspects of your secondary applications and begin the interview process before classes resume in late September. For example, if you are applying to medical school and are proactive in completing your AMCAS primary application as soon as it is made available in May (which the CIH Application will position you to do), you can submit it the first week of June. You will receive secondary applications in the summer, when you can work on the essays undistracted by academic responsibilities. Returning the secondary applications promptly enables you to complete some interviews in September before classes resume. If you complete the various elements and stages of your application at the earliest dates possible rather than at the last possible moments, you will significantly advantage yourself in the application process. If you are prepared to apply, this simple strategy costs nothing and can pay wonderful dividends.

When To Apply
The application process is long, expensive, time-consuming, and pretty emotional to go through. Therefore, CIH strongly urges applicants whose credentials are not competitive to wait to apply. This requires that you take an honest look at yourself, considering both your strengths and your weaknesses before moving forward. Being strategic about when you apply can also demonstrate maturity, the thoughtfulness of your decision-making, the seriousness of your preparation, and an ability to delay gratification—all highly valued qualities in the health professions. An additional year or two can greatly improve your chances for admission (allowing, e.g., for further career exploration, the opportunity to obtain a glowing letter of recommendation from a science faculty member speaking to your improvement over time, a chance to improve your science GPA). Remember, the strength of an application is not a function of passionate claims or future promises (e.g., I aim to, I hope to, I intend to). Rather, success hinges on evidence presented in support of these claims.

It can be very advantageous for applicants with low science GPAs to complete a post-baccalaureate or special master’s program before applying. Beyond helping you cultivate competency in science, these programs can help you build confidence in your academic abilities, demonstrate commitment to learning, and provide evidence of dedication to pursuing a career in the health professions. CIH can advise you about these options.

Many very competitive candidates also make the decision to wait to apply—be it to have some time to engage in a new activity or interest, simply taking an academic break, or working for a while to save money for the application process. Applicants are increasingly taking 1-2 gap years prior to applying to health professions schools, in fact, over the past two application cycles over two-thirds of our applicants were 4th years or alumni. The admissions committees do not place judgment on whether you took time away or whether you did not—one is not inherently better than the other. Admissions committees want you to apply when you are ready to do so.

Re-Applicants/Those Who Turn Down Offers of Admission
Schools of the health professions and CIH take the re-application process very seriously. As the above section suggests, delaying an application, when appropriate, to allow for additional preparation reflects a number of very positive qualities. Conversely, an ill-timed application can raise questions about your judgment, seriousness of purpose, and ability to solicit and heed advice.

There are medical schools which do not consider re-applicants after a certain number of attempts. Needless to say, the decision to mount a second application should be made only after careful consideration of the variables which may have led to rejections. Accordingly, applicants who quickly re-apply or those who fail to strategically target areas of weakness are often unsuccessful again. In our many years of experience, we have found it best to wait at least two years before re-
applying to allow for time to strengthen the application (i.e., you should not apply in the cycle immediately following an unsuccessful application). Applicants who wish to re-apply must meet with your CIH adviser before the end of Winter Quarter to discuss the timing and feasibility of a re-application, and how we might best support you in that process.

If you are admitted to a school of the health professions and opt not to accept that offer in favor of re-applying and hoping for a different/better outcome, you will not be eligible for the Health and Medicine Committee Letter process in the future. Schools of the health professions are quite clear and unyielding on their view of applicants to act in such a manner—there is a clear bias against applicants who had the opportunity to attend professional school and turned down the opportunity. Whether fair/accurate to your personal circumstance or not, the assumption is that you are either “name shopping” for a “better” school, or that you weren’t thoughtful in where you made your original applications.

Early Decision Program: Medical Schools
This program is NOT the same as applying early decision to colleges. It does not give you an admissions advantage, and it is a binding program. The Early Decision Program (EDP) was established by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). EDP applicants are permitted to apply to one school only (typically by August 1st), and are guaranteed an admission decision by October 1st. EDP applicants may not apply to any other medical school prior to receiving an admission decision. If offered admission, EDP applicants must accept the offer. Most medical schools participate in the program; however, it is advantageous only for extremely qualified and competitive applicants certain of their school choice. Due to the high stakes of such an application, medical schools often require that EDP applicants meet with a Dean or Director of Admissions prior to applying. Therefore, applicants considering the program should meet with CIH to discuss the program in greater detail before the end of Winter Quarter, so that we have time to strategize together your appropriate communication with the medical school.

Pritzker School of Medicine Accelerated Medical Scholars Program (AMSP)
The University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine’s AMSP provides an opportunity for exceptional College students to complete their undergraduate degree with a “BA in Professional Option: Medicine,” by replacing the fourth-year undergraduate curriculum with the first year of medical school. The BA degree is granted after successful completion of the first year of medical school and the MD degree after successful completion of the four-year medical curriculum.

AMSP is a highly competitive, merit-based program, and Pritzker, on average, accepts only one AMSP applicant annually. Because of the accelerated nature of the curriculum, applicants must possess outstanding academic credentials that place them among the top candidates for medical school in the country. In addition to proven academic accomplishment and promise, applicants must have a demonstrable commitment to a career as a physician or physician scientist, evidence of analytical thinking, strong communication skills, leadership, and energetic involvement in the various communities in which they participate. Pritzker will not consider (and therefore CIH will not support) applicants with MCAT scores below the 93rd percentile, or with individual section scores below the 85th percentile. In addition, CIH applicants must have an overall GPA of 3.70 and BCPM of 3.65. Students considering AMSP should meet with CIH to discuss the program early in their College career. Third-year students who meet the above criteria must schedule a meeting with a CIH Health Professions Adviser to discuss their candidacy before January 14 (the end of the second week of Winter Quarter).
THE HEALTH AND MEDICINE APPLICATION PROCESS: OVERVIEW

The Health and Medicine Application Process (HMAP) is designed to bring transparency to what can seem like a daunting and mysterious process. To do this, we divide the application into a series of manageable steps, giving you ample time for careful reflection and thoughtful decision-making. Each step is thoughtfully designed to help you manage the parts of your application with as little stress as possible, while also acclimating you to the culture of professionalism you are seeking to join.

Accordingly, the stages of the HMAP dovetail with components of the applications you will submit to professional schools. The primary parts of the HMAP are:
- One mandatory and three strongly recommended application seminars
- Personal readiness checklist
- Statement of Understanding and Applicant Agreement
- Dean’s Certification
- An individual personal statement consultation (optional)
- A Self-Assessment Rubric
- Mock behavioral interview with a Career Advancement staff (optional)
- Mock Interview with a Pritzker Medical Student (optional)

Following your successful completion of all parts of the HMAP, CIH will compile your individual letters of recommendation into the HMAP Letter Packet and upload it on your behalf. The HMAP Letter Packet is contingent upon your meeting all deadlines and requirements outlined in this document. **Failure to meet these deadlines possibly renders you ineligible for the HMAP Letter Packet, as throughout your application process, beginning with our office, you are expected to meet all deadlines and expectations.** For your convenience, we list all deadlines and dates on the first page of this guidebook.

**Current Students**
With the exception of students studying abroad (see below), current students are required to attend and actively participate in the first mandatory seminar. **Students must arrive on time and to stay for the full duration of each meeting.** We are mindful that applicants have numerous commitments and we have therefore developed a process that has all of the necessary steps involved to allow us to properly support you in your application, and to allow you to invest the time and energy necessary for a strong application. Receipt of the HMAP Letter Packet is contingent upon your active participation and engagement. If you previously began the HMAP process (formerly the HMC process) but did not complete your application to health professions programs, you are required to re-do the HMAP in its entirety.

**Study Abroad**
CIH encourages students to study abroad. However, study abroad does not exempt students from HMAP’s application requirements or deadlines. We will make recordings and PowerPoint handouts of the application seminars available to students studying abroad; you are responsible for this material. Personal statement conferences and mock interviews may be conducted by telephone, Skype, Zoom, or via email. You are also responsible for the timely submission of your pre-interview essays, letters of recommendation, waiver forms, and other materials. All deadlines are local Chicago time. If you are living in a place where access to the Internet is unreliable, you are responsible for ensuring that you have adequate access to submit your materials by the appropriate deadline.

**Alumni**
CIH works closely with many College alumni. In fact, the average age of matriculants to medical school is around 24-25, so many successful applicants are choosing to delay applying until after graduation. Like students studying abroad, alumni are expected to meet all HMAP requirements and deadlines. Local alumni are required to attend our virtual application seminars. Audio recordings and PowerPoint handouts of each seminar will be made available.

**Advanced Alumni**
Alumni who graduated more than three years prior to the current application cycle (i.e., before 2020) should have rich professional, personal, and/or academic experiences beyond their time in the College, and are therefore not eligible for an HMAP Letter Packet, however, advanced alumni are welcome to participate in the HMAP programs. Thus, for alumni with a wealth of post-graduate experience, an HMAP Letter Packet of mostly undergraduate letters is of little value.
Instead, CIH recommends a more individualized approach combining letters reflecting academic performance with letters discussing post-graduate pursuits. Accordingly, alumni who graduated before 2020 are invited to arrange a time to meet with a CIH adviser to discuss the best approach.

**Post-Baccalaureate & Special Masters Programs**

Instead of the HMAP Letter Packet, alumni who have completed post-baccalaureate work shall obtain a letter of support/endorsement from their post-bac institution. Regardless of the type of post-baccalaureate program (i.e., academic enhancement or career changer), your post-bac program is best positioned to speak to your most recent academic performance and competency in science—questions which will be at the top of an admissions committee’s mind.

**International Students**

It has become increasingly difficult for international students to obtain admission to U.S. medical schools (as well as to other schools of the health professions)—even with solid academic and personal preparation and ample financial and social resources. Many medical school loans are federally and/or state funded, and are limited to U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Finances aside, medical schools must consider the challenges their graduates will encounter (e.g., residency placement). Since many residency training programs are also federally funded, international students are again at a disadvantage. Returning to the home country can pose challenges as well. Therefore, we encourage international students to meet with us early in this process, so that we can do what we can to assist them.

**Statement of Understanding and Applicant Agreement**

An electronically confirmed Statement of Understanding and Applicant Agreement, attesting that you have read this entire document carefully, must be submitted through Slate by 5:00 p.m. on December 1st. This is one step beyond simply stating your “Intent to Apply” as 2023 within Slate. Alumni and students studying abroad follow the same procedure.

**Dean’s Certification**

In March, we will send the list of current applicants to the Dean of Students Office as well as the Title IX office on campus to determine whether any of our applicants have experienced academic or disciplinary issues during their time on campus. In Slate, you will grant us permission to perform this Dean’s Certification. We encourage anyone with such actions to speak with us early in their application process so that we can begin to determine whether (and how) the action may affect their application to professional school. Additionally, you will certify that, should an issue arise following the completion of this screening, you will immediately bring such action to our attention.

**Personal Readiness Checklist**

Our greatest hope is that you launch your application process when you are sufficiently prepared and when you will be most likely to meet with success in the process. As mentioned earlier, schools of the health professions consider a myriad of factors in evaluating your application. A single misstep is not often enough to render your application precarious, however, multiple missteps may demonstrate that this is not the appropriate time to apply. The checklist is designed to help you identify whether you have small “flags” in your application, and then to meet with us to determine the remediation and timing that we would most recommend. Remember, our goal is always to support you in fulfilling your goals and to assist you, to the best of our ability, in moving forward with success. You must complete the Personal Readiness Checklist through Slate by 5:00 p.m. on December 1st. Alumni and students studying abroad follow the same procedure.

**Application Seminars**

The goals of the application seminars are to make the application process more transparent and to help pace applicants through the process. The content of the seminars changes yearly and is shaped by feedback from previous applicants and admissions committees as well as changes in the application process itself. The material covered in each seminar is designed to answer “big picture” questions in a group setting. This enables CIH to tailor one-on-one advising sessions to each applicant’s individual needs.

The application seminars are:
- Application Seminar I: Application Process Overview (REQUIRED)
- Application Seminar II: Crafting the Personal Statement (Optional)
- Application Seminar III: School Selection, Interviewing, and Emotional Quotient (Optional)
- Application Seminar IV: Secondary Applications and Financing (Optional)

Personal Statement Consultation
Should you wish to have your personal statement reviewed by a member of our office, you will have the ability to do so through individual appointment scheduling with your CIH adviser from January through May 13th. Further details on the personal statement and the personal statement consultation are below, in the section covering the primary application.

Pre-Primary Application Required Steps
The materials you must complete prior to your primary application submission and your HMAP Letter Packet request mirrors the primary application and affords you an additional opportunity to reflect on your personal characteristics and career choice. The required steps are found in Slate as your application “checklist” and includes a waiver for the HMAP Letter Packet, your personal statement, a completed self-assessment rubric, an a fully completed and up-to-date Academics and Engagements Planner. It is in your best interest to provide accurate, thoughtful, concise, and honest responses. This is designed to prepare you for the essay questions you will respond to in the application process.

HMAP Letter Packet
For the 2023 application cycle and cycles moving forward, CIH has transitioned to offering to submit a Letter Packet for new applicants on their behalf, rather than the HMC Committee Letter as in previous years. Given the evolution of the medical school admissions landscape in recent years, the value of and subsequent need for a Committee Letter submitted by pre-health advisers on behalf of medical school applicants has decreased. This shift means that students will receive even more optimally focused support from our team members in other elements of the application process without the added pressure of a culminating Committee Letter. Additionally, our team is providing even more robust programming in partnership with other Careers In Programs at the intersections between them and the healthcare industry – areas of growing interest from students. The HMAP Letter Packet consists of a general cover letter along with the individual letters of recommendation students have uploaded to their Slate portal.

How To Request your HMAP Letter Packet
We will begin compiling your cover letter and your individual letters of recommendation into one file individualized Letters of Recommendation are received and you have submitted your AMCAS application. To request your HMAP Letter Packet, you must first submit your AMCAS (or other primary) application. Then email us with a PDF of that application, a list of authors who have submitted letters of recommendation on your behalf, and your Letter Request ID from AMCAS. We will finalize and transmit the packets in the order in which the request was received, with the first submission to the medical schools occurring in early July.

HMAP Waiver of Right of Access
You will complete your HMAP waiver through Slate. If you wish to waive your right of access to your HMAP letter packet (i.e., the packet and letters within are confidential), indicate so within the system. If you do not wish to waive your right (i.e., the packet and letters within are not confidential), indicate your wish to retain your right to access. Note: although schools accept both confidential and non-confidential letters of recommendation, letters written in confidence are given more weight.
THE PRIMARY APPLICATION: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Much like the “Common Application” you completed for college admissions, most schools of the health professions utilize a centralized application service (e.g., AMCAS, AACOMAS, VMCAS) to verify and process primary (i.e., preliminary) application materials. Primary application materials typically include demographic information, academic information, a personal statement, and a list of activities and experiences. Each service has detailed information describing their process, including answers to frequently asked questions. Carefully read these instructions before you begin to complete your application so that you understand the scope of the application and your requirements for completion.

The costs of a primary application can add up quickly (for example, in 2020, AMCAS charged an application processing fee of $170 for one medical school designation, and $40 for each designation thereafter. Most of our applicants apply to an average of 18-20 schools). For applicants with financial need, a fee waiver program is available and information can be found in the primary application. If you are granted a fee waiver by the primary application service, most of the participating schools will waive their secondary application fees as well. The AAMC also offers a fee waiver for the MCAT, which is tied to the fee waiver for AMCAS.

Standardized Exam: MCAT
The purpose of the MCAT is to test basic science and social science knowledge and reasoning ability. It is not an aptitude test. Information on the content, structure, and scoring of the MCAT can be found on the AAMC website (https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/taking-mcat-exam/).

Preparation
The MCAT will require you to apply your knowledge of biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, physics, sociology, psychology and math. However, it is qualitatively different than most exams you have taken in the College; accordingly, it requires a change in mindset. It is best to prepare longitudinally and deliberately. We strongly encourage applicants to be exceedingly well-prepared before taking the exam. You do not want to sit for the MCAT once just to see what it’s like. Unlike other standardized tests, the MCAT should not presume to be taken multiple times. As with the timing of the application itself, it is best to be strategic about the timing of the MCAT, demonstrating maturity and judgment by choosing to take it only when you are fully prepared for it. A poor MCAT score can undermine an entire application. A poor MCAT score followed by a stellar MCAT score leaves room for doubt—admissions committees might question why the applicant did not take the exam seriously the first time, or they might average the two scores. Once again, the less room for interpretation regarding your preparation, the better. The majority of schools will accept MCAT scores taken within 3 years of matriculation, however, we encourage you to check the MCAT website to confirm the exact rules at each of your schools of interest. You do not want to have to retake the MCAT because your score expired!

Test-Taking Strategies:
Ultimately, the MCAT is a test not of one’s ability to memorize facts but to integrate prior knowledge with new information, and questions are successfully answered based on such a balance. Some require regurgitation of specific information contained in a passage, while others require analysis of information provided entirely by the exam itself. Mastery of test-taking strategy often is dependent upon the ability to quickly identify these question types as well as common signs that can be utilized in answering them. Study for the MCAT can take a variety of forms, including 1) self-study, 2) commercial test prep course in-person, 3) commercial test prep course online, 4) private tutoring. We would encourage you to consider the method by which you currently learn best as a guideline—the MCAT is NOT the time to start a completely new study strategy! If you are person who learns well in a lecture-based environment or who needs the structure of a course, then perhaps a commercial preparation course is the best bet. If you work well individually or in a small-group, then structured self-study might be the way to approach the exam.

Timing & Logistics
As you prepare for the exam, it is essential to measure your progress (e.g., complete multiple full-length practice exams in test-taking conditions modeled on the actual exam) so that you can anticipate when to schedule the exam. Use the results of practice exams to diagnose areas in which you need to improve. Think both about the content of questions that
give you trouble and the types of questions you tend to miss. Consider also the amount of time you spend in various subject areas and on various types of questions, to determine if you can move through the test more efficiently. Be careful to strengthen your areas of weakness, rather than focusing primarily reinforcing areas of your strength.

To ensure you get your preferred test site, it is ideal to register as soon as registration is available. However, if you find you are not ready (e.g., your practice test scores are not improving), even if your friends might be ready, reschedule. Even if your parents expect you to be ready, or if you want to be readier than you are, reschedule.

If you wish to receive an HMAP Letter Packet, you must select the option to “release” your standardized exam scores to CIH. If you do not release your scores, CIH cannot identify your application or transmit your application materials (e.g., HMAP Letter Packet, LORs). If you forget to release your scores during the exam, it is your responsibility to follow-up with the appropriate test service to do so.

If you release your scores, AMCAS will automatically send them (and any previous score) to the participating schools to which you have applied. On average, it takes 30 days from the date of exam to receive your score.

**Personal Statement**

The strongest personal statements are just that—personal: authentic and unique. Application Seminar II: Crafting Your Personal Statement provides details about personal statement “do’s” and “don’ts,” the reader’s perspective, and writing style. The personal statement is one of two pieces of the application over which you have complete control (the other being Activities & Experiences). Writing a personal statement is an iterative process, not a one-time event: you will need to prepare multiple versions of it, editing them relentlessly, in order to arrive at a final statement of which you will be proud. Accordingly, we encourage you to write and rewrite your personal statement several times before bringing it to us for our comments, so that we can be most helpful to you in our review. We will post the audio and the power point presentation from the personal statement seminar within the “Library” section of the Inspire website. Please refer to those materials as questions arise. Many of you ask if there are examples we can provide to you of “good” statements. Remember that the statement is, by definition, PERSONAL. Therefore, we do not collect or provide examples of “good” statements vs. “bad” statements. We encourage you to write your personal journey and motivation in your own voice.

Those who are applying to MSTP or MD/PhD programs will write two additional essays as a part of their primary application. One will ask you to describe why you are pursuing the MSTP or MD/PhD pathway. The other will ask you to define all of your prior research experiences. Applicants at times struggle with how the three essays should connect or flow with one another. We recommend thinking of the Personal Statement as your broad introduction to why medicine as a career and how you reached this decision, then narrowing further in the “Why MD/PhD” essay to discuss your goals for both degrees and how you hope to use them, and then the final detail of your past research experiences and what you have accomplished. Sometimes MD/PhD applicants feel they should not comment on their research at all in the Personal Statement, since they will have two additional essays in which to discuss it. While we understand the motivation behind that approach, it can be rather jarring for an admissions committee member to read an essay 100% focused on the clinical side/value of medicine and your desire to work directly with patients, and then see an essay all about why you wish to pursue a PhD and research career. Put another way, reading a personal statement that never mentions research, followed by two essays all about research, can lead the reader to question your authenticity.

Though not required to have us review your personal statement, we strongly recommend that you do so. We will be available for personal statement review during a regularly scheduled appointment throughout the months of January through mid-May, provided you submit your statement one week ahead of time.

**Activities & Experiences**

Similar to the personal statement and letters of recommendation, the activities and experiences section of the application is an opportunity to paint a portrait of you, the applicant. You will be asked to detail a maximum of 15 activities, jobs, volunteer experiences, internships, and hobbies as well as awards you have received since graduating from high school. Your emphasis should be on the quality of each experience, not the quantity of experiences (i.e., you are not required to use all 15 spaces). You will be asked to provide a brief (i.e., 700 characters, spaces included) description of each activity, so be strategic:

- if you have similar experiences (e.g., multiple research positions) highlight their differences (e.g., different skill sets, lessons learned)
- provide a balanced and holistic overview of your life since beginning college—if you only include one set of experiences (e.g., research) or skills, you will be perceived as one-dimensional
- demonstrate self-reflection—integrate your experiences by drawing linkages across them (e.g., how one experience informed another, how they individually and collectively shape who you are)
- link experiences to the competencies, skills, attributes, and traits valued by the health professions

Out of these 15 activities, you will be asked to designate the three most meaningful experiences. For these three experiences, you will be given an additional 1,325 characters to discuss your activity. Applicants often ask about the strategy one should use in selecting the most meaningful experiences. Should you avoid the experiences mentioned in the personal statement since they have already been discussed? Or would it be weird not to have overlap, because if it wasn’t meaningful, why mention it in the personal statement? Again, this decision is ultimately a personal one, and may depend on the overall flow and content of your personal statement. Think about the three experiences which are truly most meaningful to you, whether because of the personal growth/impact that resulted or because you spent considerable time with the experience. It is most likely that at least one of your most meaningful experiences should be tied to a medically-related experience, and at least one would be a further elaboration on an experience discussed in your personal statement.

Your descriptions should be thoughtful but succinct, with just enough detail to explain why the experience was meaningful. Be mindful of what the reader will know and not know (i.e., avoid acronyms and terms specific to the UChicago; avoid extremely technical language when describing research). The tone with which you describe these activities is crucial—if you do not sound excited, engaged, and committed to the pursuits you describe, your reader will probably not be inspired either.

Each experience should be entered only once (e.g., for Dean’s List, note each year earned in the description). When schools download your primary application, they can select the order of your activities (e.g., chronological, alphabetical). Nevertheless, we recommend that you list experiences and activities in order of importance, beginning with the most significant.

Note: The information you provide must not only be thoughtful and succinct, but also accurate and honest. Your integrity may be called into question, and your application rejected, if you intentionally (or unintentionally) misstate, exaggerate/inflate your accomplishments (see “Professional and Ethical Conduct,” Page 5). The information you provide in your application is more easily (and often) confirmed than most applicants think. For example, admissions officers frequently add up the number of hours attributed to each activity; if your in-class hours and co-curricular activities add up to 150 hours per week, your honesty will be questioned. Readers will also often look up the websites of organizations, clubs, and labs.

Clinical Experiences Abroad
Many applicants have participated in service projects (both locally and abroad) that involve patient care. These experiences can be very rewarding and meaningful; however, we strongly urge you to be mindful of the ethical implications of these projects and your roles in them. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has adopted guidelines for pre-medical and medical students providing patient care during clinical experiences abroad. The AAMC notes that “students traveling abroad should understand their role as learners and never work beyond their level of training.”3 Performing any act or procedure (e.g., extracting a tooth) for which you have not been properly trained will not impress an admissions committee. As a rule of thumb, you should not do anything abroad that you are not qualified or permitted to do in the United States. Such actions show poor judgment on your part, and they reflect poorly on the University. Admissions committees are also increasingly suspicious of “medical tourism,” especially when students participate in service trips, often by paying private companies, when there are populations in need right here in Chicago. When discussing clinical experiences abroad, we advise you to realistically represent on the nature of your pursuits and the level of your contributions to them.

Letters of Recommendation (LOR)
All letters of recommendation must be submitted to CIH by 5:00 on May 19th. Containing nuanced, detailed information by independent people who know you well, LOR help contextualize your strengths and weaknesses, and give readers insight into aspects of your academic career, co-curricular pursuits, and character that may not be visible in

3 See Appendix B.
your own written materials. Strong LOR also reflect your ability to cultivate relationships with professors and supervisors, to enlist their support of your application, and to identify and use resources well. LOR confirm claims that you make in other parts of your application, and allow readers an additional opportunity to understand both your potential contributions to your chosen profession as well as your specific motivations for pursuing it.

The best LOR come from writers who know you well as an individual. Even if you are the top student in a class, a letter that attests to this without providing more personalized information will not carry as much weight as will a letter from someone who can speak to your personal characteristics, interpersonal skills, values and commitments, etc. Letters from writers who know an applicant well often include sentences like:

- “She was successfully able to maintain good relationships with everyone, from clinic technicians to medical students, residents, and fellows in the clinic, to research scientists in the laboratory.” (Competencies: collaborative skills, relationship building, career exploration through learning about a care team.)
- “He has a natural ability to put troubled people at ease, and has contributed greatly to the development and maintenance of a community atmosphere that embraces diversity, individuality, and mutual respect.” (Competencies: interpersonal skills, altruism, professional demeanor, cross-cultural sensitivity.)
- “I would be delighted to have her as my doctor because I would absolutely trust her analytical abilities and conscientiousness. Likewise, I would trust my children’s health to her because I would unequivocally trust her bedside manner and commitment to high-quality and complete care.” (Competencies: intellectual ability, professional demeanor, commitment to service.)

**Requirements**

All applicants must submit a minimum of three LOR from the following writers:

- Minimum of two LOR from science faculty/instructors with whom you have completed a course (lecture or lab component)
- Minimum of one LOR from non-science faculty/instructor with whom you have completed a course
- Optional one LOR from someone who can speak to who you are outside the classroom (e.g., research/lab supervisor, volunteer coordinator, academic adviser, coach)

Alumni must also submit a minimum of one LOR from someone who can speak to postgraduate work or experiences.

In addition to these requirements, applicants may submit one additional LOR. That is, current students may submit a maximum of five LOR, and alumni may submit a maximum of six LOR. Remember, though, that quality is more important than quantity. Should you have more than the maximum LOR in your application file, you must notify us via email regarding which LOR you want to use in support of your application (i.e., which LORs to retire). If you are requesting an HMAP Letter Packet, at least two of your faculty letters must be from current or former UChicago faculty from whom you completed a UChicago course.

LOR are appended to an HMAP general cover letter forming your letter packet, and thus should not be listed individually in your primary application. If you wish to add an additional letter to your application after the CIH deadline has passed, you should speak with CIH to discuss your individual circumstances and why that letter is important to your application.

**How to ask for a letter**

Think strategically about who you will ask to write on your behalf (e.g., what each will highlight about your candidacy). Be proactive and start early (no later than the end of Winter Quarter), so that your recommenders will have adequate time to compose thoughtful, detailed letters. It is best to ask in person so that you can both elaborate on the purpose of the LOR and get a sense of whether or not the person is comfortable supporting your application. Encourage them to be honest—you do not want a LOR from someone who cannot provide a strong endorsement of your candidacy. A weak LOR will not only fail to enhance your application but it may also undermine it.

Provide each writer with a portfolio of background information including:

- Cover Sheet: name, address, phone, email, and photo
- Brief Biography: your major, an explanation of the program to which you are applying and why, brief explanation of the strengths and weaknesses of your application. Be sure to provide context for your weaknesses (e.g., if you had a poor grade one quarter because of an illness)
- Resume: GPA, co-curricular experiences, special skills/experiences (e.g., languages, study abroad, research), employment history, internships, awards
- Personal Statement Draft
- Due date for the LOR
- AAMC guide for writing LOR for medical school:

Schools often recommend or require that the LOR be dated within a year of the application. Some students find it best to request a recommendation immediately following completion of a course, but we would encourage you to see this moment as the beginning of a more long-standing relationship. You can always remain in contact with an instructor, asking him/her to revise a letter with important updates reflecting academic, professional, or other achievements. Note: You should not plan to request a letter from your professors during Spring Quarter unless this is the second time you have had that professor.

Logistics
After you have completed the above, politely follow-up after a few weeks and ask if the writer requires any additional information. Send a thank-you note once your letter has been submitted and remember to inform the writer of the outcome.

It is your responsibility to follow up with each writer to confirm that his/her letter has been sent to CIH—CIH will not follow-up on your behalf. You will be able to track whether your letter has been submitted through Slate.

MD/PhD & MSTP Applicants
The above requirements also apply to MSTP and MD/PhD applicants. However, we strongly recommend that MSTP and MD/PhD applicants include in their LOR a letter from a Principal Investigator with whom you have conducted research. Similarly, we recommend that applicants to MD/PhD programs in a non-science discipline (e.g., anthropology) obtain a letter from a faculty member in the discipline to which you will be applying.

Waiver of Right of Access: Faculty Letters of Recommendation
Although LOR are appended in the HMAP Letter Packet, each letter of recommendation must be accompanied by a waiver, completed on Slate. Schools accept both confidential and non-confidential letters of recommendation, but letters written in confidence (i.e., you have waived your right of access to the letter) are given more weight. Note: University policy prohibits CIH from accepting letters from the student for whom they are written. Letters of Recommendation are requested through Slate.

Institutional Action
The majority of centralized application services ask if you have ever been subjected to an institutional action from your campus. At the University of Chicago, in accordance with the policies set forth by the Dean of Students office, you must answer YES to this question if you received a disciplinary sanction (such as suspension) that is noted on your official transcript. If you were questioned about a particular situation but deemed not guilty, or your sole punishment was a failing grade, you do NOT need to answer YES to the question. Please do, however, talk with CIH about how best to address the incident within the remainder of your application. A failing grade on your transcript will most certainly be noted by admissions committees and will require explanation.

Transcripts
You are responsible for requesting that the UChicago registrar submit your official transcript to the application system. UChicago is an approved school for electronic transmission of a transcript to AMCAS. You will make this request through your MyUChicago portal. In addition to your UChicago transcript, you will also need to request transcripts to be sent to AMCAS from any other U.S. or Canadian schools where you have studied. This includes courses you took either during high school or after you graduated from high school but before you began college. Simply put, if you received a grade at any college (2-year or 4-year) you need to send a transcript from that school. Allow plenty of time for transcripts to be sent.

School Selection
Application Seminar III: School Selection, Interviewing, and Emotional Quotient will delve into the art of school selection. CIH will offer guidelines and suggestions for school selection, but ultimately you will choose the schools to
which you will apply. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of being strategic in your school selection—careful research and informed choices can make the difference between success and failure. Rankings and admissions statistics provide an indication of how competitive a school may be, but it is essential to look beyond numbers. For those applying to medical school, the Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR) online resource is a great place to begin your research. Individual school websites are also replete with helpful information. As with other elements of the application, school selection requires that you make individual decisions, rather than use the same list as one of your friends. You are more likely to be successful if you identify and apply to schools that genuinely fit you, rather than schools that are on a Top 10 list or are popular among students in the College. An audio recording of Seminar III, along with the power point presentation, will be available via a Box file sent to applicants who are entering this coming cycle. We would encourage you to refer to that presentation for additional information on how to select schools.

Again, given the extremely competitive nature of the application process, admission to any school is a success. CIH does not support re-applications from individuals who have declined offers of admission, so give your choices careful thought and consideration. Accordingly, do not apply to a school you would not be willing to interview with, or to attend if it were the only one to which you were accepted.

Residency
As a full-time student, you are generally considered a resident of the state where your parents/family resides or where you graduated high school. Most centralized application services will not consider you a resident of more than one state. Knowing your residency status helps you to think strategically. You will automatically be given preference at your state schools, which are typically less expensive than their private counterparts. Pay attention to differences between in-state/out-of-state ratios. Some state schools only admit state residents, so do your research before applying. If you have a question about your state of residency, it is best to go directly to the school websites for additional information. CIH advisers are not aware of the policies of every single state.

Application Logistics & Summary
You should begin working on your primary application in early May, and submit it as soon as possible once it opens (typically near June 1st), but no later than 11:59 p.m. June 30. We advise applicants to submit the primary application as early in June as possible (see “Early Birds,” Page 9), even if you are taking the MCAT at a later date. Remember to release your application to CIH. Upon receipt of your primary application you will receive a confirmation email from AMCAS. Again, to request your HMAP Letter Packet, you must email a copy of your submitted application, which will include your application service ID number (e.g., AMCAS ID) to us (CIH@uchicago.edu), along with a list of the individual LORs you have solicited and your Letter Request ID as soon as you receive the confirmation email. This will “launch” your HMAP Letter Packet into the queue for compiling and transmission to the health professions schools.

Medical School Applicants
In addition to your AMCAS ID, CIH requires an AMCAS Letter ID (for identification purposes) to transmit your HMAP Letter Packet.

Note: AMCAS will ask you to identify what types of letters your undergraduate institution will be sending. Select: “Letter Packet.” Primary Contact/Author: Scott Metcalf. Contact Info: smetcalf@uchicago.edu, 773.702.7040, The University of Chicago, CIH, 1212 E. 59th Street, Chicago, IL 60637.
SECONDARY APPLICATIONS: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Application Seminar IV: Secondary Applications and Financing will outline steps necessary to complete the secondary applications for medical schools. After your application is processed by the centralized application service, it will be made available for download to the schools you designated. The amount of time this takes depends largely on when your application is submitted (see Early Birds), with most schools beginning to release their secondaries on July 1st or after. Upon receipt of your primary application, most schools will send a secondary application which includes an additional fee, further biographical information, and additional essays and short-answer questions. Note: A few schools will conduct a preliminary screening before sending a secondary application (e.g., UCSF, Vanderbilt). School-specific secondary application procedures for medical school are included in the Medical School Admissions Requirements resource on the AAMC’s website.

Do not delay—complete all secondary applications within two weeks of receiving them. Even schools without official rolling admissions have limited interview slots and many are 60-70% filled by the end of October. Secondary applications should be submitted well in advance of any official deadline. When completing secondaries, you can draw on material you saved from personal statement drafts, as well as material from the CIH Application and from your own school selection research. For example, a response to a secondary application question might begin, “I am a good fit for this school because of its historical commitment to serving vulnerable populations. This is a commitment I share, as you can see in my work with…”

Secondary questions provide an opportunity to speak to the “goodness of fit” between you and the school. Needless to say, it is impossible to elaborate on the ways in which a specific school complements your educational goals without being familiar with the institution (see School Selection, Page 21). Even if your primary application material is stellar, it will likely be dismissed if your answers to secondary questions give the appearance of being “cut and paste.” Generic responses to specific questions reflect a lack of interest and commitment. Moreover, there will be plenty of other applicants with both strong primary and secondary applications from which admissions committees can choose. The Secondary Application contains the questions/prompts that this particular school has deemed to be most important to their admissions committee. Therefore, it is very important that you give your responses as much attention and diligence as you did the completion of the primary application. To many schools, the Secondary is actually given more weight than the primary. Be sure you factor in enough time to your overall schedule/summer plans to give the Secondary Application the time and thoughtfulness it needs.

CASPer Test
Some schools have added an additional step to their secondary application process called the CASPer test. This computer-based test allows you to demonstrate the personal and professional characteristics that you possess, and would be bringing to your professional school training. Though only administered on certain dates throughout the application cycle, you are able to take the CASPer from your own home computer and internet connection. You may visit https://takecasper.com/aboutcasper/ for more information.

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL INTERVIEWS

The interview provides a chance for you to bring your application to life. Take advantage of the opportunity to distinguish yourself and add depth to your application—do not just parrot the material in your file when discussing your accomplishments, values, and beliefs. If necessary, you can also use the interview to update your file with new accomplishments, or to explain extenuating circumstances related to academic (or non-academic) challenges you may have overcome. Admissions committees consider a number of things on interview day (e.g., maturity, familiarity with the school/profession, communication skills, performance/composure under stress, ability to work with others) to assess how you would represent the school, treat patients, and contribute to the class. The interviewer might also consider if he/she can identify a unique set of skills or experiences you would bring to the larger community, or if he/she would trust you to care for a family member. We expect that interviews will take place in person for the 2023 cycle, however, should virtual interviews still be utilized we will send information about additional tips regarding your on-camera background, appearance, etc. The preparation you do prior to the interview and the questions you will likely be asked remain the same whether in-person or virtual.

Before the Interview
Presentation matters. Your clothing, grooming, and presence communicate a message. Do not underestimate their
importance. Prior to the interview, wear your entire outfit at another occasion to “test out” the fit and feel. It is difficult to present yourself with confidence if you are uncomfortable and distracted.

When considering how to present yourself at an interview, the guiding principle is to avoid anything—clothing, jewelry, scents (cologne, perfume, aftershave, strongly scented deodorants or antiperspirants, and body odor), cosmetics—that might distract an interviewer. You want the interviewer to focus on what you are saying, rather than on some aspect of your appearance. Additionally, presentation demonstrates self-care—if you suggest that you are not able to take care of yourself, you will not be trusted to take care of others. While your clothing may reflect your personality, you should remember that the interview is not a fashion show, and that you should maintain a professional appearance.

Women may wear pant suits or skirt suits; skirts should be at the knee or lower, and the blouse should be simple, in a basic color. Women should ensure that they can wear their shoes comfortably and confidently during the day. Flats are acceptable; heels should be under two inches. Remember you will have a walking tour as a part of the interview day, and in some cases will also have quite a distance to walk between interviewers. Wear makeup judiciously, and avoid colognes, perfumes, and scented lotions.

Men should wear business suits tailored to fit well, and avoid flashy shirts and ties. Men’s shoes should be polished and broken in, and dress socks should match the suit (i.e., no white socks or short socks). Men’s faces should be clean shaven, or, if you wear a beard, neatly trimmed.

Do not underestimate the importance of good grooming and hygiene—hair neatly trimmed or pulled back, nails clean and clipped, be sure body and teeth are clean and odor-free. If you smoke, you may wish to avoid smelling like cigarettes by abstaining throughout the day of your interview.

Carry a portfolio with you during the day, and if you need some additional space, feel free to carry a small purse, a professional briefcase or messenger bag. Remember that you may be interviewing in cold climates throughout the winter, and may be going on tours outdoors. If at all possible, purchase or borrow a dress coat that can fit comfortably over a suit. Though better than getting frostbite, a ski jacket over a suit has a bit of a funny look to it. Try to avoid this if you can.

Practice your table manners and be sure you are able to eat comfortably and cleanly while also carrying on a conversation. If you have questions, feel free to ask us prior to your interview.

Make certain that schools have your current contact information. Email invitations are often sent en masse so check your spam/junk folders regularly. When invited for an interview, we recommend that you take the earliest available time. Your interview should demonstrate the thoughtfulness with which you have approached the application process and school selection. Accordingly, prepare by reviewing information about the school (e.g., curriculum, grading system, size, residency positions to which its students have been matched) and your application materials. Interviewers may ask questions about anything you have included in your materials (or, perhaps, something you may have left out).

Examples of Interview Types:
Conversation—The most common type of interview, in which the interviewer tries to allay anxiety as much as possible in order to see you at your best light and to converse with you about your ideas and experiences. In these, engage your interviewers even as they engage you, and always ask questions.
Open, Closed, Ajar—Open file interviews give the interviewer your application ahead of time to read so they can ask specific questions. In closed file interviews the interviewer is blind to your background. Note: some interviewers may only have access to certain elements of your application (e.g., activities list but no GPA).
Stress—Few schools use stress interviews, which are intended to make applicants feel uncomfortable so as to gauge how they respond under pressure. Under these circumstances, keep your cool and answer questions to the best of your ability—don’t take it personally and don’t let anyone’s demeanor put you off.
Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)—MMI, a format gaining traction at medical schools around the country, features a series of short case studies or role-playing situations. For example, you might be given a short patient history, and then asked to interact with a person pretending to be this patient. You might also be asked to work collaboratively with other interviewees to solve a problem. In MMI, you are observed and evaluated on a range of competencies, including your interpersonal and collaborative skills, your ethical thinking, and your professionalism. McMaster University in Canada is widely regarded as the pioneer of this interview format, and most of the medical schools in the US and Canada who now
use MMI base their procedure on the template of McMaster University. Therefore, we recommend visiting the McMaster website for additional information and training guides, even if you will not be applying to that school directly: http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/mdprog/interviews.html.

Interview Day
You may be interviewed by administrators, admissions committee members, faculty, current students, or community members. Accordingly, you should anticipate questions that reflect these multiple perspectives (e.g., your background, familiarity with health and medicine). Take time for self-reflection, and practice speaking about your strengths and your weaknesses—yes, this takes practice! Create a few “STAR” narratives (Situation, Tactic, Action, Result) to illustrate and highlight your qualities. Also, prepare something to say about each item in your activities list; specific narratives illustrating your abilities or commitments are particularly valuable. Practice, but avoid preparing “canned” answers you think will please the interviewer—you are much more interesting when being open, honest, and articulate about your beliefs, ideas, and experiences. The more you practice, the more relaxed and natural you will feel and appear—the more likely you will present with confidence and humility.

Know your field—stay on top of current events and practice speaking about a number of topics and issues. Some quick resources: NYT, Health Affairs, NEJM, Journal of the American Public Health Association. The more you discuss your application, interests, and the field, the more comfortable and confident you will feel when responding on interview day. You might practice this sort of speaking with friends, colleagues from labs or co-curricular pursuits, mentors, professors, etc.

Interviewers will give you the opportunity to ask questions. Be prepared to ask intelligent questions that are of interest to you and specific to the school. Coming into an interview without well-prepared questions may make you seem less serious about the school. The interview is also an opportunity for you to assess if the curriculum, students, philosophy, opportunities, etc., will adequately support your career goals.

Finally, the interview begins the moment you leave home—assume the person sitting next to you on the train and the cab driver taking you to the airport are affiliated with the school. It’s a small world.

A typical interview day at a professional school may include an orientation, a financial aid presentation, multiple interviews, a campus tour, and an exit survey. You are always being evaluated; how you interact with students, support staff, and other applicants, even outside of formal interview settings, may be noted. Poor manners, arrogance, inappropriate attire, and lack of punctuality will negatively affect your application.

In addition to being prepared for an interview, you must look prepared: bring a portfolio and take notes during the breaks in your interview day. Establish a good rapport with your interviewer with a firm handshake and eye contact. Say your name clearly and audibly, and enunciate carefully when speaking. Demonstrate active listening throughout the day (e.g., proper seating posture, straight shoulders, good eye contact, and leaning forward interestingly). Avoid fidgeting with your hands; if you hold a pen, hold it as if you’re about to take notes. Remember, the majority of communication is made through non-verbal cues. Looking bored or gripping the edge of your chair with white fingers raise red flags.

Ask for a business card or, if one is not available, make sure to note the name and title of each interviewer. Do not forget to thank your interviewer for his or her time.

Many of you take pride in your leadership skills. However, on interview day, it is important to allow each interviewer lead the pace and direction of the interview. This will vary depending upon your interviewer and the structure of the process—some interviewers may have a predetermined list of questions that need to be asked, while others may be more able to go wherever the conversation naturally leads. Do not worry if your interviewer is excited to learn more about your love of gardening and much of the interview becomes a discussion about this one aspect of you. Communication skills can be evaluated regardless of the topic of conversation—it is not the content that matters, but how you talk about it.

If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification. An interviewer may purposely ask ambiguous questions to gauge how well you can think on your feet, your willingness to ask for help, etc., but there is no harm in taking your time understanding and responding to a question. Do not get defensive—a strong candidate has a good response when their answers and thoughts are challenged. Use your problem-solving skills and draw on a variety of experiences to substantively prove your point (see STAR advice above--Situation, Tactic, Action, Result). Do not argue with your
interviewer—you’ll lose. Instead, reframe the experience and your response: consider controversial viewpoints that differ from yours an exercise in tolerance.

Avoid the obvious: crying, complaining, defending, interrupting, confessions, excuses, cursing, bias, anger, confrontation, second-guessing the interviewer.

Timing is everything (well, almost)—so, be at least 15 minutes early to your first event. Should you arrive earlier than that, find a café or a bench somewhere to pass the time. You don’t want the medical school to feel they need to entertain you. Plan your travel so that you can stay for the entire length of the day. Leaving early demonstrates a lack of interest or poor planning.

Additional Sessions on Interview Day: Beyond the interviews themselves, most schools will also offer any or all of the following during the day: orientation session with a Dean of Admissions; financial aid session; informal lunch with students and/or faculty members (remember: the lunch may be informal, but you’re still being evaluated); a campus and hospital tour.

- Orientation session: allows applicants to gauge how a school views its own philosophy, curriculum, and strengths. The Deans leading these sessions have a wide range of personalities, but most tend to be very honest and answer your questions with depth. Use this time to answer your big-picture and basic questions about the school’s program.
- Financial aid session: describes sources of funding and loans and how the school calculates a student budget. If a school does not provide this session, packets of information are usually available in the Admissions Office.
- Lunch: allows you to meet current students and ask questions about their lifestyle, extracurricular activities and experiences at the school. Students often have the best insight into the practice behind the theory and are also able to provide interview tips specific for their school. Note: current students are not your peers—they too are interviewers, either formally or informally.
- Tour: usually led by students affiliated with the Admissions Office, take the opportunity to ask them about their lives and examine your potential facilities freely.
- Interviews: as already mentioned, these are usually conducted by a faculty member, an admissions officer or an upper-class student. There are multiple types and formats to interviews. You might be requested to walk to a designated location (as opposed to meeting the interviewer in the same building as Admissions) — in this case, be prepared to find your way around with a map while being on time.
- Related activities: may include an overnight stay with a student host. Since these students volunteer, they tend to be extremely friendly and helpful. Beyond the free room and board, they also provide many additional insights that may be missed on interview day. Remember, you are being evaluated at all times. In addition to student hosts, some groups will hold dinner/dessert gatherings on the night before Interview Day or breakfast on the morning of. Once again, this is another opportunity to talk with students about how the program and lifestyle of the school works for them. If you stay at a student’s home, remember houseguest etiquette (e.g., leaving your sheets folded at the foot of the bed) and leave things better than you found them.

After the Interview
Within 24 hours, send individual, thoughtful, and professional emails to all interviewers, thanking them for their time. Your thank-you email should draw on the personal connections you made with your interviewers, and reference part of the conversation you had with them. This will help you distinguish yourself and reinforce that all-important personal connection. Never underestimate the power of sincere gratitude. If you stayed at a student’s home, send your host(s) a thank-you note as well. If you attended an interview day at a school which runs the MMI style, you may not know all of your interviewers’ names and contact info. In this instance, sending a thank you to the Director or Dean of Admissions is most appropriate. In your note, be sure to extend thanks to all those who participated in your interview day process.

Interacting with Other Interviewees
At interview day, you will be spending a good amount of time around other candidates for admission to the school. It is important that you treat them as your potential future classmates and colleagues—not your competition. A school’s potential student body can also help you determine goodness of fit: do you want to go to school with these people? When interacting with them, there is no need to be defensive or competitive; rather, a warm, cheerful, and engaging demeanor will impress interviewers and the school’s staff. Remember, everyone is watching, and you are always being
evaluated. Support staff will take note of your behavior. How you interact with other interviewees demonstrates your interpersonal and collaborative skills, so try to find common ground with them, and form a cordial relationship. Contribute to the success of others by sharing information—if you can help someone navigate the school or the city, do so.

Questions You Might Ask Them

The School & Students
What kind of advising (e.g., academic, career, personal, financial) is available?
What is the philosophy behind the school’s mission statement?
How has the philosophy behind the school’s mission statement evolved?
Ask about facilities, departments and accomplishments in a specific field of interest if you have one.
What type of personality thrives at this school?
Tell me more about the diversity you look for in creating a class?
What types of student organizations are most popular?

The Curriculum: Pre-Clinical & Clinical Years
Are there any upcoming changes to the curriculum?
How are research and community service integrated into life here?
Is there funding available for research and community projects?
What resources are available to help students select a specialty (e.g., mentoring, advising, alumni)?
How are clinical evaluations performed?
May I pursue rotations at other institutions or internationally?
Is a car necessary for clinical rotations?

Money Matters
At what rate do you anticipate tuition will increase each year?
What types of federal financial aid and school endowments are available to students?
What percent of students have an “unmet need” in their budget? What is the average amount? Where do they find the resources?
How do you help incoming students with budgeting and financial planning?
What guidance is available for graduates regarding debt management?

Questions They Might Ask You

Background, Education, Experience, Interests, Personality
Tell me your story.
What are your strengths and weaknesses?
What differentiates you from other applicants?
What do you do for fun or to relax?
What newspapers do you read? What book have you most recently read for pleasure?
Why did you choose UChicago? Have you liked it?
What are your most effective study techniques?
Describe a situation in which your work was criticized and how you responded.
What has been the most stressful situation in your life so far? How did you cope?
What experiences have you had in the community which demonstrate your commitment to health and medicine?
Tell me about an experience that made you question your decision to pursue this profession.
If the health professions did not exist, what alternative careers would you explore?
Is there something I’ve not asked about that you would like the admissions committee to know?

Current Issues, Ethics, Difficult Problems
What do you think is the most pressing issue/problem in the field today? What are some potential solutions?
Name some strategies to address the problem of teen drinking.
What drives a doctor, or any health professional, to become corrupt?
Discuss a professional ethics issue you find of interest.
How do you feel about animal research for the purpose of scientific discovery?
Questions about Trouble Spots in Your Application
Do you believe your undergraduate grades/standardized exam scores reflect your ability? Why/why not?
Why did you get a low grade in X? What did you learn from the experience?

Questions About Your Plans
What other schools are you considering? Have you interviewed/been accepted?
How will you finance your education?
What are your plans if you are not accepted this year/ever?

Questions You Do Not Have To Answer
Questions regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, handicaps, age or ancestry directly or indirectly do not have to be answered unless they are specific to a position or candidate’s claims of qualification.
Interviewers may also not ask you about marital status, plans for a family, height and weight, health status, place of birth, whether you are a native-born or a naturalized citizen (if this applies), mother tongue, pending discrimination charges you have filed, military service outside of the U.S., arrests without convictions, or credit history. Take note if your interviewer is asking questions that appear specifically geared toward your gender.

Mock Interview Resources
We strongly encourage you to schedule one (or more!) mock interviews with a current Pritzker student through the PUMP program. Due to the schedule of the Pritzker students, these mock sessions will ONLY take place during the summer months. They can be conducted via Skype or Zoom if you will be away from Chicago during the summer.

FINANCING YOUR EDUCATION
Application Seminar IV: Secondary Applications and Financing will also cover financing in great detail. In preparation, we encourage you to obtain and review your credit report. Make sure your existing student loans are in good standing and that you are paying all of your bills in a timely manner. If you do not have a credit history, you can begin building one by obtaining a credit card and using it responsibly (i.e., pay the bill in full, on time, every month). If you have credit card debt, begin paying down your balance. Loans are the primary source for funding medical school, and your creditworthiness is instrumental in helping you secure loans with decent interest rates.

The financial realities of professional school present another opportunity for considering the timing of your application. Many applicants find it advantageous to work for one or more years before proceeding to professional school—not only will this give you valuable real-world experience (which health professions schools find very compelling), but it will also enable you to save money and reduce the amount of debt you must take on. Average graduate indebtedness is well over $100,000; if you have undergraduate loans, your indebtedness can easily rise over $200,000.

Resident physicians typically earn between $40,000 and $50,000 annually. Physicians usually begin repaying their student loans after their residencies end. Because of the structure of student loan repayments, you may be responsible for monthly loan payments of $2,500 or more. This is in addition to the costs of housing, food, transportation, clothing, etc. To put this in context, a salary of $100,000 will net, after taxes and other withholdings, about $5,000 a month, half of which will go towards repaying loans.

While this financial picture is daunting, there is a lot you can do now to save money and lessen the financial impacts of professional school. To begin with, write a budget, and stick to it. Budgeting websites like mint.com can be very helpful...
in this endeavor. Be honest with yourself (once again)—identify and eliminate unnecessary expenditures, especially if you carry a balance on your credit cards. $4 lattes from Starbucks quickly add up. A latte three times a week comes out to almost $50/month, or $600/year. In many places, this is equivalent to an extra month’s rent. Identifying similar opportunities to spend less and save more will allow you to borrow less, which will save you a great deal over the long term.

The facts about financing medical school may also inform your school selection choices. You may want to live in a major city—New York, San Francisco, Chicago—but you can begin weighing the advantages of city life against the reality of its expenses. How much money and time will you have to enjoy what a large city has to offer? Is $2,000/month for rent worth it? These are questions only you can answer, but they are worth asking.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Remember: we are here to help you. There are hundreds of you though, and only a few of us. If you have a question, please check in with this guidebook before calling or emailing us. This will allow us to spend our time in answering your specific and nuanced questions that are not answered elsewhere. This process is long, can feel confusing, and there is a lot at stake. We know this—and it is our job to do what we can to help you through it, and it is our pleasure to celebrate with you once you know your dream is achieved! Good luck!
Institutional Action

If you were ever the recipient of any institutional action by any college or medical school for unacceptable academic performance or conduct violation, you must answer Yes, even if such action did not interrupt your enrollment or require you to withdraw. Furthermore, select Yes even if the action does not appear on, or has been deleted or expunged from, your official transcripts as a consequence of institutional policy or personal petition.

Failure to provide an accurate answer to the question about institutional action or, if applicable, failure to complete the form provided by the school will result in an investigation. Medical schools require you to answer the question accurately and provide all relevant information. Medical schools understand that many individuals learn from the past and emerge stronger as a result. Full disclosure will enable medical schools to evaluate the information more effectively within the context of your application.

If you become the subject of an institutional action after certifying and submitting the AMCAS application, you must inform your designated medical school(s) within 10 business days of the date of the occurrence.
Acquiring exposure to a variety of health-related clinical settings is a vital part of premedical and medical student preparation. Many students are now taking advantage of opportunities to gain clinical experiences abroad, where regulations governing the procedures that students can perform on patients are often less stringent and well defined than in the United States and Canada. Additionally, existing local regulations may not be uniformly or fully enforced. While many students have had beneficial experiences through involvement in patient care activities abroad, and services have been provided to people in need, the potential for harm and abuse in these situations cannot be ignored. Participation of inadequately educated and untrained students in these situations can have negative consequences including:

- **Harm done to the patient.** Everyone’s goal is to always help those in need; the first step in that direction must be to avoid doing any harm. As a student, it may be difficult to know what might cause harm, so you must carefully avoid situations where there is any possibility that you might injure someone or cause other harm.
- **Physical harm to yourself.** Engaging in any clinical practice without sufficient training and protection can result in direct harm to you, as well as to the patient. Further, sponsoring organizations may not have in place plans to assist you if you contract an illness and/or are injured.
- **Legal issues with local authorities.** Even if a local health care provider is supervising your interactions with patients or says that it is acceptable for you to perform a procedure, violation of local laws may still be a punishable offense.
- **Putting acceptance to medical school and residency training programs at risk.** Many pre-medical students believe that the more in-depth clinical experience they have, the stronger their applications will be. However, taking on tasks that are beyond your training could make you look unethical, unknowledgeable about the health professions, irresponsible to admission committees, and may diminish or eliminate your chance for acceptance into medical school. Similarly, medical students who perform procedures beyond their training may negatively impact their chances of matching in residency programs.
- **The potential for being involved with a fraudulent company.** There are companies that will, for a fee, help place you in a foreign clinic. Be aware that some of these companies are in the business of making money first, and they may not be ethically sound. Check out these companies very carefully before signing any contracts. If any agency is over-promising and suggests that you will actually practice medicine while abroad, rather than simply observe or shadow, you should have serious reservations about working with this agency.

Premedical and Medical students considering participating in an international medical service experience should review the following:

- The primary purpose of a student clinical experience is observation, not hands-on treatment. You are there to learn, not to treat.
- Always keep the welfare of the patient foremost in your mind, not the perceived opportunity for proving yourself. Ask yourself how you would feel if you were in the place of a patient and a person with limited skills and preparation was about to perform a procedure on you. If this thought makes you feel uncomfortable, it is probably not an appropriate task for you to be doing. Recognizing patient autonomy is one of the core values of medical ethics; it is particularly important to honor in communities with limited resources, where all patients must be given the choice whether or not to have trainees involved in their care.
- Every act of service involves the building of a cultural bridge. Students should bring knowledge of the history and culture of the community they will serve, respect for cultural differences, a listening and learning attitude, and behaviors that will enable ethical and effective service. Health care professionals in the country being served will likely have a deep understanding of local health care issues, resources and challenges. Be sensitive to the concerns of the local health care team and seek to understand the perspective of the patients you are serving.
- It is appropriate for students to provide preventive health education and to support the health care team by assisting in the provision of health treatment after receiving adequate instruction. However, students should never engage in any unsupervised activity that is considered the practice of medicine including, but not limited to: diagnosing diseases, administering narcotics, performing surgical procedures, suturing or other tasks generally reserved for the trained health professional.
- There will always be disparities in what individual students are prepared and trained to do. Some students (e.g., those with previous EMT training) will be better prepared to take on more advanced patient care than others. However, just
because a peer has been able to successfully perform a particular task does not mean that you are also ready to undertake the same task. Understand and perform within your limitations.

- Students should be aware that it is not necessary to travel abroad to serve those in need. There are many opportunities to help the disadvantaged and other underserved groups in the U.S. There are likely worthwhile volunteer opportunities in your own community, with many more around the country. Also, be mindful that while appropriate experience in other countries can be valuable and may be viewed as complementary, if you plan to practice in the U.S, it is particularly important to understand U.S. healthcare.

Approved by the AAMC GSA Steering Committee on February 25, 2011
Adapted with permission from policies developed at: Hendrix College, Conway, AR by Mark Sutherland, Ph.D., Professor of Biology; Stanford University’s Haas Center for Public Service (http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/haas/principles/document), and the American Dental Education Association.