## 2015 Application Process: Mandatory UCIHP Deadlines & AMCAS Dates

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Quarter</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autumn 2014</td>
<td>Oct 27/Nov 5</td>
<td>UCIHP Application Seminar I: Application Process Overview--REQUIRED</td>
<td>5:30pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nov 3</td>
<td>UCIHP Deadline: AG-16 Agreement Submission Begins--REQUIRED</td>
<td>8:30am</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nov 18</td>
<td>UCIHP Application Seminar II: Crafting Your Personal Statement</td>
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<td>Dec 1</td>
<td>UCIHP Deadline: AG-16 Agreement Submission Ends</td>
<td>5:00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter 2015</td>
<td>Jan 5</td>
<td>UCIHP: Personal Statement Appointments Begin-Schedule with your regular adviser</td>
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<td><em>(Remember, Personal Statements must be emailed to your adviser ONE WEEK ahead of appointment time)</em></td>
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<td>Feb 2 – Mar 20</td>
<td>Personal Statement Reviews are suspended until after the HMC Letter Interviews have ended</td>
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<td>Feb 3</td>
<td>HMC Interview Calendar opens. May begin selecting interview date and time.</td>
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<td><em>(Remember, A&amp;E Planner and all components of the UCIHP application must be complete in AdviseStream TWO WEEKS prior to interview. If not, your interview is cancelled and you will NOT be permitted to reschedule)</em></td>
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<td>Feb 9</td>
<td>UCIHP: Application Seminar III: School Selection, Interviewing, and Financing</td>
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<td>Mar 20</td>
<td>UCIHP: Health &amp; Medicine Committee (HMC) Interviews End</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>Mar 30</td>
<td>UCIHP: Confirm programs to which you will be applying (MD, DO, MD/PhD, DVM, etc)</td>
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<td>Apr 15</td>
<td>UCIHP Deadline: Letter Request and Signed HMC Waiver Submission Ends</td>
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<td>May 1</td>
<td>AMCAS: Primary Applications Available (1st week of May)</td>
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<td>May 15</td>
<td>UCIHP Deadline: All Letters of Recommendation to UCIHP except MSTP applicants</td>
<td>5:00 pm</td>
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<td>Spring/Summer 2015</td>
<td>June 1</td>
<td>AMCAS: Begin Submitting Primary Application (1st Week of June)</td>
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<td>June-Aug</td>
<td>UCIHP Sends out Health &amp; Medicine Committee Letters within 3 weeks of request</td>
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<td>July 24</td>
<td>UCIHP: Suggested deadline for Submitting AMCAS Primary Application</td>
<td>5:00 pm</td>
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<td>Jul-Sept</td>
<td>Begin Receiving Secondary Applications: Submit Within Two Weeks</td>
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<td>Aug 28</td>
<td>FINAL day to request HMC Letter/Deadline for MSTP Applicant Letters of Recommendation to be received by UCIHP</td>
<td>5:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Throughout 2014-2015</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>Complete Anonymous UCIHP Interview Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>Apr 30</td>
<td>AAMC Deadline: Select One School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Update UCIHP: Schools Interviewed, Accept, Reject, Waitlisted, Final Decision</td>
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***To Download Important Dates into your personal device, visit https://careeradvancement.uchicago.edu/health/deadlines***

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1 “AMCAS” is used as a proxy for all centralized application services (i.e., AACOMAS, TMDSAS, etc.) throughout the AG-15. Accordingly, unless otherwise noted, deadlines apply to all applicants to schools of the health professions. For information on other centralized application services and health professions, see Appendix A.

2 All times listed in this document are local, Chicago time (CST or CDT).
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2016 application process for schools of the health professions! UCIHP and the Health and Medicine Committee (HMC) look 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-16?
The Applicant Guidelines 2016 (AG-16) is designed to be your primary reference for information and recommendations throughout the professional school application process. Based on best practices and informed by years of experience working with applicants from the College, faculty recommendations, and feedback from admissions officers, the AG-16 comprises detailed information on admissions expectations for schools of the health professions, the UCIHP Application cycle, and the logistics of submitting applications. We have designed the AG-16 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, you are the owner of your application. 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 of 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, UCIHP), 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-16 complements information presented at our application seminars, and you are responsible for knowing its contents. The AG-16 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-16 carefully, and refer to it before contacting UCIHP for more information. We will refer you back to the AG-16 if your question can be found there. Additionally, it is best to work directly with your primary UCIHP 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. It is not necessary or effective to bring the same question to multiple advisers in hopes of a different answer.

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.

Similarly, be mindful that your actions throughout the application process reflect not only on you, but also on UCIHP, the College, and the University. Be thoughtful and careful in your decision making—respond, rather than react, to difficulties and unforeseen circumstances. Your actions have the potential to impact the outcomes not only of your application but also those of your peers and of future applicants. Your actions can also affect the College’s long-standing relationships with schools of the health professions.

UCIHP and the HMC are 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.

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. 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 UCIHP 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 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. 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.

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.

UCIHP E-mail List
The UCIHP 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 UCIHP. Any amendments, additions, or corrections to the AG-16 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 UCIHP 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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3 For the AMCAS question on institutional action and academic honesty, see Appendix B.
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 cocurricular 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.

While schools of the health professions have very high expectations of applicants, this does not mean that you have to have been 100% perfect in order to be successful. It is alright, for example, if an applicant struggled in a science course, so long as they learned from the opportunity, e.g. used resources better in later science classes. It’s also alright if an applicant didn’t study abroad or have significant research experience, so long as they demonstrate that they made the most of opportunities and experiences that were accessible to them and pursued passionately their areas of interest. Applicants who have never failed, or who did not avail themselves of resources available to them, have not demonstrated the skills that they require to adapt in the face of change or adversity, which they will inevitably encounter in the future.

When applying to a school of the health professions, you make the claim that you ought to be a physician (or dentist, pharmacist, nurse, veterinarian, etc.), because you have the abilities and traits necessary to succeed in medicine. It is not the strength or passion of this claim that will result in your success, but rather the quality of the evidence you present in support of this claim. Your application will need to demonstrate not only your potential to thrive in a rigorous professional school curriculum, but also your ability—not just your desire—to care for others.

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, 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 (Biology, 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 section scores below 9 often (but not always) struggle to gain admission. However, personal circumstances, special curricula, and other factors play a role. 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.

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

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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 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.

For any applicant, a limited palette of activities can be interpreted as weak personal preparation. Given sufficient academic preparation as defined above, College students with experience in two major extracurricular commitments and a steady stream of minor activities usually find success. We have found that successful applicants generally commit at least 6 hours per week every quarter to such activities. These individuals have also demonstrated a sustained and longitudinal commitment (i.e., over the course of several quarters or multiple years) to some activity or organization. Summer activities are important as well.

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 UCIHP 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
This is a decision you alone can make—UCIHP, your family, your professors and mentors, etc., can support you, but you must choose whether this is the right year to apply. The application process is long, expensive, time-consuming, and pretty emotional to go through. Therefore, UCIHP and the HMC strongly urge 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. 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 awhile 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 half 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.

It can be very advantageous for applicants with low science GPAs to complete a post-baccalaureate or special masters 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. UCIHP can advise you about these options.

**Re-Applicants**

Schools of the health professions, UCIHP, and the HMC 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 period. For example, individuals who have applied for admission to Harvard Medical School (HMS) twice are ineligible for future consideration.5 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 the Program Director 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.

**Early Decision Program: Medical Schools**

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 16), 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 UCIHP 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 four-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. In conjunction with the advice of Pritzker, UCIHP shall not support applicants with MCAT scores below 33, or with individual section scores below 10 (we will update you with their requirements related to the MCAT 2015 scoring in late fall). In addition, UCIHP applicants must have an overall GPA of 3.70 and BCPM of 3.65. Students considering AMSP should meet with UCIHP to discuss the program early in their College career. Third-year students who meet the above criteria must schedule a meeting with a UCIHP Health Professions Adviser to discuss their candidacy before January 16 (the end of the second week of Winter Quarter).

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5 See [http://hms.harvard.edu/admissions/default.asp?page=requirements](http://hms.harvard.edu/admissions/default.asp?page=requirements)
THE UCIHP APPLICATION PROCESS: OVERVIEW

The UCIHP Application process 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 UCIHP process dovetail with components of the applications you will submit to professional schools. The primary parts of the UCIHP process are:

- One mandatory and two strongly recommended application seminars
- Statement of Understanding and Applicant Agreement
- An individual personal statement consultation (optional)
- The UCIHP Application
- The Health and Medicine Letter interview
- Mock Interview with a Pritzker Medical Student (optional)

Following your successful completion of all parts of the UCIHP process, the HMC will compose an institutional letter of endorsement (HMC letter, or committee letter) on your behalf. The HMC letter is contingent upon your meeting all deadlines and requirements outlined in this document. Failure to meet these deadlines renders you ineligible for a full HMC letter, though we will still add a cover letter to your individual letters of recommendation. Throughout your application process, beginning with our office, you are expected to meet all deadlines and will not be granted exceptions. 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 expected to attend and actively participate in the first mandatory seminar. Students are expected to arrive on time and to stay for the 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 write a thorough letter of support for you, and to allow you to invest the time and energy necessary for a strong application. Receipt of an institutional letter of endorsement from the HMC is contingent upon your active participation and engagement.

Study Abroad
UCIHP encourages students to study abroad. However, study abroad does not exempt students from UCIHP’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 HMC Letter Interviews may be conducted by telephone, Skype, or via email. You are also responsible for the timely submission of your Application Questionnaire, 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.

Students in the application cycle planning on studying abroad must notify us via email (ucihp@uchicago.edu). If you are studying abroad in the Autumn Quarter, you must contact us by October 24. Students studying abroad in Winter or Spring must notify us by the end of Autumn Quarter.

Alumni
UCIHP works closely with many College alumni. In fact, the average age of matriculants to medical school is around 24, so many successful applicants are choosing to delay applying until after graduation. Like students studying abroad, alumni are expected to meet all UCIHP Application requirements and deadlines. Alumni are welcome, but not required, to attend application seminars; alumni are, however, responsible for the information presented at the 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 2012) should have rich professional, personal, and/or academic experiences beyond their time in the College. While advanced alumni are welcome to participate in UCIHP Application cycle programs, the HMC letter speaks primarily to an applicant’s
undergraduate years. Thus, for alumni with a wealth of post-graduate experience, a letter from the Committee is of limited value. Instead, the HMC recommends a more individualized approach combining letters reflecting academic performance with letters discussing post-graduate pursuits. Accordingly, alumni who graduated before 2012 are invited to arrange a time to meet with a UCIHP adviser to discuss the best approach.

Post-Baccalaureate & Special Masters Programs

As an alternative to the HMC letter, alumni who have completed post-baccalaureate work are strongly encouraged to obtain a letter of support/endorsement from their post-bac institution. The HMC letter can only speak to an applicant’s performance in the College. 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 so 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 their studies, so that we can do what we can to assist them.

Statement of Understanding and Applicant Agreement

A signed copy of the Statement of Understanding and Applicant Agreement, attesting that you have read the entire document carefully, must be submitted through AdviseStream 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. 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 UCIHP 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 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 UCIHP adviser during the month of January. You are allowed one review of your personal statement with your UCIHP advisor, unless your advisor specifies otherwise. Further details on the personal statement and the personal statement consultation are below, in the section covering the primary application (Page 17).

UCIHP Application

The UCIHP Application mirrors the primary application, and affords you an additional opportunity to reflect on your personal characteristics and career choice. In addition to biographical and academic information, the UCIHP Application includes several questions that speak to your preparation for professional school. It is in your best interest to provide accurate, thoughtful, concise, and honest responses. Not only is this good preparation for the essay questions you will respond to in the application process, we also utilize your responses in composing your HMC letter of support. The launch of the UCIHP application will be emailed to applicants by January 7th. You are responsible for completing the UCIHP Application in time to schedule an HMC Letter Interview through AdviseStream.

Sheila Putzel Prize

Sheila Putzel, PhD, was one of the founders of health professions advising at UChicago. During her tenure, she assisted
hundreds of students and shaped a generation of future practitioners and researchers. The annual Putzel Prize, named in her honor, recognizes two current students in the application cycle whose personal qualities and academic accomplishments foreshadow an exceptional future, as evidenced in the UCIHP Application. Past winners of the Putzel Prize have been able to articulate sophisticated linkages across the breadth of their experiences. For example, one student discussed the connections between her family background, childhood education, interest in art, and passion for science, and how all of these combined to lead her to pursue a career in dentistry. Putzel Prize winners have also demonstrated remarkable maturity, a sense of social responsibility, and self-awareness (of weaknesses as well as strengths) in their responses to UCIHP Application questions. In addition to a cash prize, awardees will be invited to attend the College Awards Ceremony hosted by President Zimmer and Dean Boyer in May.

HMC Letter Interview
Prior to composing your HMC Letter, you must complete an interview with a member of the Career Advancement or Dean of Students staff. The purpose of this interview is to understand your motivation for your chosen career, to learn what you are most passionate about, and to come to know you very well so that we can highlight those strengths and talents in the writing of your HMC letter. Though not a “mock interview,” you may find that the questions you are asked are quite similar to the questions you will face as you go through the interview process at health professions schools. The interview will usually take approximately 30 minutes. Individual interviews will vary, much as they will on interview day, both among particular interviewers and among different schools.

HMC Letter Interviews will be held from February 23rd through March 20th. On January 5th, the interview schedule will open on AdviseStream. You may claim your interview date at that time. You must schedule your interview with a member of the team that is NOT known to you (i.e. not your regular College adviser). Select your interview date carefully—they will not be rescheduled. It is your responsibility to ensure that your UCIHP Application AND the Academics & Engagements Planner is thoughtfully completed in AdviseStream TWO WEEKS before your interview date. If your materials are not complete at that time, your interview will be cancelled and you will no longer be eligible for an HMC interview or Committee Letter. Note: the date of your HMC Letter Interview will not negatively affect the timing of your committee letter.

We recommend that you use the HMC interview not only to highlight the strengths of your preparation, but also the areas that make it distinct. The interview is also an opportunity for you to provide additional context around obstacles or challenges you may have encountered, including the ways in which you met these challenges. While the HMC interview is a wonderful occasion in which to hone interview skills and we expect you to prepare the same way you would for a professional school interview. Remember—the comments we receive from your interviewer will help us in creating a very strong and personalized letter on your behalf. The more effort and preparation you put in to your interview, the better equipped we will be to write your letter. This includes:

- Preparation: review your UCIHP Application and know your profession—be prepared to speak about current issues/challenges/innovations in the field
- Professionalism: be punctual (i.e., respectful of the staff member’s time); and wear professional attire
- Engagement: be an active and enthusiastic participant
- Parsimony: less is more—answer questions succinctly
- Be yourself: relax—enable your authentic commitment to health and medicine and passion for science to come through
- Send a personalized (i.e., not generic) thank-you email within 24 hours after the meeting—just like you would for a professional school interview

Applicants will only receive ONE HMC letter interview per application cycle.

HMC Letter
The HMC institutional letter of endorsement (“HMC letter,” or “committee letter”) is seen by professional schools as an important element in your application. The HMC letter aims to provide evidence of the academic and personal competencies you have cultivated throughout your time in the College. The letter presents a short biography; interprets your curriculum, academic record and co-curricular activities while in the College; and evaluates your personal preparation and the strength of your decision to pursue a career in health and medicine. The letter is approximately two pages in length, providing a succinct, balanced, and holistic overview of the strengths of your application and presenting you in the strongest way possible.
The format of the exam is as follows: (highest). three multiple choice sections and two writing samples. The multiple choice sections are scaled from 1 (lowest) to 15 aptitude test.

In addition to science grades (i.e., BCPM) and research experience, the Standardized Exam: MCAT, which is tied to the fee waiver for most of the participating schools will waive their secondary application fees as well. Information can be found in the applicants apply to an average of 15 processing fee of $160 for one medical school designation, a. The purpose of the MCAT is to test basic science knowledge and reasoning ability. It is not an aptitude test. As it is currently structured, the exam takes approximately five-and-a-half hours to complete and includes three multiple choice sections and two writing samples. The multiple choice sections are scaled from 1 (lowest) to 15 (highest).

The format of the exam is as follows:
• Physical Sciences: 70 minutes to complete 52 questions
• Verbal Reasoning: 60 minutes to complete 40 questions
• Biological Sciences: 70 minutes to complete 52 questions

This version of the MCAT will be administered for a final time during January of 2015. An overview of the exam and previously administered practice tests is available online at www.aamc.org/students/mcat.

Following the January administration dates, the AAMC plans to introduce a new format for the MCAT which will roughly include the sections listed above in addition to a new section entitled Psychological, Social and Biological Foundations of Behavior. The remaining three sections have slightly different names, though content remains largely the same.

The format of the exam is as follows:
• Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems: 95 minutes to complete 59 questions
• Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills: 90 minutes to complete 53 questions
• Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems: 95 minutes to complete 59 questions
• Psychological, Social and Biological Foundations of Behavior: 95 minutes to complete 59 questions

MCAT scores are currently valid for three years, and many of the medical schools will accept scores for either/both versions of the MCAT during that period. There are some variations, however. We would encourage you to look at the list of policies by school, provided on the AAMC website:

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 have found that our most successful applicants prepare for the MCAT over the course of an academic year. Additionally, these applicants often stagger the MCAT and the application process—i.e., taking the MCAT at the end of one academic year, and submitting applications at the end of the next academic year. Preparing for the MCAT and for applications at the same time can be daunting, especially when combined with coursework and cocurricular activities. Be honest with yourself—if you have had difficulty with standardized exams in the past, allow for additional time; if you need to beef up on certain material, form a study group; if you have challenges keeping to a schedule, find a study buddy, etc.

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 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.

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.

In addition, many of our former applicants note the powerful role stress and anxiety play in hindering performance. Fortunately, there is a growing body of literature supporting the efficacy of mindfulness meditation, breathing exercises, and distraction techniques in both reducing anxiety and improving performance. We encourage you to integrate these techniques to hone your stress-reduction skills. These skills will be helpful well beyond test-day.

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Verbal Reasoning/Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills
To develop the reading and reasoning skills necessary for success on this section, we strongly recommend that you begin to read argumentative writing from a variety of fields and publications. Because the MCAT is a computerized exam, we encourage you to practice reading substantive material online (reading a long, complex passage on a screen is qualitatively different than reading it on a page, and also different than reading a feed of Facebook status updates). Valuable sources include the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, The Economist, The New Yorker, The Atlantic, The Nation, The New Republic, the New York Review of Books, Foreign Policy, Foreign Affairs, and other similar publications. For science writing, you should review publications such as Nature, Science, Scientific American, the New England Journal of Medicine, JAMA, and specialized, field-specific journals. You are especially encouraged to read material from fields with which you may be less familiar.

The above preparation will not only improve your score on this section of the MCAT but will also familiarize you with current events and hot topics in health and medicine (e.g., health policy and health care reform, medical ethics). You will need to be able to speak to these issues during your HMC interview and on interview day.

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 HMC letter, you must select the option to “release” your standardized exam scores to UCIHP. If you do not release your scores, UCIHP cannot identify your application or transmit your application materials (e.g., HMC letter, 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. Note: If you sit for the MCAT prior to early May, we will have the opportunity to comment on your scores in the context of your HMC Letter. If it works best for you to take the MCAT in June or July, we will release your HMC without commenting on your MCAT. Either option is perfectly fine, and one is not “better” than the other. We will simply state to the schools that our comments on your academic preparation are (or are not) including MCAT performance.

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 over 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. Additionally, we find that following the review process, applicants may attempt a more panicked or hasty re-write just before the applications are submitted. We certainly understand that you will continue to grow and experience new things from the time you work on your statement in the winter to the time of your application. However, remember that the statement is designed to be an overall reflection of your interests and preparation toward your future career, and putting in a last-minute event or epiphany is generally not helpful to the overall content and flow of the statement.

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 month of January,
provided you submit your statement one week ahead of time.

Expectations for the polished personal statement draft:

1) **Content:** Support all claims with evidence. It is not enough to tell the reader “I am a hard worker.” Provide proof—give examples.

2) **Flow:** Make sure there are transitions between each paragraph. Transitions show how the new paragraph connects to the previous paragraphs and/or cue the reader that you are moving to a new topic.

3) **Flow:** Read your statement aloud to yourself. If there are awkward areas, insert transitions or look for themes you might highlight.

4) **Review:** Successful review requires defamiliarizing your writing—making it unfamiliar to you again, so that you can notice mistakes and issues. You will need to apply many types of editing to achieve the high quality this document requires. At the very least, you will need to do the following:
   a) Recall mistakes that you tend to make in other writing, and assume that you may make them in your personal statement. (We all have blind spots!)
   b) Leave your draft alone for at least two days; let it stay in a drawer, away from your attention. Then, when you return to the paper, reformat it. Change the font, set formatting to double or even triple spacing, and read it again, carefully.
   c) Once you have edited the document front-to-back, change the order that you read: read the paper backwards, word-by-word and then sentence-by-sentence.
   d) Typographical errors will absolutely affect your application—proofread carefully and do not rely simply on spell check. Spell check will not catch a cut and paste error or the inappropriate use of a word.

5) **Review:** At a minimum, expect to rewrite each paragraph twice. UCIHP strongly recommends deleting the first version of your first paragraph, once you complete an early draft, and writing it again to reflect the ways that your essay has changed.

6) **Spelling & Grammar:** Check your statement for spelling and grammar errors—this is more than just spell/grammar-check. Look for spelling errors that spell-check will miss (e.g., effect vs. affect, there vs. their). Any professional style manual (the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, etc.) will have a list of common spelling and grammatical errors. You should definitely consult at least one such manual as you are editing your paper.

7) **Polish:** Read your statement aloud to yourself to check for errors. Next, read your statement aloud to at least two other people. Whether friends, family, enemies or otherwise, these people should be those who can give you constructive feedback; unconstructive praise gives you nothing. Ask your audience how well your statement captures and distinguishes you. When listening to your statement read back to you, listen for awkward moments, places where the reader trips up, etc.—these are areas which need additional revision.

8) **Logistics:** For students applying to allopathic medical schools, the personal statement is limited to 5,300 characters, including spaces. Osteopathic schools and other health professions schools have different length requirements, which we list in Appendix A. You are responsible for producing an essay that meets all of these requirements. When you submit your draft to UCIHP, provide a character count at the end of your statement. Your draft must be within 10% of the required length (i.e., 4,770 to 5,830 characters for allopathic medical school applicants). Drafts that are shorter or longer than these limits are not sufficiently polished, and will be returned. Your draft must be double-spaced, with your name at the top of each page. In order to ensure ease of editing, drafts must be submitted in 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, with normal margins.

**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
Letters of Recommendation (LOR)

Letters of recommendation (LOR) provide important information both to the HMC and to admissions officers. 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, cocurricular pursuits, and character that may not be visible in 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:

- 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 list designate the three most meaningful experiences. For these three experiences, you will be given an additional 1,325 characters to discuss your activity.

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 cocurricular 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.” 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 nearby.

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.

7 See Appendix D.
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.)

Strategy & Etiquette
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 February 1”), 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

LOR may be requested at any time during the undergraduate years. Some students find it best to request a recommendation immediately following completion of a course. 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: If you plan to request a letter from a faculty/instructor for a course that will be taught in the Spring Quarter of your year of application, we must receive it by the May 15 deadline.

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 UCIHP—UCIHP will not follow-up on your behalf. You will be able to track whether your letter has been submitted through the AdviseStream system.

All letters of recommendation must be submitted to UCIHP by noon on May 15. An HMC letter will not be written on your behalf if your application file is incomplete (i.e., the minimum number of four required LOR are not on file with UCIHP) by this deadline. If you miss the May 15 deadline, UCIHP will still forward LOR to professional schools on your behalf. However, you must submit a written request to us (ucihp@uchicago.edu) by July 13 at noon. These letters will be sent with a brief cover letter. Applicants must submit their own letters after this date.

Requirements
All applicants must submit a minimum of four LOR from the following writers:
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 by May 11 at noon regarding which LOR you want to use in support of your application (i.e., which LORs to retire).

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

MD/PhD & MSTP Applicants
The above requirements also apply to MSTP and MD/PhD applicants. However, we strongly recommend that in addition to the minimum number of LOR, MSTP and MD/PhD applicants submit a letter from a science faculty member 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 to the HMC letter, each letter of recommendation must be accompanied by a waiver form. A PDF of the waiver will be available on our website under “Documents.” 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 UCIHP from accepting letters from the student for whom they are written.

Transcripts
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 Financing will delve into the art of school selection. UCIHP 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)* 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.

National studies have shown that it is rarely productive to apply to more than 15-18 schools. Moreover, it is extremely challenging to complete 15-18 sets of secondary applications in a timely and thoughtful manner (see Secondary Applications, page 23). So, when considering schools of interest, be honest with yourself—carefully consider your strengths, weaknesses, interests, hierarchy of needs (e.g., could you be happy with warmer weather in a rural setting, would you be willing to go to a smaller school to be closer to family/friends) and the “goodness of fit” between you and

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the schools you select. Based on this information, select a range of schools. Your school list should look like a normal
distribution—two tails (i.e., reaches and safety) and a meaty middle (i.e., greatest probability for success).

Regardless of the health profession to which you are applying, key things to consider in addition to admissions statistics
include:

- Location
  - Urban, suburban, rural (e.g., size and diversity of community)
  - Housing, transportation, weather
- Curriculum
  - Pedagogy (e.g., grading system, teaching format and approach)
  - Research or teaching requirements/opportunities
- Support
  - Proximity of family/friends
  - Institutional resources
- Organizational
  - Student body and patient population
  - Mission—areas of excellence/specialization (e.g., research, global health)
- Cost
  - Tuition
  - Housing and transportation

When considering goodness of fit, it is helpful to consider such factors as a school’s mission (i.e., research, teaching,
social justice, serving underserved populations, etc.) and curriculum (problem-based learning, didactic lectures, pass/fail
grading, etc.). Understanding your own priorities, and how they align with a school’s priorities, will help you articulate
in secondary applications and at interviews why you would fit at a particular school.

Given the extremely competitive nature of the application process, admission to any school is a success. Except in
exceedingly rare circumstances, UCIHP 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. 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.

Application Logistics & Summary
You should begin working on your primary application in early May, and submit it as soon as possible after June 1 but
no later than 11:59 p.m. July 23. 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
UCIHP. Upon receipt of your primary application you will receive a confirmation email from AMCAS. Email a copy of
your submitted application, which will include your application service ID number (e.g., AMCAS ID) to us
(ucihp@uchicago.edu) as soon as you receive the confirmation email. This will “launch” your HMC Letter into the
queue for finalization and transmission to the health professions schools.

Medical School Applicants
In addition to your AMCAS ID, UCIHP requires an AMCAS Letter ID (for identification purposes) to transmit your
HMC letter along with your other LORs through VirtualEvals, a secure letter service provider.

Note: AMCAS will ask you to identify what types of letters your undergraduate institution will be sending. Select:
“Committee Letter/Packet.” Primary Contact/Author: Joni Krapec. Contact Info: krapec@uchicago.edu, 773.702.8611,
The University of Chicago, UCIHP, 1116 E. 59th Street, West Tower #406, Chicago, IL 60637.
SECONDARY APPLICATIONS: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

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). 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.

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 UCIHP 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.

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/the 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.

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 socks should match the suit (i.e., no white 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](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 cocurricular 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 interestedly). 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.
Order of Operations: most schools hold all-day interview sessions comprising most, if not all, of the following: 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; interviews.

- 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: 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.

FINANCING YOUR EDUCATION

Application Seminar III: School Selection, Interviewing, and Financing, will cover this topic 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!
# APPENDIX A

## HEALTH PROFESSIONS ASSOCIATIONS & APPLICATION SERVICES REQUIREMENTS

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<th>APPLICATION OPEN</th>
<th>EXAM</th>
<th>CCHHP Exam Deadline</th>
<th>HMC Letter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allopathic</td>
<td>AAMC</td>
<td>AMCAS</td>
<td>Virtual Evals</td>
<td>1st week of June</td>
<td>MCAT</td>
<td>21-Jun</td>
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<td>Audiology</td>
<td>AFA</td>
<td>CSDCAS or individual apps</td>
<td>CSDCAS/eLOR</td>
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<td>GRE</td>
<td>Contact CCHHP</td>
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<td>Rolling Admissions</td>
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<td>ADSAS</td>
<td>ADEA AADSAS Evaluators Portal</td>
<td>1st week of June</td>
<td>DAT</td>
<td>Contact CCHHP</td>
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</tr>
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<td>NDCAS/eLOR</td>
<td>Rolling Admissions</td>
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<td>Contact CCHHP</td>
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<td>4,500</td>
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<td>OTCAS</td>
<td>OTCAS/eLOR</td>
<td>1st week of July</td>
<td>GRE</td>
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<td>OptomCAS</td>
<td>OptomCAS/eLOR</td>
<td>1st week of July</td>
<td>DAT</td>
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<td>AACOM</td>
<td>AACOMAS</td>
<td>Virtual Evals</td>
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<td>MCAT</td>
<td>21-Jun</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4,500</td>
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<td>PharmCAS</td>
<td>PharmCAS/eLOR</td>
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<td>PCAT</td>
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<td>4,500</td>
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<td>PTCAS/eLOR</td>
<td>1st week of July</td>
<td>GRE</td>
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<td>4,500</td>
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<td>CASPA</td>
<td>CASPA/eLOR</td>
<td>April 15th</td>
<td>GRE</td>
<td>Contact CCHHP</td>
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<td>AAMCPAS</td>
<td>Virtual Evals</td>
<td>1st week of August</td>
<td>MCAT, DAT, GRE</td>
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<td>Public Health</td>
<td>ASPH</td>
<td>SOPHAS</td>
<td>SOPHAS/eLOR</td>
<td>Mid Sept.</td>
<td>GRE, GMAT, LSAT, (schools have different test requirements)</td>
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<td>~1,500</td>
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<td>AACVM</td>
<td>VMCAS</td>
<td>VMCAS/eLOR</td>
<td>1st week of June</td>
<td>GRE/MCAT</td>
<td>21-Jun</td>
<td>Y</td>
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APPENDIX B

AMCAS QUESTION ON INSTITUTIONAL ACTION AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

INSTITUTIONAL ACTION

Were you ever the recipient of any institutional action by any college or medical school for unacceptable academic performance or conduct violation, even though such action may not have interrupted your enrollment or required you to withdraw? You must answer "Yes" even if the action does not appear on, or has been deleted from your official transcripts due to institutional policy or personal petition. Select "Help" at the top of this screen for important instructions on answering this question.

Back  Yes  No
APPENDIX C

TIPS TO ENSURE SUCCESS UNDER STRESS

From Choke: What the Secrets of the Brain Reveal about Getting It Right When You Have To

Reaffirm your self-worth. Before a big test or presentation spend a couple of minutes writing about your many interests and activities. This writing can promote feelings of self-worth. Reaffirming yourself, especially when you question your abilities, can boost your confidence and performance.

Map out your complexities. Before taking an important test, spend five minutes drawing a diagram of everything that makes you a multifaceted individual. This exercise can help to highlight that this one test score doesn’t define you, which can in turn take some of the pressure off.

Write about your worries. You can train your brain not to dwell on negative thoughts and instead recognize and then discard them. Meditation training can help you harness all of your cognitive horsepower for the task at hand.

Think differently. Think about yourself in ways that highlight your propensity for success. Instead of thinking, for example, that you belong to a sex or racial group that is unfairly stereotyped to be bad at math, remind yourself instead that you have the tools to excel—maybe you are a college student at a prestigious university or you have done well in school in the past. Focus on your credentials to help turn a bad performance into a good one.

Reinterpret your reactions. If you get sweaty palms and your heart races under pressure, remember that these physiological reactions also occur under more pleasant circumstances, such as when you have met the love of your life. When under pressure, if you can learn to interpret your bodily reactions in a positive way (“I am amped up for the test”) rather than negative (“I am freaking out”), you may be able to turn your body to your advantage.

Pause your choke. Walking away for a few minutes from a challenging problem that demands working-memory can help you find the most appropriate solution. This “incubation” period helps you to let go of your focus on irrelevant problem details and instead think in a new way or form an alternative perspective—and can produce an “aha” moment that can ultimately lead to a breakthrough and success.

Educate the worries. Merely drawing attention to the stereotypes students may hold—for instance, “Girls can’t do math” or “Whites are not as good at math as Asians”—and reminding them that they are stereotypes and nothing more can help to prevent people from worrying about their ability when the pressure is on. It might seem counterintuitive that teaching people about a stereotype regarding their ability would quell its effects rather than exacerbate them, but giving people an excuse for their worries allows them to see their performance as less diagnostic of their intellect.

The Obama effect. Seeing examples of people who defy common stereotypes about sex, race, and ability can help to boost the performance of people in these social groups. After all, if a black man can become leader of the free world, certainly the stereotype that African-Americans are not intelligent just can’t be true.

Practice under pressure. The old adage that practice makes perfect can do with a bit of adjustment. Studying under the same conditions you will be tested under—for instance, in a timed situation with no study aids—helps you get used to what you will experience on test day. There is also research suggesting that testing yourself on material (rather than simply studying it) helps you remember it better in the long term. After all, you are going to be tested during the test so you might as well practice being tested.

Outsource your cognitive load. Write down the intermediate steps of a problem rather than trying to hold everything in your head. This provides you with an external memory source, one that may be relatively free of worries compared to your own prefrontal cortex. As a result, you may be less likely to mix up information or forget important details of what you are doing.

Organize what you know. Take a clue from expert waiters like JC, whom we talked about in chapter 2. Coming up with meaningful ways to organize the information you need to remember for a big test or presentation can help take the burden off your working memory and actually help you remember more.

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.

APPENDIX E
HELPFUL WEBSITES

Professional Associations:

- American Osteopathic Association: www.osteopathic.org
- American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy: www.aacp.org
- Physician Assistant Education Association: www.paeaonline.org
- American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine: www.aacpm.org
- Association of Schools of Public Health: www.aph.org
- Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges: www.aavmc.org
- American Academy of Audiology: www.audiology.org
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing: www.aacn.nche.edu

Health and Medicine Websites:

- AspiringDocs.org
- explorehealthcareers.org
- studentdoctor.net
AdviseStream Instructions for the Application Process

1. Log In to the System if you haven’t already.
   Go to advisestream.uchicago.edu and use your cNet ID and password to log in.
   If you don’t see the health professions information, click on the gray “support” button to the right of the screen and submit a request to be added as a health professions student.

2. Set up your Profile. Start by clicking the “Profile” section off of your homepage.

3. Once inside the profile, complete the biographic information and then select your “health profession goals” section. You need to select 2016 as your application year, and the appropriate professional program (MD, DDS, etc).
4. Next, go back to your homepage and select the “Intent to Apply” button. This will activate all of the pieces needed within the system:

5. To complete your Statement of Understanding and Agreement (due by Dec 1), click on the “Committee Letter” section of your “Apply” module. At the very top of the page you will see “Statement of Understanding” as a required document. Click to open the statement, read through the statement carefully, and then submit your agreement:

6. Begin filling out the “Academics and Engagement Planner” with all of your courses and activities. This will mirror the “Experiences” section on the AMCAS, and will be used when we write your HMC Letter. Please note: this takes time (about 2-3 hours) so the sooner you start, the more manageable it will be!