Ask Admissions

Inspiring Stories: How Non-traditional Students Navigated the Path to Medical School

AAMC Ask Admissions Webinar
September 21, 2016
Housekeeping

• You will not hear audio until the webinar begins
  • Send any technical problems to AAMC Meetings using the Chat Panel

• Submit your questions via the Q&A Panel and send to “All Panelists”

• A recording of this presentation will be available on www.aamc.org/students in about 2 weeks
Today’s Panelists

Michael Duerden, MD Candidate
University of Washington School of Medicine

Kelly Foster, MD Candidate
FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine

Andria Williams, MBA
Director of Admissions & Recruitment
FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine

Jim Castellanos, MD-PhD Candidate
Weill Cornell/Rockefeller/Sloan Kettering Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program

Ruth Gotian, MS
Administrative Director
Weill Cornell/Rockefeller/Sloan Kettering Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program
Resources from the AAMC

www.aamc.org/students
Ask A Med Student Video Series

Medical students answer questions about their path to medical school, what med school courses are like, patient experiences, and more.

Which Experiences Have Inspired You?
Medical students share moments and activities that inspire them, keep them motivated, and help

What Helped You Become a Stronger Candidate the Second Time Around?
Medical students accepted after reapplying share

How Do You Balance Medical School with Your Personal Life?
Medical students share how they manage their time in medical school and have a personal life.

www.aamc.org/students
Aspiring Docs Diaries

BECOME A BLOGGER!

Want to share your story?

Learn More

www.aspiringdocsdiaries.org
Resources from the AAMC

Aspiring Docs
Answers to your questions about pursuing and living a medical career, fact sheets, and more.

MSAR
Search for programs that fit well with your medical career goals.

www.aamc.org/students
Resources from the AAMC (cont.)

Fee Assistance Program
Designed to assist those who, without financial assistance, would be unable to afford to apply to medical school
www.aamc.org/fap

Med-MAR
A service for medical school applicants who self-identify as being from groups historically underrepresented in medicine or who are economically disadvantaged
www.aamc.org/medmar

www.aamc.org/students
Use the Q&A panel to submit your questions!
Michael Duerden
MD Candidate

University of Washington
School of Medicine
Pre-Medical Experience

- Everyone has a compelling story
- Your own personal journey
- Fellowships

“It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there’s no knowing where you might be swept off to.”

– J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings
Application Experience

- The MCAT - The first of many standardized tests
- AMCAS, letters, and your personal statement

"Your focus determines your reality."
- Qui-Gon Jinn
Interview Experience

- Interview preparation - Practice, Practice, Practice

- Be comfortable talking about yourself

“Just keep swimming”
- Dory, Finding Nemo
Medical School Experience

- Things to know going forward
- Do not fear failure

“It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live”
- Dumbledore
Last Thoughts

- Use your support system
- Do not get overwhelmed
- Be yourself

“Hang on tight and survive. Everybody does.”
- Captain Kirk
Use the Q&A panel to submit your questions!
Background Info

Name: Kelly Foster
From: Sunrise, FL

- Grew up in South Florida
- Parents immigrated from Jamaica
- Have a twin sister
- Interests: Theater, Dance, Gymnastics, Travel, and Photography
Academic History

Undergraduate Education:
University of Miami
Major: Nursing
Minor: Theater Arts

Graduate Education:
Some classes at Nova Southeastern University

Medical School:
Florida International University
Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine
Class of 2018
Non-Traditional Applicant

• Worked as a Registered Nurse for 8 years before entering medical school

• Worked in the PICU, NICU, Nursery, Pediatrics

• Why did I decide to go to medical school?

• Completed pre-med classes while working

• Who provided me with guidance to go to medical school?

• Volunteered with the Paralyzed Veterans Association of Florida

• Volunteered with the American Heart Association
The MCAT, AMCAS Application, and Interview

• **MCAT**
  • Test prep course and a local tutoring company
  • Best resource was the practice MCAT exams on the AAMC website

• **AMCAS Application**
  • Get your LORs early and apply early

• **Interview**
  • Research the most commonly asked questions
  • Look at your resume/CV and be prepared to answer questions based on what you have done
Best Advice

• Research programs that can help prepare you for medical school.
• Self reflect---know your strengths and weaknesses.
• Obtain a premed advisor---Don’t do it alone!
• Don’t let your age or any other obstacle dictate your future goals!
Use the Q&A panel to submit your questions!
Andria L. Williams, MBA
Director, Admissions and Recruitment
HWCOM At A Glance

- South Florida’s first public medical school
- Fully accredited by the LCME
- Opened in Fall 2009
- Full capacity with 480 students
- Curriculum integrates basic sciences and clinical experiences
- Distributed learning model
- USMLE pass rates and mean scores exceed national averages
- Residency Match rates above the national average
- Green Family Foundation NeighborhoodHelp™
- Panther Learning Communities
HWCOM Mission

By providing an environment enhanced by diversity, clinical innovation, and research, we prepare socially accountable, community-based physicians, scientists, and health professionals who are uniquely qualified to transform the health of patients and communities.
# HWCOM Student Body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Underrepresented in Medicine</strong></td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantaged</strong></td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Residency</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>81%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Out-of-State</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AAMC Fee Assistance Program</strong></td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First-generation in College</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Languages Spoken</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multilingual</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nontraditional/Career Changers</strong></td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reapplicants</strong></td>
<td>17%</td>
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*Denotes self-reported data
Admissions Criteria

The Admissions Committee assess the “whole” applicant using holistic review and balances an applicant’s experiences, attributes, and metrics in a way that will help HWCOM achieve its mission.

HWCOM has provided access through the use of holistic review to students who would have been overlooked if only metrics were considered.
Characteristics/Experiences

- Motivation toward practicing caring, compassionate medicine
- Exposure to clinical medicine, such as physician shadowing and hands-on patient care activities
- Altruism demonstrated by commitment to voluntary community service activities
- Research exposure
- Leadership skills and experience
- Teamwork/ability to work with others
- Unique and enriching qualities often demonstrated by overcoming obstacles, diversity of experiences, and distance traveled
- Attributes that include interpersonal and communication skills, integrity, maturity, conscientiousness, empathy, resilience, and emotional stability
Top Six Important Tips

• Keep a journal of your activities.
• Take the MCAT exam when you are ready.
• Use the AMCAS Experiences to tell schools who you are.
• Submit all materials in a timely manner.
• Apply to schools you share a common mission with.
• Beware of the dream killers!
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Use the Q&A panel to submit your questions!
Jimmy Castellanos
MD-PhD Candidate
Weill Cornell/Rockefeller/Sloan Kettering
Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program
Background

• Parents were undocumented immigrants from El Salvador
• Chino Hills, California (Los Angeles suburb)
• Enlisted in United States Marines at 17 years old
Pre-med and Current Experience

Post-high school:
- United States Marines (6 years)
  - Iraq War Veteran (Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2004)
  - Aviation weapons system technician
  - Honorably discharged (2007)

Pre-med:
- Chaffey Community College
- B.A. in Biology—Claremont McKenna College
- M.F.A. in Creative Writing—University of Arizona

Present:
- MD-PhD student: graduation year 2020 (I hope…)
  - Weill Cornell/Rockefeller/Sloan-Kettering Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program
  - PhD in Immunology (microbe-immune cell interactions)
Application Experience

- Roadblocks:
  - “You’re never getting in!” (pre-med advisor)
  - “You’re getting in everywhere!” (lab directors)

- Interviews: your personal statement matters!
  - “I read your personal statement five times this morning…”
  - “Jimmy, let’s talk about life…”
  - “Jimmy, I can’t wait to read your book…” (Ruth Gotian)
  - “Oh, your MCAT…..it’s on the lower end. Tell me why…”
Advice

• Find your best cheerleaders

• Personal statement: Trust your story
  Be honest, be funny, be deep, be goofy
  Just be yourself!

• Interviews: just run with the conversation
Use the Q&A panel to submit your questions!
MD-PHD PROGRAMS

Ruth Gotian, MS
Administrative Director
Weill Cornell/Rockefeller/Sloan Kettering
Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program

Twitter: @TriIMDPhD
Facebook: facebook.com/TriIMSTP
WHAT MAKES AN APPLICANT STAND OUT?
RUTH GOTIAN’S TIPS

• APPLY EARLY, APPLY EARLY, APPLY EARLY!
• Have *at least* one long term research experience.
• Have a letter of recommendation from every significant research experience.
• Think long and hard about why you want to be a physician-scientist. Have that passion come through in your personal statement.
• Have your recommenders write comparative statements.
Use the Q&A panel to submit your questions!