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College Advisor

By Elizabeth LaScala



Elizabeth LaScala, PhD personally guides each student through each step of selecting and applying to well-matched schools for undergraduate, graduate and professional school admissions. For over two decades, Elizabeth has placed hundreds of students in some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. By attending professional conferences, visiting college campuses and making personal contacts with admissions networks, Elizabeth stays current on the latest trends and the evolving nature of admissions and passes that know-how on to her clients. Both college and graduate school advising is available and the number of clients taken is limited to ensure each applicant has personalized attention. Contact Elizabeth early in the process to make a difference in your outcomes. Write elizabeth@doingcollege.com; visit www.doingcollege.com or call (925) 385-0562.

students to access these opportunities at the college? Are there enough opportunities on campus (or can I create them) for me to develop the skillsets I need to clearly demonstrate that I am a strong scientist, an empathetic healer and a competent teacher?"

Taking a hard look at these questions as you consider your options puts college/program choice into perspective.

I tend to steer clear of looking too seriously into the stats regarding a college's rate of medical school admits because it is very hard for schools to track how many students started off as premeds and how many remained and applied successfully. In addition, schools typically do not track the students who apply well after graduation, those who supplement with a post baccalaureate program, and those who apply more than once prior to getting admitted.

Premed is a word that is easy to say and hard to actually play out over time - the overall plan as well as prerequisites that make for a successful medical school admissions experience require unwavering commitment and regular, systematic revisions; serious students need to select their undergraduate school with the utmost care so as to provide themselves with the foundation necessary to be successful.

One of my specialty areas is graduate and professional school admissions and I work with many high school and college students who are hoping to one day attend medical, dental or vet school. For this short article, let's look more closely at medical school admissions.

When advising students, I want them to first consider that a medical school application is strongest when it has a foundation in four separate areas: core academics, MCAT (Medical College Aptitude Test) scores, research and clinical experiences. Their academics should result in a strong undergraduate GPA, especially in required premed coursework (biology, physics, chemistry and some calculus); the student's MCAT scores should support and validate that high undergraduate GPA; substantive research and clinical medicine experiences are critical as well. Each of these four components needs to be strong - there is no balancing a lower GPA with a higher MCAT or with extra research experience. Letters of recommendation from professors, researchers and clinicians who know you well are also very important as is an engaging personal statement, effective supplemental writing and, ultimately, good interviewing skills.

In addition, students must show evidence of passion and competence in each of three roles: scientist, healer and educator. The opportunity to test each of these roles should begin in high school and continue as well as expand through the college years.

High school students need to consider this information as they decide on colleges to apply to and, after results are in, consider their options in light of it. A student must think "Will this school make it possible for me to get the premed courses I need? Can I earn A's in the required classes? Will the classes be rigorous enough for me to do well on the MCAT? Are there a rich variety of research experiences offered? Will I be able to attend conferences? Get published? Will I have the chance to have some significant clinical and shadowing experiences? What is the track record for undergraduate

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