

CLASS OF 2023

Guide to the Fourth Year

SECTION II: STUDENT AFFAIRS



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Section II: Office of Student Affairs

A Letter from Amy Smith

Dear Rising Fourth Year Students:

On behalf of the Office of Student Affairs, congratulations for becoming Rising Fourth Year Students!

The information that follows has been collected from a variety of sources and will serve as an overview to the activities that take place from this point forward and into your fourth year. There is a lot of information to digest, but please do not allow it to overwhelm you!

At this point, you may be asking, “Where should I be in the process?” and the answer is simple. You should be considering what you liked and what you did not like about your clerkships. A useful way to do this is to go to the AAMC Careers in Medicine (CiM) [website](#) and complete the Clinical Rotation Evaluation. I will provide a copy for you at the end of this document. As recommended by CiM, while completing your rotations, consider how your values, skills, and practice needs might be met by the specialties you’re exploring. For example, how do you feel about?

- Providing inpatient vs. outpatient care?
- Continuity of care?
- Working with different age ranges?
- Working with one or both genders?
- Providing diagnostic-oriented care vs. performing procedures?
- Dealing with breadth vs. depth of patient problems?
- Providing short-term vs. long-term or continuous care?
- Having direct vs. indirect communication with patients?

It is perfectly normal if you have not yet decided on a specialty. After all, you have not had all the clinical experiences you need to make this decision. There are a number of things planned that will assist you. as you will see in this document, I will be meeting with you frequently. In addition, you have advisors from whom you can seek advice and, after the current fourth years match in March, they will put on a program for you so that you can benefit from their experiences and ask questions.

We will be with you every step of the way from your decision making process to the day that you find out where you will be completing your residency. Do not hesitate to call upon me as you see fit as I am always available to you.

Sincerely,

Amy Smith, BSN M. Ed.

Associate Dean, Office of Student Affairs

Frequently Used Abbreviations and Terms

CiM	AAMC Careers in Medicine (https://www.aamc.org/students/medstudents/cim/).
FRIEDA	Fellowship and Residency Interactive Electronic Database (http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/education-careers/graduate-medical-education/freida-online.page).
ERAS	Electronic Residency Application Service (https://www.aamc.org/students/medstudents/eras/).
NRMP	National Resident Matching Program (http://www.nrmp.org/).
ROL	Rank Order List—preferences submitted by you and your selected programs in February.
MSPE	Medical Student Performance Evaluation (https://www.aamc.org/download/139542/data/mspe.pdf .)
SOAP	The process through which positions offered by unfilled programs are accepted by unmatched applicants during Match Week.

It is important to understand the types of residency training available as you choose a specialty and begin applying for residency positions. There are different types of training programs depending on your specialty choice. Some of the positions offered through the NRMP Main Residency Match include:

- **Categorical-C:** programs that begin in the PGY-1 year and provide the full training required for specialty board certification.
- **Primary-M:** categorical programs in Primary Care Medicine and Primary Care Pediatrics that begin in the PGY-1 year and provide the full training required for specialty board certification.
- **Advanced-A:** programs that begin in the PGY-2 year after a year of prerequisite training for advanced programs.
- **Physician-R:** programs that are reserved for physicians who have had prior graduate medical education. Reserved programs offer PGY-2 positions that begin in the year of the Match and thus are not available to senior medical students.

Some specialties may offer both categorical and advanced type positions. I.e. Dermatology, Anesthesiology, Neurology, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and Diagnostic Radiology.

More information can be found at: <http://www.nrmp.org/intro-to-main-residency-match/>

Preparing for your Fourth Year

Narratives

Stay focused on your remaining clerkships. Remember that information in the narratives from your clerkships are included in your Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE *to be described in a subsequent section*). Review your narratives as you go along. If there are problems noted, take them to heart and make sure they do not appear again. Strive for exceeding expectations by actively seeking out learning opportunities, show professionalism and great teamwork in all your interactions. Remember you will be asking for Letters of Recommendation from the attending with whom you worked.

Curriculum Vitae

Utilize your advisor as a resource in the process. Utilize the AAMC Careers in Medicine (CiM) [website](#) that has a tremendous amount of resources that will be of great help to you, including CV development.

Fellowship and Residency Interactive Electronic Database

You may begin researching residencies by going to the Fellowship and Residency Interactive Electronic Database (FRIEDA). FRIEDA Online® is a database with over 9,000 graduate medical education programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education as well as, over 100 combined specialty programs.

Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS)

In May, you will be receiving a “token” from the Office of Student Affairs that will allow you to register with the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS). [Check out the website](#). ERAS is a service that transmits the MyERAS application and supporting documentation from applicants and their Designated Dean’s Office to Program Directors. ERAS consists of MyERAS, the Dean’s Office Workstation (DWS), and the Program Director’s Workstation (PDWS). Laura Christopher, Assistant Director of Academic and Career Support Services, maintains the Dean’s Office Workstation (DWS).

ERAS opens in April and you can begin working on your application. It can be viewed by Program Directors in September, so you want to plan September 1 as a deadline for completing your application. Completing your application does not mean you have to have your Letters of Recommendation in.

National Resident Matching Program

As you proceed through your decision making process, it will be critical that you examine how competitive you are for your chosen specialty. One of the best ways to do this is to begin reviewing the 2018 Charting Outcome for the Match which can be found on the [National Resident Matching Program website](#). This document is a collaborative report developed by the AAMC and NRMP which details the distribution of USMLE scores, number of programs ranked, membership in AOA, number of publications and participation in research projects and other evaluative criteria for matched and unmatched applicants.

In addition to ERAS, you must also register with the NRMP. The NRMP is a private, not-for-profit corporation established in 1952 to provide a uniform date of appointment to positions in graduate medical education (GME) in the United States. There is a code of conduct to which you must adhere. You should [review these as there are penalties](#) for violating match rules. Keep in mind that “The listing

of an applicant by a program on its certified rank order list or of a program by an applicant on the applicant's certified rank order list established a binding commitment to offer or to accept an appointment if a match results and to start training in good faith (*i.e., with the intent to complete the program*) on the date specified in the appointment contract." In other words, do not rank programs to which you are unwilling to go.

The NRMP matching algorithm uses the preferences expressed in the rank order lists submitted by applicants and programs to place individuals in positions. The process begins with an attempt to place an applicant into the program indicated as most preferred on that applicant's list. If the applicant cannot be matched to this first choice program, an attempt is then made to place the applicant into the second choice program, and so on, until the applicant obtains a tentative match, or all the applicant's choices have been exhausted. ROLs are submitted by applicant and programs in mid-February. [If you want to learn more about the matching algorithm, click here.](#)

Urology and ENT Match

If you are considering matching into these programs, it is imperative that you schedule a meeting with the Office of Student Affairs to discuss the timelines.

Plastic Surgery or Ophthalmology Match

If you are considering plastic surgery or ophthalmology, you will need to register with the [San Francisco Match](#). This match has different timelines and deadline, so review it carefully. You still need to register with the NRMP.

Military Match

If you are going through the Military Match, you will need to speak with your Recruiter for further information. Timelines and deadlines are different than the Main Match. You still need to register with the NRMP.

Couples Match

If you are going through the match as a couple, you will use the Couples Match through the NRMP. Each partner of a couple enrolls individually in The Match and indicates in the NRMPs secure web-based Registration, Ranking, and ResultsSM (R3SM) system that they want to participate in The Match as a couple. The NRMP allows couples to form pairs of choices on their primary rank order lists, which then are considered in rank order in The Match. The couple will match to the most preferred pair of programs on the rank order lists where each partner has been offered a position. Couples can be matched into a combination of programs suited to their personal needs. In creating pairs of programs, couples can specialties, program types (*preliminary or transitional, categorical, and advanced*), and geographic locations. [For more information, click here.](#)

Letters of Recommendation

From the Careers in Medicine website (*with modifications*), consider the following in asking for Letters of Recommendation: letters should generally come from faculty who know you well, have worked with you in a clinical setting and are in the specialty you wish to pursue. You want letters from the faculty that know you best and can describe your clinical abilities as well as your personal attributes, (*i.e., being a team player or having good problem solving skills*). You should get at least one letter, and probably two from a person in your chosen specialty. You may also need to get a letter from the department chair

and/or clerkship director. Make sure you set up a face-to-face meeting so you can make a good impression and supply the necessary information they may need. Generally you should not solicit letters from residents, preclinical faculty and non-physicians. You should discuss your letter writing selections with your advisor or students affairs dean so they can help you decide who may be best to ask in your particular field or situation. *See additional details on the LoR in a subsequent section.*

Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE/Dean's Letter)

The Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE) is a performance evaluation that describes in a sequential manner, a student's performance, as compared to his or her peers, through years 1-3 of your medical education. It includes an assessment of both your performance and professional attributes. This letter is prepared by the Office of Medical Education with a deadline of October 1. [If you would like to read more about the MSPE, click here.](#)

Personal Statement

One of the more difficult aspects of the application for many medical students is writing the Personal Statement (PS), particularly if you are not comfortable with your writing skills. The CiM website is a good place to go for information on what to include in your PS and it is excerpted in a subsequent section below. Amy Smith will review your PS but you will want to have others review it as well. You will want to start writing your PS in July so that you will have time to go through revisions and have it ready to submit to your ERAS application by September 1. Some specialties and programs value the PS more than others but, since you do not know which ones will value it most, do your best. *See separate section at the end of this document.*

How Will I Know if I Have Matched to a Program?

At 12:00 noon Eastern Time on Monday of Match Week, applicants can learn IF they matched to a program on their rank order list by logging in to the NRMP's Registration, Ranking, and Results (R3) system with their AAMC ID and password. Applicants will be presented with one of the following messages on the Applicant Options page:

Congratulations, you have matched!

This message will be displayed for any applicant who is "fully" matched, including:

- Applicants who listed and matched to a categorical program.
- Applicants who listed and matched to preliminary and advanced programs.

Congratulations, you have matched to an advanced position but not a first year position!

This message will be displayed for any applicant who matched to an advanced position but did not match to a preliminary position listed on a supplemental rank order list. Applicants who receive this message and who are deemed eligible to enter graduate medical education on July 1 in the year of The Match will have access to the List of Unfilled Programs and will be eligible to participate in the Match Week **Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program** obtain a preliminary position. Applicants will not have access to information about unfilled categorical or advanced positions.

Congratulations, you have matched to a one year position!

This message will be displayed for any applicant who matched to a preliminary position but did not match to an advanced position listed on the primary rank order list. Applicants who receive this message and who are deemed eligible to enter graduate medical education on July 1 in the year of The Match will have access to the List of Unfilled Programs and will be eligible to participate in the Match Week

Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program to obtain an advanced position. Applicants will not have access to information about unfilled categorical or preliminary positions.

We are sorry; you did not match to any position!

This message will be displayed for any applicant who did not match to any program. Applicants who receive this message and who are deemed eligible to enter graduate medical education on July 1 in the year of The Match will have access to the List of Unfilled Programs and will be eligible to participate in the Match Week **Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program** for any category of unfilled positions.

You are NOT matched because you did not submit a certified rank order list!

This message will be displayed for any applicant who registered to participate in the Match but did not certify a rank order list prior to the rank order list certification deadline is the third Wednesday in February. Applicants who receive this message and who are deemed eligible to enter graduate medical education on July 1 in the year of The Match will have access to the List of Unfilled Programs and will be eligible to participate in the Match Week Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program for any category of unfilled positions. **DO NOT LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU.**

You are NOT matched because you are withdrawn!

This message will be displayed for any applicant who registered to participate in The Match but was withdrawn either by the medical school or by the NRMP.

What Happens if I Do Not Match?

First thing is to contact Amy Smith immediately at 304-638-0943. Arrangements have been made to meet with a career advisor upon this condition. Most likely those advisors will be Laura Christopher, Amy Smith and/or Dr. Bobby Miller. We will walk you through the next 3 days of activities.

This is dreadful to think about but it is important information for you to know. **SOAP** is the process through which positions offered by unfilled programs are accepted by unmatched applicants during Match Week. **SOAP** provides a standardized and uniform process for obtaining post-match appointments. Unfilled programs electing to participate in **SOAP** offer positions to **SOAP**-eligible unmatched applicants through the **Registration, Ranking, and Results (R3) system**, and positions offered and accepted constitute a binding commitment under the Match Participation Agreement.

SOAP is a series of "rounds" that begin at 12:00 Noon Eastern Time on Wednesday of Match Week. At 12:00 Noon, the first **SOAP** offers are extended through the **R3** system to the unmatched applicants listed at the top of programs' preference lists. Offers are extended to as many applicants on a program's preference list as there are unfilled positions in that program. Each "round" of **SOAP** lasts two hours, during which applicants can accept or reject any offers they receive. Offers are sent at 3:00 p.m. Wednesday, 9:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., and 3:00 p.m. on Thursday. **SOAP** concludes at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday of Match Week. *Detailed information about **SOAP** can be found in Section 7.0 of the Match Participation Agreement for Applicants and Programs.*

Letters of Recommendation (LoR)

How Many Letters Do I Need?

The program will specify the number of letters you need. Most programs will ask for three or four letters. ERAS allows you to store as many letters of recommendation as you wish and designate different letters for each program, but no more than four letters can be sent to an individual program.

How Do I Ask for Letters?

Anticipate who you will ask for letters, get to know them and let them get to know you beforehand. Strategize who your strongest advocates will be. You may be surprised at how willing faculty members are to write letters of recommendation. Keep in mind that they have probably been doing this for quite some time and it is part of their job to perform this important function. Request a letter of recommendation directly and in person. Ask if the faculty member would feel comfortable writing you a strong letter of support. This gives the potential letter writer an easy out if they are not comfortable and keeps you from getting a negative or neutral letter that will do little to help your candidacy. If the answer is anything other than a strong affirmative, you should probably look elsewhere. If they agree, follow-up with an email confirming so they will remember.

When Should I Ask?

Plan to give your letter-writer at least four weeks' notice for a letter. Provide a copy of your CV and personal statement. ERAS has a letter request form/cover sheet that you can use to assist your letter-writer with format and submission. Make sure you keep track of those whom you've asked and follow up to make sure your letters are being submitted. It's important that you stay in communication with your Student Affairs since they will be assisting you in collecting and submitting your letters of recommendation and other supporting documents.

Note that some faculty members write a large number of letters so I recommend that if you know you will be asking for a letter, give them a "heads up" around June that you will be asking. Then when you have your CV and PS complete (or at least your CV), make an appointment to meet with them in order to officially ask for a letter. There is a waiver form that you will have to provide them that waives your right to see the letter. If someone offers to write you a letter, say that you would be honored if they did so. You don't have to necessarily use it but if they offer, they must have good things to say.

Remember that letters do not have to be in when you submit your application. They will generally come in from August – October. Effective ERAS 2016, all letters of recommendation must be uploaded by your author or their designee using the LoR Portal. Medical schools will no longer be able to upload letters on your behalf. Keep in mind that letters are uploaded when they come in but sit there until you assign them to programs.

Personal Statements (PS)

The personal statement can be difficult to write and a source of much frustration for students, but it is a useful tool to give the selection committee some idea of your background, goals and character. Think of this as an opportunity to highlight your strong points. A good personal statement should focus on your medical career objectives, your specialty choice, and aspirations. It should not be a rehash of why you came to medical school (*like you wrote for AMCAS*) or a summary of your CV, but rather a succinct statement of your career goals that reflects your personality and style. [Examples of personal statements are available on the Student Affairs website under the Career Advising and Counseling Program on the left navigation tab.](#)

Your personal statement should include:

- An explanation of why you want to go into your chosen specialty and the characteristics or points that attracted you. If there is a particular event that led to your interest, describe it.
- Clinical activities, research or special projects that solidified your interest. You want the reader to see your commitment to the specialty and the profession.
- Your personal characteristics that make you well suited for the specialty, and the strengths you can offer the program. Your self-assessment results may be helpful to you in describing the attributes that you bring to the program and specialty.
- What you are looking for in a program, clinically and academically (making sure you are sending it to programs that can meet those needs).
- Your future plans and goals within the specialty.

There may be situations where a unique personal statement focused on a single residency program may be in order (ex: if you have done a sub-internship at your first choice location or did research as an undergraduate with a faculty member at a particular program). With your advisor, think about strategy given your credentials and the places you want to apply. Your personal statement should be succinct, yet provide the reader with an overview of who you are and where you are headed.

Tips for Writing Your Personal Statement

- Keep it to one page, neatly typed with proper grammar and composition.
- Avoid abbreviations.
- Avoid repetitive sentence structure.
- Get help – have your advisor and Student Affairs Dean read over it.
- Give yourself adequate time to prepare a well-written statement.
- Be error-free – proof your work for grammar, spelling, and typographical errors.

Remember that in the early part of the residency selection process, the personal statement is the closest thing your reviewers have to knowing you personally.

Clinical Rotation Evaluation

In addition to beginning your practice of clinical medicine and learning the basics of being a physician, clinical rotations are a great chance for you to try on different specialties and start figuring out which one might be a good fit for you. As you complete each of your rotations, fill out and compare the evaluation questions below from the AAMC Careers in Medicine to assist you in gathering your thoughts, feelings, and reflections on each specialty as a possible career choice for you.

1. Name and Location of Clinical Rotation:

2. What did I like most about this specialty?

3. What did I like least about this specialty?

4. Did this clinical rotation give me a good sense of what practice in this specialty would be like?

Yes No Comments:

5. Did my interests, values, skills, and/or personality “fit” with this specialty?

Yes No

If yes, in what way did they fit?

If no, why might they not be compatible?

6. What are the possible practice settings for specialists in this field?

a. Which of these settings interest me and do I know enough about them?
