Letters of Recommendation, School Requirements, Creating a School List

Pre**MD**

School of Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Looking for previous PreMD Presentations?
https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/deans-office/diversity-inclusion/about-us/pre-med-program

Looking for a Pre-Health Advisor?

- Check your school's advising website
- Check out National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions
  - Get connected with an advisor:
    - https://www.naahp.org/public-resources/student-resources/find-an-advisor
  - See if your school has an NAAHP advisor:
    - https://www.naahp.org/public-resources/student-resources/find-an-advisor/locate-an-advisor-by-institution

Looking for shadowing opportunities during the pandemic?

- Virtual Shadowing Program created by CU Faculty!
  - Watch over the shoulder of one of our physicians, nurse practitioners, or PAs as they go bedside in the ED to assess and diagnose a simulated patient. Each video is followed-up by a series of questions posed to the student and then a summary by the physician. A short quiz on the topic addressed finalizes each class.
  - 14 hours of shadowing material
  - Apply for a Certificate of Completion from the University of Colorado School of Medicine for a $50 fee
    - If the fee is a barrier, just email them
  - https://www.coloradowm.org/courses/pre-med/virtual-shadowing-nano-course-emergency-medicine/

Letters of Recommendation (LORs)

WHO TO ASK?

- Doctors, PIs, professors, extracurricular coordinators, job supervisors, religious leader
- Range of individuals to highlight different aspects of you & your application
- Important: If applying DO, AACOMAS will ask for a DO LOR

WHEN TO ASK?

- **The earlier the better**
- Give them a date you would need the letter by
  - They know when they need to work on it & can complete it in time
- Can be stored on third party sites -- keep confidentiality (**Interfolio**)

HOW MANY SHOULD YOU GET?

- Try to get 2-6 letters

DO SOME RESEARCH

- Does your school have committee letters
- Medical school LOR requirements (science professors, humanities, volunteering, etc.)

Tips:
- *Talk to professors at the beginning of the course*
- *Send letter writers your resume, personal statement, etc. and specific characteristics/qualities you would like them to attest to.*

LOR - What should be in a LOR

- Provide writers official [Guidelines for Writing a Letter](#) from the AAMC
- Writers should provide stories/concrete examples of times you demonstrated [Core Competencies for Entering Med Students](#)
  - Ask different writers to speak to different competencies

Tips:

- Provide a packet with Personal Statement draft, CV/updates, and other useful documents like thos listed above (also see [Email Correspondence Example](#))
- Use thank you cards to nudge/remind writers when the deadline is soon
- Ask your premed advisor to proof LORs if a writer is new to this process

Emailing a Letter Writer (previously agreed to write one)

Hi [Letter Writer]!

Thank you so much for writing a letter of recommendation in support of my application to medical school. I just took the MCAT yesterday, and I'll get my scores back in about one month – things are getting very real, but I'm looking forward to having a little more breathing room and getting to enjoy some of my hobbies again! In the event that you might still find it helpful, I've attached a copy of my **CV that includes awards, employment, volunteering experience** and the like from both my undergraduate and postbaccalaureate experience. Other resources that might be helpful include the list of **pre-medical competencies** published by the AAMC that can be helpful when structuring a letter. These are traits and skills that many medical schools use when evaluating an application, so letters that speak to some of these competencies tend to be very helpful. Those competencies can be found here, and the main page for the **AMCAS Letter Service** is here, which may include answers to any other questions you have. Also attached is the letter request form that needs to accompany your letter, regardless of how it's submitted. It contains my AAMC application ID, as well as the specific letter ID that will help match the correct letters to the correct application (and on my end, to make sure get those letters sent to the correct school). While you might be familiar with the process already, there are three methods to upload a letter; all of my schools are using the AMCAS Letter Service, and their application works pretty seamlessly, so that might be the simplest route to go. You go to https://services.aamc.org/letterwriter."

Thank you,
[Student]

Emailing a Letter Writer (has not agreed to write one)

Hi [Potential Letter Writer]!

I hope your time out east with your family has been super helpful (and restful)! I know the Daily staff has missed having you around – I filled in once, but I've been so horrifically busy since January that I haven't been able to help out many of the times that Nina asked!

I'm gearing up to apply to medical schools this May/June, and since I'm considered a non-traditional student (I've been out of undergrad for some time now), some of my letters of recommendation can come from current and previous employers. If you feel that you might have the time and energy I was wondering if you would be willing and able **to write a positive letter** of recommendation in support of my application.

I'm still figuring out how the application process works, but I believe that once the applications open in May, I can simply send you a link where you can upload a letter. This letter then gets sent to the schools depending on the individual specifications for each program (how many employer letters they'd like, how many academic letters, volunteer letters, etc.).

If this isn't going to be feasible for you right now, I completely understand, but I wanted to ask you since I really have valued my time at the Daily (as limited as it is now!) and because I have really enjoyed working for and with you in my time in Jackson! Please just let me know if this sounds like something you may or may not be able to take on.

Thank you,
[Student]

AAMC Core Competencies

Pre-Professional Competencies	Thinking and Reasoning Competencies	Science Competencies
▪ Service Orientation	▪ Critical Thinking	▪ Living Systems
▪ Social Skills	▪ Quantitative Reasoning	▪ Human Behavior
▪ Cultural Competence	▪ Scientific Inquiry	
▪ Teamwork	▪ Written Communication	
▪ Oral Communication		
▪ Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others		
▪ Reliability and Dependability		
▪ Resilience and Adaptability		
▪ Capacity for Improvement		

What does CUSOM say?

- **How many letters do you require?**
  - 3 to 5 letters
- **If a school offers a committee letter, do you want to see one?**
  - Yes
- **If a student sends the maximum number of letters, do you read them all?**
  - Yes
- **Do you prefer 3 vs 5 letters?**
  - There is no need to have 5 letters, just make sure that every letter is strong and from someone who knows you really well
- **What makes a great letter of recommendation?**
  - Have someone write it that knows you well and in a longitudinal fashion
- **What mistakes do students make?**
  - A common mistake is getting letters from someone who doesn't know you well. The letter might say "they were in my biology class and got an A"

LOR Example

I am writing in whole-hearted support of ███████ application in her pursuit of a Master of Science in Finance. I had the privilege of working as one of her supervisors at Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico, during the 2019 summer season, though I have worked alongside her in other capacities for the last six years. In that time, I have come to know ████ as a brilliant, tenacious, and creative employee who works well in a team, adapts readily to the unfamiliar, and earnestly dedicates herself to the task at hand. For these reasons, I believe that she will be a tremendous asset to any program to which she applies.

Over the past several years, ████ has eagerly applied herself to a number of positions at Philmont, and her work ethic and independence enabled her to move into positions of higher leadership in recent seasons ██████. In her most recent role as a camp director, she was responsible for coordinating the efforts of 10 staff members from different departments and backgrounds in order to provide educational living history programs related to an 1800s mining operation that occupied the area. ████ adeptly handled interpersonal conflicts among the staff while also managing inventory, operations, and other logistics associated with providing program to more than 6000 participants. I was impressed by ██████ foresight and her communication with her supervisors; she is analytical but flexible, and her careful attention to the smallest details makes for proactive responses to anticipated events (such as swells in visitor/crew numbers and changes to program) and swift but thorough responses to emergent situations (such as medical evaluations both in and outside of camp).

In 2018, ████ was one of the 1100+ staff members whose summer employment plans were upended by the Ute Park Fire, which burned nearly 37,000 acres of Philmont and neighboring properties. Following the cancellation of crew arrivals, many staff were given the option to go home or start in new roles in timber stand improvement, which meant long, hard, physical working days of clearing excessive forest undergrowth. ████ elected to stay to aid in fire recovery efforts and was asked to step into the role of a crew lead for one of the forestry crews. As a crew lead, she was responsible for supply orders, maintenance schedules, work schedules, and maintaining morale for her crew following a total upheaval and rewriting of job expectations. ████ proved her worth as an exemplary leader and problem-solver; under her leadership, her crew enjoyed a culture of cooperativity in the face of incredible adversity.

████ is one of the most capable individuals I know. As former seasonal staff myself, I recognize that such jobs are sometimes viewed as "less than" by academic programs, professional schools, and year-round employers. However, I assure you that ████ has learned and accomplished a tremendous amount in a remarkable environment that makes her uniquely qualified and prepared for her pursuit of a Master of Science in Finance. I cannot recommend her highly enough for admission to your program.
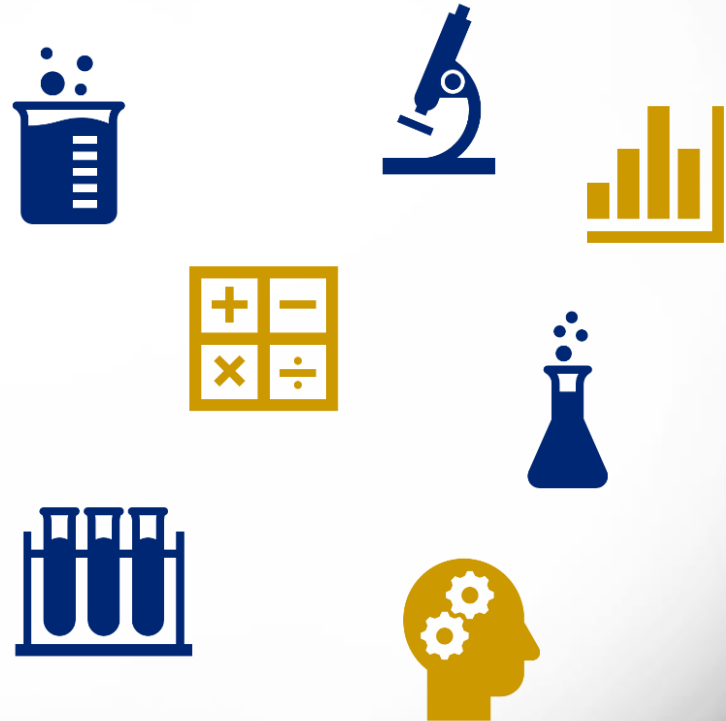
Premed Course Requirements

Every med school has different requirements!

In general:

- 1 year biology **WITH lab**
- 1 year general chemistry **WITH lab**
- 1 year organic chemistry **WITH lab**
- 1 year physics **WITH lab**
- 1 year English/Humanities
- 1 year math
- 1 semester biochemistry

PreMD

TIPS: Course Requirements

- **You don't need to be a science major!**
- Check if schools take AP credits
- Consider timing your classes to help prepare for the MCAT
- Might be able to use "unusual" courses to satisfy requirements (e.g., Mechanical engineering lab for physics lab requirement; anthropology for genetics course)
  - Work with the medical school you are applying to
  - Save your syllabus/course description
- Double check course requirements for each school in case there is something unique!

What to consider when picking where to apply

- Location
- Stats
  - GPA, MCAT
- Requirements
  - Pre-requisite courses
- Mission
- Curriculum
  - 2 year didactic or shortened didactics
    - CUSOM transitioned to 1 year
  - Clinical rotation
    - Traditional vs longitudinal
- Special programs
  - MD/PhD, MD/MPH, tracks (global, rural, research)
- Tuition cost
- Residency placement success rate
- Learning environment, facilities
- Out of state acceptance %
  - Any "ties" to the school
  - Public vs Private- Public may accept more in-state students
  - Make an argument of why you'll fit the new community

NAME	LOCATION	RATIO OF IN-STATE vs. OUT-OF-STATE ACCEPTANCE	AVG MCAT (most recent cycle)	AVG GPA (most recent cycle)	RANKING (research)	RANKING (primary care)	PRICE
Duke	Durham, NC	1.79	516	3.85	10	26	57k
University of Washington	Seattle	.35	507	3.71	11	3	35k (In state)
University of Michigan	Ann Arbor	1.48	516	3.86	15	7	36k (In state)
Baylor	Houston	9.24	513	3.89	16	5	30k
UNC	Chapel Hill	14.1	518	3.85	23	1	55k
University of Virginia	Charlottesville	1.62	518	3.9	26	21	54k
UT Southwestern	Dallas	1.32	514	3.89	26	19	32k
Oregon Health & Science University	Portland	22.24	510	3.73	29	5	63k
University of Maryland	College Park	5.85	512	3.82	31	21	62k
Ohio State	Columbus	3.45	515	3.83	32	26	38k
University of Colorado	Denver	8.02	512	3.79	32	9	64k
University of Rochester	Rochester, NY	1.08	515	3.79	32	32	55k
Dartmouth	Hanover, New Hampshire	2.15	515	3.78	44	21	61k
Georgetown	DC	2.93	512	3.74	46	Bottom 1/4 (Not Listed)	51k
University of Miami	Miami	2.25	513	3.8	50	79	42k
Wake Forest	Winston-Salem, NC	4.42	511	3.69	52	61	59k
Thomas Jefferson	Philadelphia	2.97	512	3.75	56	46	55k
Tufts	Medford, MA	2.88	513	3.74	57	46	61k
George Washington	DC	On Friendly List	511	3.72	62	79	58k
Rush University	Chicago	1.47	512	3.73	60	59	62k
Saint Louis University	Saint Louis	1.47	512	3.87	70	51	53k
Virginia Commonwealth	Richmond	6.04	511	3.74	72	61	49k
Wayne State	Detroit		510	3.76	78	Bottom 1/4 (Not Listed)	32k (in-state)
University of Oklahoma	Oklahoma City	17.64	507	3.82	82	72	56k
Drexel	Philadelphia	3.99	511	3.73	89	Unranked	58k
Michigan State	First two years in East Lansing or Grand Rapids; next two years in random places	20% from out of state	507	3.71	89	79	45k
Quinnipiac	Hamden, CT	On Friendly List	512	3.68	Unranked	Unranked	59k
UT Dell	Austin		512	3.88	Unranked	Unranked	31k
Virginia Tech	Blacksburg	On Friendly List	513	3.61	Unranked	Unranked	61k
Western Michigan	Kalamazoo	On Friendly List	514	3.7	Unranked	Unranked	57k

How the AAMC organizes how to choose a school

Factor	Ideal fit	Good fit	No opinion	Unsure	Not a fit	Notes
Course offerings						
Class size						
Location						
Research programs						
Technology						
Interviews and/or meetings with faculty						
Reputation						
Technology						
Tuition and financial aid						
Programs for minority or disadvantaged students						
Teaching methods						
Combined-degree offerings						
Campus tour						
Rural or community offerings						
Residency placement						

What is the MSAR?

- Compiles all up to date information that is relevant to applicants in one place for each school.
    - Matriculant demographics
    - Primary application information
    - Letter of evaluation information
    - Research information and opportunities
    - Combined degrees and special programs
    - Application deadlines
    - Enrollment data
    - Campus type
    - Mission statements
    - Where schools accept applicants from

PRICE:
1 year = $28
2 year = $36
2 year subscription included with the AAMC Fee Assistance Program

Example MSAR Page

The Medical School Directory

- Free alternative to MSAR that uses LizzyM
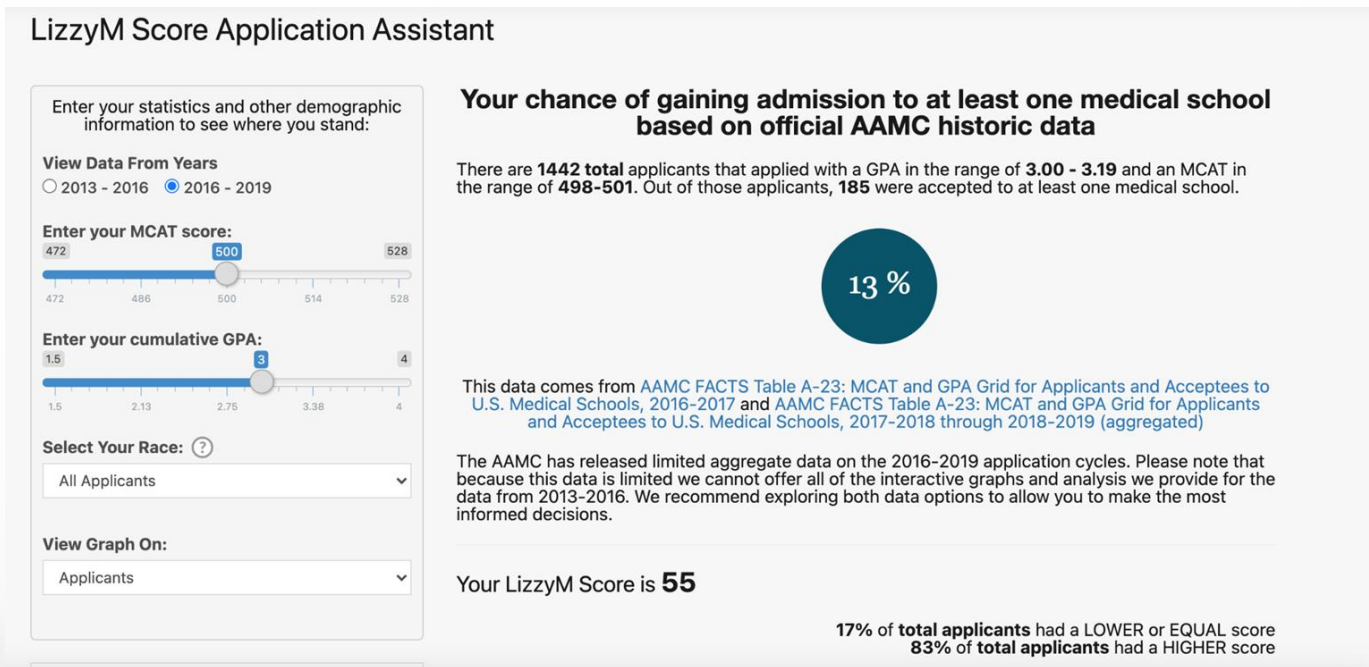- Consider using this when further out from actually applying
- https://themedicalschooldirectory.com/

Medical School Directory Map

WSU Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine (Spokane, WA)
Public, Tuition: $35,000, LizzyM: 65, OSM: 5%
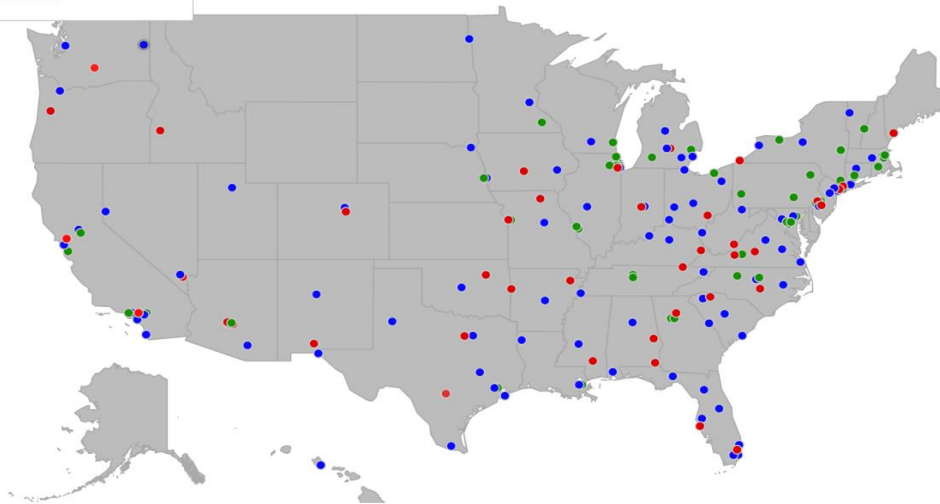
Tips

- Some schools have an agreement to be an "in state school" for "out of state applicants"
  - WWAMI
  - Utah
- Talk to your pre-med advisor (or find one on NAAHP)
- Make an excel sheet to organize your schools
- How to you think about "out of state friendly" schools: https://www.reddit.com/r/premed/comments/iz4rj4/what_percentage_of_a_student_body_is_considered/
- Reddit how to make a school list: https://www.reddit.com/r/premed/wiki/schoollist
  - **Disclaimer: Reddit threads are one person's opinion, but may help you conceptualize**

PreMD Exit Survey

Please complete our survey!