

Developing an Application Strategy

Having a strategy when you choose the professional schools to which you apply is an important step in a successful application cycle. Medical and dental schools receive thousands of applications that must be screened and evaluated. Most, if not all, have to use a process to screen out a bulk of the applicants before offering them a secondary application or an interview. That screening process is done by looking at cumulative GPA, science GPA and MCAT or DAT scores. Additionally most schools publish the ranges of the scores that the past years' accepted applicants fell into. **The mean within the range of scores is the most important metric to use as you're making your plan.** Often people, especially on the low end of the range have special circumstances that the professional school took into account when accepting that student into their program. Even though your scores may fall within the range of those who were accepted the matriculants at the low end of the range usually have special circumstances that overrode their grades and MCAT/GPA scores. Consequently if your scores are at the mean or better you stand a better chance of being accepted.

After you have taken the MCAT or DAT then calculate your science GPA using the information available here <http://healthprofessions.wsu.edu/documents/2014/12/bcpm-calculation.pdf>. Your cumulative GPA at the end of your junior year is also needed for this process. If you attended more than one institution (including Running Start) you will need to manually calculate your GPA. A great tool for completing this project is the GPA calculator provided on the Foothills Community College website <https://thegpacalculator.appspot.com/college/foothill>

Once you know your science GPA and cumulative GPA then compare your results against the statistics of the people who entered the school(s) of your choice during previous application cycles. You can find that information at <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/> or <http://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor/applying>

Of your list of schools confirm that they take out of state residents. Look at their mission statements, which will require going to the individual schools' websites. Does your life mission match their mission statement? If so, add that school to your list. If not, move on.

When you've come up with a list of schools that meet the above criteria, determine if you can afford to apply to all of them. If not, pare down the list accordingly. Most candidates apply to over 15 schools. It is not wise to limit your application to a small geographic area such as the Pacific Northwest; the choices are far too limited.