The Catholic University of America

Pre-Med Advising Handbook

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CUA Premed Checklist

Welcome to the Pre-Med Track at The Catholic University of America!

Introduction

This checklist is intended as an advisory guide for pre-medical (MD, DO, and Vet) students beginning their journey here. It provides a general overview of common academic, extracurricular, and application-related steps that successful pre-med students often follow. However, it should not be taken as a strict or exhaustive set of requirements. Post-secondary professional programs vary in both their requirements and recommendations. Additionally, each student's path may differ depending on their interests, strengths, and goals. Overall, it is best to show a strong commitment to an ideal or theme for an application. It is important not to see this handbook as a simple checklist for medical school where you need to complete everything, but rather as advice to help create a cohesive narrative for your applications. Students are encouraged to consult with their academic advisor, mentor, and the Pre-Health Student Association to tailor their journey and discover opportunities to explore possible career paths. This checklist provides an overview with more details in the following sections:

Academics

- ☐ Complete prerequisite courses (Biology, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Physics (all with associated labs), Biochemistry, Calculus/Statistics, English/Writing)
- ☐ Maintain strong GPA (aim 3.7+ if possible)
- ☐ Seek tutoring/support early for challenging classes
- ☐ Consult MCAT Topic Coverage for courses that could be helpful (such as Genetics and Physiology).

Clinical Experience

- ☐ Work/volunteer in a clinical setting (hospital, clinic, hospice, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), scribe, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), animal clinic, etc.) [100 hours minimum is recommended, 300+ is competitive]
- ☐ Patient contact hours sometimes count toward this, like volunteering for nursing homes or as a greeter at hospitals

Shadowing Experience

- ☐ Shadow physicians [or veterinarians] (variety of specialties, if possible. Include primary care) [100 hours in more than 1 department is recommended]

- ☐ If you are interested in applying to DO programs, it is recommended that you also shadow DOs, as many schools highly recommend or require this.

Research

- **Research is mostly optional, but very ADVANTAGEOUS for many schools**
- ☐ Join a lab or research project (bench or clinical research)
- ☐ Present findings (poster, symposium, publication if possible)

Service & Leadership

- ☐ Volunteer in community service (preferably long-term, non-medical possible as well)
- ☐ Take leadership roles (clubs, tutoring, mentoring, student orgs)

MCAT Preparation

- ☐ Choose MCAT date [During summer or as early as possible (January) recommended]
- ☐ Create study plan (3–6 months ahead)
    - MCAT prep courses often have study plans that are organized and effective.
- ☐ Register for MCAT
- ☐ Take practice exams and track progress

Letters of Recommendation (LOR)

- ☐ Identify professors, physicians, mentors early
- ☐ Build strong relationships
- ☐ Request letters 2–3 months before application
- ☐ Follow up with letter writers with a timeline of when the application will be submitted and until you receive submission notifications that they have uploaded their letter. It is your responsibility to ensure that all deadlines are met, even for letter writers.

Application Prep

- ☐ Research medical/vet schools (mission, stats, fit)
- ☐ Research if additional exams are required (AAMC PREview or CASPER)
- ☐ Draft personal statement
- ☐ Seek feedback from trusted mentors or the writing center to finalize personal statement
- ☐ Prepare activities section (AMCAS/AACOMAS/VMCAS)
- ☐ Update CV/resume
- ☐ Determine timeline for schools of interest. Many schools have rolling admissions, so early submission is advantageous, but they also have a hard submission target date.

Timeline

- ☐ Freshman year: focus on GPA, explore clubs, and shadowing
    - Winter: Use winter break to line up summer opportunities at home or abroad.
    - Summer: start volunteering in hospitals, get EMT or Medical Assistant (MA) certified, or start shadowing doctors to see if the profession is a good fit for you. Log ALL hours for use in applications later
- ☐ Sophomore year: research, volunteer consistently
    - Summer: start working in a clinical setting and make a list of mentors to ask LOR from, if taking an early MCAT, start studying
- ☐ Junior year: MCAT (take in January to allow for focus on applications later, or retake later in the year if needed), LORs, leadership, clinical experience
    - Summer: Pre-write personal statement and activities section to submit within the first week of application opening
- ☐ Senior year: applications, interviews, continue volunteer or research opportunities, and keep schools updated on your accomplishments
- NOTE: In many cases, the strongest applications with the most experiences require a longer timeline. This timeline can be shifted by a year or two, with one or more gap years of medically-related experiences, in order for your application to be the most impressive it can be. If taking the MCAT in the spring of senior year, be sure to coordinate with senior comprehensive exams to avoid being overwhelmed with both at the same time.

Academics

The academic foundation is one of the most important parts of the pre-med journey. Medical schools expect applicants to demonstrate strong performance in core prerequisite courses such as Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Biochemistry, Mathematics, and English. These classes not only provide essential knowledge for the MCAT but also help build the critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed in medical training. Maintaining a competitive GPA, typically a 3.7 or higher, should be a priority, and an important aspect of achieving this GPA goal is developing consistent study habits and seeking support when needed. Whether through tutoring, study groups, or faculty office hours, building a strong academic foundation early will help set you up for success. We recommend that you take these courses in your first two or three years of college, as the material in these prerequisite courses will be on the MCAT. It is **IMPORTANT TO MASTER** the course materials that will also be present on the MCAT (Chemistry, Biology, Physics, etc.) as you go along. For example, if you struggle on a General Chemistry exam, go back **RIGHT AWAY** and learn the material since science courses, and ultimately the MCAT, will build on all of the knowledge in Chemistry or Biology. It is a good strategy to keep your notes from these classes so that you can look back at them when the time comes for the MCAT. Many successful students also report that taking graduate-level courses helps prepare them for the MCAT through the rigorous literature review and experimental analysis, similar to what the reading passage-based questions will be on the MCAT.

The following courses are the standard requirements and recommendations for many medical and veterinary schools (Pre-Med and Pre-Vet) in the United States, as well as CUA course IDs that may fulfill them:

Subjects	Required Lecture	Semesters	Required Lab	Semesters	Recommended Course	CUA Course IDs
General Biology	*	2	*	2		BIOL 105-106 + BIOL 115-116
General Chemistry	*	2	*	2		CHEM 103-104 + CHEM 113-114
Biochemistry	*	1				BIOL 454 / CHEM 472+496
Physics	*	2	*	2		PHYS 215-216 + 225-226
Mathematics	*	1				MATH 111+112
English / Composition and Rhetoric	*	2				ENG 101, ENG 235 (or any others)
Psychology		1			*	PSY 201
Sociology		1			*	SOC 101
Physiology		1			*	BIOL 418
Statistics	* (Required for Biomedical Engineering Students)	1			*	MATH 114, PSY 322 for Psychology Minors, or MATH 309 for Engineering Students
Internship		[Varies]			*	ENGR 595 for Engineering Students

***NOTE: ENGR595 is only for engineering students to take an internship. This course is often used by students to work or volunteer in a hospital to count for clinical hours or shadowing. Please speak with your engineering advisor about internship opportunities. These internships can be either through the engineering faculty OR opportunities that the student discovers on their own to fulfill the course.**

Clinical Experience

Clinical exposure allows you to see medicine in action and confirm your motivation for pursuing a medical career. Shadowing physicians across different specialties helps you understand the daily realities of the profession. It is typically recommended that you achieve at least 100 hours of shadowing overall, having visited more than one department. Hands-on experiences such as volunteering in hospitals, working as a medical scribe, or serving as an EMT provide direct patient interaction. Admissions committees want to see that you have a genuine understanding of what it means to practice medicine and that you have demonstrated commitment to patient care. Multiple sources suggest at least 150 hours, with 300+ hours being highly competitive for applications. Given that your role is more limited in shadowing a physician, volunteering or working in these hands-on experiences is where you will truly be able to see the demands of the health field with your own eyes. In all clinical experiences, we recommend that you keep a journal or an electronic log of your experiences (without violating the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, or HIPAA, **AKA NO PATIENT NAMES OR IDENTIFIERS**) so that you have something to draw from when the time comes for your personal statement, other essays, and interviews. For example, you can record how meaningful a patient interaction a doctor had with their patient was to you. See the end of the checklist for opportunities that previous students recommend.

Research

Engaging in research helps you develop analytical skills and teaches you how scientific discoveries translate into medical advances. Whether you pursue bench research in a laboratory, clinical projects with patient data, or even computational modeling, participating in research shows medical schools that you can think critically, solve problems, and contribute to advancing knowledge. Presenting your findings through posters, symposiums, or publications strengthens your application further and highlights your ability to communicate science effectively. While not required by all medical schools, research experience is especially important if you're interested in academic medicine or an MD/PhD program. We recommend that you read faculty profiles on the CUA department website (links in the Resources section) that you are interested in and reach out via email. It is most effective to indicate interest in their specific work and to set up a meeting to discuss opportunities. Finding a mentor can have a huge impact on your success in college and even beyond. Being able to develop a relationship with a mentor through research can help in receiving a high-quality letter of recommendation, as they have directly seen your work ethic as well as perseverance in such a rigorous environment. It is extremely advantageous to become involved in research as soon as you can because it allows you to tackle concepts and expose yourself to topics and skills that would otherwise be unavailable until you reach higher-level classes or even medical school itself. Additionally, research in a faculty member's lab could be a great opportunity for you to explore a possible area of research that has human application that you can use to further inform your career decisions. Faculty are also very well-connected to

opportunities through colleagues and collaborators. When in doubt, always reach out to mentors to discuss your interests, and they just might have someone they know that would interest you!

Service & Leadership

Medicine is fundamentally about service, so long-term volunteer work demonstrates your commitment to helping others. Community service outside of medicine, such as tutoring, food drives, or mentoring, shows that you care about people beyond clinical settings. Leadership roles in student organizations, clubs, or mentoring programs also highlight your ability to take initiative and inspire others. These roles are more likely if you start early and engage in long-term rather than short-term service opportunities. Together, service and leadership experiences show medical schools that you are not only academically capable but also compassionate, responsible, and ready to contribute to your community. The Catholic University of America has a wellspring of clubs and organizations that are committed to service and leadership as part of the Catholic mission of charity. Spanish for Healthcare is a certificate offered by CUA where you focus on learning medicine, as well as child development and tropical diseases, and treatments in Spanish. In the certificate curriculum, there are internship opportunities such as shadowing and volunteering in a local hospital or abroad. The local internship will likely be in a nonprofit clinic in DC. In this internship, there is an emphasis on translating conversations for Spanish-speaking patients and helping doctors with medical documentation for patients (e.g., vitals, notes). Abroad internships, such as the internship in Peru, will focus on learning the local healthcare setting and enhancing Spanish medical knowledge. There are other leadership and service mission opportunities provided by other clubs. Among those are Campus Ministry, Pre-Health Student Association, Migrant Rights Coalition, and Global Medical Brigades. Below are some healthcare-related service sites that are in collaboration with Campus Ministry:

- Bethlehem House (social group for older adults with disabilities)
- Little Sisters of the Poor (nursing home right across the street from campus)
- Community of San'Egidio (low-income nursing and rehabilitation center in DuPont Circle)
- Global Medical Brigades (spring break service trips)
- Campus Ministry Spring Break Service Trips

MCAT Preparation

The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is a standardized, multiple-choice exam that assesses critical thinking, problem solving, data analysis, and comprehension of many sciences. Information about the content included in the exam can be found here: https://students-residents.aamc.org/media/9261/download. The exam is typically 7-8 hours long with short breaks in between sections, including a lunch break in the middle. The MCAT tests the following core subjects in four parts: **1.** General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, and Physics. **2.**

Critical Analysis and Reasoning (e.g., English Language and Comprehension), **3.** General Biology and Biochemistry. **4.** Psychology and Sociology. Each of the four sections has a test score range of 118-132, with the highest MCAT score being a 528. The scores are based on the percentile of scorers, meaning your score in each section is relative to the performance of everyone who took the same exam as you. So, your score in each section will be based on your percentile score (e.g., you get a 129 in Biology/Biochem, putting you in the 90th percentile, meaning you scored better than 90% of people who took that section with you). The MCAT is a critical component of your medical school application because some schools have score cutoffs, and applications will not be considered if the MCAT score is below the minimum. Success on the MCAT requires thorough preparation. Most students begin studying **four to six months before their test date**, combining content review with practice questions and full-length exams (and reviewing the performance on those exams). Creating a structured study plan and tracking your progress are essential to building both knowledge and test-taking stamina. While the exam is challenging, approaching it with discipline and consistency will allow you to perform at your best and open the door to more medical school opportunities. How you structure your study plan may depend on when you decide your exam date will be. For example, if you are planning to take it during a semester where you have a heavy course load, it might be best to start off with topics you are more familiar with so that you can ease into the study process and work toward more difficult topics the closer you get to your exam. Test prep courses can help you with the timeline, content coverage, and practice test attempts. MCAT prep is minimally the equivalent of a 3-credit course in terms of time, so planning your course schedule to not have a heavy courseload while prepping is very useful. Alternatively, some students wait until the summer after graduation to take the exam, beginning their preparation directly after commencement.

It is recommended that students **study for a few hours every day** during their MCAT prep phase. Students who have scored in a high percentile have suggested the MCAT study plan be structured in a way where there are **two to three months of content review, and then two to three months of practice questions and exams**. When students take the MCAT in the second semester of their junior year, they may have taken most of the prerequisite courses covered on the MCAT. **However, there still may be a class or two that they still have not yet taken (such as Physics 2, Psychology, or Sociology)**. We recommend that students in this scenario take either an MCAT prep course or do online learning with various free resources, which will be linked below.

Application Preparation

Professional school applications are comprehensive and time-consuming. You want to start early in order to get feedback on drafts, to make sure all parts of the application are complete and well-written, and everything is submitted as close to the beginning of the application cycle as possible, since medical schools tend to do rolling admissions. Make a list of medical schools that match your personal mission, your GPA, and your MCAT score. Also note that some medical schools require the CASPER or AAMC Preview exams, so plan accordingly.

Medical school applications consist of two parts: the primary and secondary applications. The primary application is much like the CommonApp, wherein it is a central application that is sent

to all schools. For MD schools, the application portal used is AMCAS, and for DO schools, the application portal used is AACOMAS. For Vet schools, the portal is VMCAS. Note that medical schools in Texas use a different process and portal.

The primary applications for both the AMCAS and AACOMAS include background information, personal statement, activities, and letters of recommendation sections. The secondary application can look different for each school, as the schools will reach out to you with supplemental questions specifically regarding their programs and how you would fit into them, a few weeks after the primary application is submitted. Below are some things to consider when preparing your primary application:

Personal Statement Section

Make a draft of your personal statement late spring or early summer of your junior year and have the Writing Center or a mentor look at it. Think about your unique life experiences and how they have influenced your decision to pursue medicine. There is no “right answer” to this part of the application - medical schools want to know you and your story, so tell it well. Look online for examples of good personal statements for medical school, and don’t be afraid to get creative here.

Activities Section

Start informing your supervisors and professors that you are applying to medical school, and get their updated contact information, as you will have to include them as references in the activities section of your application. Also, make sure that you log how many hours of a certain activity you have done. You can include anything in the activities section, so if you have a special interest (for example, you play an instrument or sport very well and have devoted many hours to it), include this! Medical schools want to see that you are a well-rounded individual. Alumni who have been accepted to medical schools have suggested keeping a running list of activities and clubs/extracurriculars so that writing this section is easier in the future.

Letters of Recommendation

Strong letters of recommendation provide medical schools with insights into your character, academic ability, and potential as a future physician. Academic letters can also address any deficiencies you may have in your transcript (e.g., a poor grade in freshman year). Building strong relationships with professors, research mentors, and physicians is key—especially those who know you well enough to speak about your strengths and work ethic. You should request letters at least two to three months in advance, giving your recommenders plenty of time. A thoughtful and detailed letter can make a significant difference in how your application is perceived. Note that different medical schools have varying requirements for letters of recommendation. Some schools even require letters of recommendation from non-science professors, so be sure to plan accordingly. Have a running list of mentors and professors who can speak to different parts of your personality. Below are suggestions for how to ask for letters of recommendation through email:

1. Re-introduce yourself and remind the recommender of when/where you met.

2. Say something positive about your interaction (e.g., how much you enjoyed learning from them through shadowing/research or in their classroom, etc.)
3. Give the recommender a timeline for when the letter is due.
4. Give an overview of the program(s) you are applying to, and three aspects of the program that connect to you and why (*e.g., "as someone passionate about volunteering and community health, I am excited about X Medical School because Y."*)
5. Attach your most recent CV or Resume, or any supporting documents that would help the recommender write a personal letter of recommendation.
6. Write three things that you hope the recommender includes in the letter (*e.g., as my supervisor at X Hospital, you could speak to my ability to work under pressure, my time-management skills, and my communication skills in a clinical setting).* Giving specific examples of how you showed these qualities is especially helpful.
7. Indicate that you are willing to meet in person or send over more information if needed.
8. Express that you will keep them updated regarding your application process and where you are receiving interviews. Tell them that you will be glad to periodically check in with them until they submit the letter, so you can ensure that it is submitted on time.

Application Timeline

- Junior year:
    - *Fall:* think about when to take the MCAT. The MCAT is offered January-September, and registration opens in October of the year prior. **Be aware of the date and time registration opens, as spots fill up quickly.**
    - *Spring:* start studying for the MCAT based on the date that you register for (for example, if you register for a January MCAT, then you will have 3 months to study for it between October and December). MCAT scores come out one month after the test date, so plan retakes accordingly if needed. Also, start drafting your personal statement and reaching out to mentors and professors for LORs.
    - *Summer:* You now have your MCAT score! Start making a school list and use the summer to gain more hours needed for your application (e.g.,: shadow if you need more of those hours, get more involved in research if that is your weak area in your application). Polish up your personal statement and make a list of LORs needed per school. AMCAS application opens May 1st, and applications can be submitted on May 28th.
- Senior year:
    - *Fall:* your applications are now all in! Wait for secondaries from each school to roll in, and complete these within two weeks of receiving them. After schools receive your secondaries, they will start reaching out with interviews and eventually, decisions!
    - *Spring:* schools with many applicants tend to take a long time to get back to you regarding interviews or secondaries, and this can continue into the spring
    - *Summer:* most decisions will be out by now, but some waitlist applicants hear back from schools late in the summer. Be sure to keep all the people who have helped you in the process in the loop.

Student Experiences

Below are some student experiences that help with medical school applications, such as clinical hours and shadowing. When applying to these programs and positions, do not be afraid to follow up if you do not hear back right away. It is okay to be politely persistent. You can also ask for a 15-minute career-related discussion with medical professionals where you can get advice and find out about other opportunities. Winter break is a great time to work on this when you are home and can visit in person.

Medical Assisting:

- Some states require EMS or MA certification to hire medical assistants, but plenty of undergraduates get their clinical hours by simply getting on-the-job training. Below are tips on how to cold-call for such a position:
    - Find a local, family-owned private practice and cold-call or email them. The subject line of the email is very important (e.g., Eager Local Premed Student Seeking Career Advice). Explain that you are a pre-medical student who is eager to learn and take advice. Plenty of small primary care facilities are looking for seasonal employees.
    - Reach out to your personal pediatrician or family doctor for medical assisting opportunities. It doesn't hurt to ask!
        - Ask your family or friends for contacts and introductions with their personal medicine professionals, then network to find opportunities. For example, if one doctor has no openings or opportunities, ask if they know of others or would introduce you to a colleague who might.

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center:

- Student Clinical Observer Opportunities Program (SCOOP)
    - Info: This program is open to all high school and college students. The program has a maximum duration of 30 days per year and must be consecutive. Shadowing hours are available from 07:30-16:00.
    - Email: dha.bethesda.walter-reed-med-ctr.mbx.wrnm-observer-request@health.mil
- Red Cross Volunteering
    - Info: The Red Cross Organization has many volunteering opportunities at Walter Reed. For specifics, please visit: https://walterreed.tricare.mil/About-Us/Volunteer

MedStar Health:

- Volunteering

- Info: The MedStar Health hospitals have many different volunteering opportunities at their various locations. Some examples of these opportunities are: Patient Navigator, Inpatient Unit Support, and Emergency Department Support. For specifics, please visit:
  https://www.medstarhealth.org/locations/medstar-washington-hospital-center/volunteer

*NOTE: The MedStar Washington Hospital is down the road from CUA and would be a great opportunity during the school year since it is within walking distance.

Gap Year Opportunities

Nowadays, many students decide to take a gap year or two before starting medical school. Taking a gap year before entering medical school is an increasingly common and strategic choice for many pre-med students. This time can be used to strengthen one's application, gain valuable clinical, research, or service experience, and clarify personal and professional goals. It can also be an opportunity to improve MCAT scores. Gap year opportunities include working as a medical scribe, research assistant, clinical assistant, or EMT, as well as participating in service programs such as AmeriCorps or global health initiatives. Students may also pursue additional coursework or post-baccalaureate programs to improve academic credentials. Many former CUA students have taken opportunities such as the NIH pre-IRTA program or enrolled in a Master's program, such as Georgetown University's Master's program. The NIH pre-IRTA program is a one to two-year research program where you will participate in cutting-edge research and expand your knowledge on critical topics and emerging science. It is a wonderful opportunity for those who are interested in research. Successful applicants identify specific research areas and labs and contact the principal investigator directly with a custom email commenting on their research (and a subject line that is custom so they open the message). The pre-IRTA program gets thousands of applicants, and connections are key to getting your application plucked out of the system by a lab head. Additionally, Georgetown University has many options in its Biomedical Sciences Master's program, from Tumor Biology to Biostatistics, allowing you to narrow in on a focus that truly interests you. This program is typically two years in length. There are several Master's programs associated with medical schools as well, many of which will allow you to have a medical school interview if you do well in the program. A well-planned gap year can provide meaningful growth, enhance readiness for medical school, and demonstrate maturity, commitment, and a deeper understanding of the medical profession. It is important to note that if you are taking a gap year, you will be applying to medical schools in the summer after your senior year, and if you are taking two years, you will be applying the year after you graduate. Additionally, students may find that they will need to take two gap years because employers or mentors might not be willing to accept prospects for just a year. With this in mind, it is important to plan your MCAT test date as the MCAT score you receive will only be valid for 2-3 years, depending on the school you will be planning to target. Your letters of recommendation may also need to be pre-planned because your application will be submitted after you graduate. Make sure you keep in touch with your professors after graduation if you plan on asking them for a letter of recommendation. You might need to inform your professors well in advance if you need a letter of recommendation after you graduate, or set up an interview later to catch up with your writers on what you have been up to

since graduation. In this case, it is a good strategy to update letter writers periodically on what you are doing and to document your gap year in the email when you make the formal letter request.

Pre-Vet Additional Information

If you are an aspiring veterinarian, some of your requirements will be a little different. For example, you will not need to take the MCAT. However, based on your school of choice, you will need to take the CASPER exam or the GRE. Luckily, many veterinary schools require the same pre-requisite courses (such as Biology, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, etc.). Most veterinary schools also require a letter of recommendation from a practicing veterinarian. Gaining hands-on experience with animals is equally essential, whether through volunteering at animal shelters, shadowing veterinarians, or working at clinics or farms. Admissions committees value not only clinical hours but also diverse exposure to different species and settings. Don't overlook the importance of communication skills; veterinarians work closely with clients and colleagues, so build those through leadership roles, jobs, or coursework. Lastly, stay organized and informed about veterinary school prerequisites, application timelines (like VMCAS), and seek out mentors who can guide you through the journey.

Final Words

Congratulations on taking these first steps toward your future in medicine! Navigating the path to medical school is a demanding journey that requires immense dedication, resilience, and a true passion for healing. Remember that this checklist is a guide to help you stay organized, but your unique story and experiences are what will truly set you apart. As you move forward, stay focused on your goals, lean on your mentors, and never lose sight of why you started this path. To give you some extra perspective, here is some advice from alumni who have made it into medical school and once stood exactly where you are today.

Some Notes from Alumni Who are Currently in Medical School

On interviewing:

"I made sure to research the school before doing the interview. It will show very quickly if you do not know the school's mission. Medical schools want to know that you want to go to THEIR school and that they aren't just simply another application."

"I always prepared by trying to learn about the school so that if given the chance, I could ask a question that wasn't super generic and showed that I had an actual interest in going there."

"One school did hypothetical 'ethical' scenarios in my interviews, which threw me off a bit because I was not prepared with how to answer something like 'how would you handle a situation in which you were the dean of a school and one of your students got a DUI?' Hypotheticals such as that can easily be found online and on Reddit threads, and could be good to read into just for context and to pick your brain a bit. You need to be able to back up however you answer those,

because the interviewers really fought me on my answers (which I see now was the point of why they do that...they want to see if you'll back down or change your mind)."

"Overall, you want to be able to talk about yourself as a PERSON and not as a prospective medical student. I talked a lot about seemingly non-school-related things, such as how being an older sister and how my role in my family unintentionally shaped a lot of aspects of who I am, and ultimately my interest in taking care of others. They have your application, your transcript, and your resume, so what more can you talk about that isn't on there? Also, be able to name some of your weaknesses/shortcomings with examples, because I remember being asked that a few times."

On the Med School Process:

"You will find the school that is right for you! It has to be a mutual decision between the applicant and the school. Go somewhere where you feel wanted and where you know you will feel at home."

"Not only is it very difficult to be prepared for the MCAT and application process in time for you to not have to take a gap year, but you essentially have to make the decision that med school is 100% the path you want to commit to by the time your sophomore year of college concludes. I used to think that taking a gap year would put me "behind" in life, in a career that is already such a long road. Now I recommend at LEAST one, but even multiple gap years. During my two gap years, I was able to work in multiple different clinical settings, not only boosting my med school applications (I had 5 acceptances), but also helping me decisively say that yes, medical school is definitely where I want to go. I was able to enjoy my life a bit in the sense of living with friends, traveling, meeting new people...all things that, trust me, become more difficult when you're in med school. One of my current roommates is a girl I met on day 1 of med school orientation. She had just graduated from college 1.5 months prior (med school usually starts in the summer). She had just about 6 weeks of time between graduating from college, moving, and starting medical school. Right from the start of becoming friends, she expressed to me her uncertainty about being here and not thinking this was the right decision for her. Regardless, she pushed through the year being unhappy but was frequently "jealous" of some of her friends who had opportunities to travel, work, and earn money, or even just relax (all things I got to do during my 2 gap years). I had already asked myself all of these questions during my gap years. I had already researched other career paths and truly, truly asked myself if I wanted to do this, so that by the time I finally made it, I was so happy and grateful to be there, regardless of how difficult some of the days got. By the end of our first year, she decided to withdraw. To this day, she says one of her biggest regrets is not taking a gap year. Even on my most difficult weeks when I've hardly slept and the material just isn't sticking in my brain anymore, I know without a doubt that this is where I want to be and this is the path I want to pursue and I don't think I would have gotten here if I hadn't given myself the time to figure that out during those 2 gap years."

Resources

CUA RESOURCES:

Center for Academic & Career Success:

(https://success.catholic.edu/)

- **Resume Help and Interview prep**

120 Garvey Hall; Tel: 202-319-6262 success@cua.edu

Tutoring Services:

(https://success.catholic.edu/academic-support/tutoring-services/index.html)

- **Individual and drop-in subject matter free tutoring – get help immediately when struggling in courses.**

Mullen Library, Second Floor; Tel: 202-319-5655 cua-tutoring@cua.edu

Technology Services:

(https://technology.catholic.edu/)

- **Any technology or computer issues**

Email: techsupport@cua.edu

Service Desk Location & Hours Phone: 202-319-4357 (xHELP) Walk-in: 117 Leahy Hall Monday - Friday, 7:00 am - 7:00 pm

Counseling Center:

(https://counseling.catholic.edu/index.html)

- **Free sessions available**

127 O'Boyle Hall; Tel: 202-319-5765

Facebook: @CatholicUCounselingCenter

Twitter: @CUACounseling Instagram: @catholicucounseling

Disability Support Services:

(https://dss.catholic.edu/index.html%20CUA-DSS@cua.edu)

- Contact early if needed for academic success, since it can take time, and you can't go back if you took a test without accommodations.

127 Pryzbyla Center; Tel: 202-319-5211

Writing Center:

(https://success.catholic.edu/academic-support/writing-center/index.html)

- **Help with personal essay structure, grammar, etc.**

219 Mullen; Tel: 202-319-4286

CUA DEPARTMENTS:

Department of Biology Faculty and Research
(https://biology.catholic.edu/faculty-and-research/index.html)

Department of Chemistry Faculty and Research
(https://chemistry.catholic.edu/faculty-and-research/index.html)

Department of Psychology Faculty and Research
(https://psychology.catholic.edu/faculty-and-research/index.html)

Department of Biomedical Engineering Faculty and Research
(https://engineering.catholic.edu/research-and-faculty/faculty-profiles/biomedical/index.html)

Medical School Advice

AAMC Official Website (Medical School Preparation and MCAT Advice)
(https://www.aamc.org/)

Medical School Admission Requirements (Provided by AAMC)
(https://students-residents.aamc.org/medical-school-admission-requirements/medical-school-admission-requirements-msar-applicants)

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
(https://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor/apply-to-medical-school)

Letters of Recommendation Guide

(https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/dental-school-letter-of-recommendation-sample)

Shadowing Log Template

(https://goelective.com/blogs/shadowing-hours-log-sheet-sample-descriptions-for-amcascaspa)

MCAT RESOURCES

Khan Academy MCAT Prep Hub (FREE) (https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat)

ANKI Flashcards (Free on computers, $25 on mobile devices) (https://apps.ankiweb.net/)

AAMC Official MCAT Prep Hub (Two Free Practice Exams, Multiple Paid Practice Exams and Question Banks)
(https://auth.aamc.org/account/#/login?spEntityID=https:%2F%2Fwww.mcatofficialprep.org%2Fsso%2Fcandidate&goto=https:%2F%2Fapi.fr.aamc.org%2Fopenam%2Fidpssoinit%3FNameIDFormat%3Durn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:nameid-format:transient%26metaAlias%3D%2FExternal%2Fidp%26spEntityID%3Dhttps:%2F%2Fwww.mcatofficialprep.org%2Fsso%2Fcandidate%26binding%3Durn:oasis:names:tc:SAML:2.0:bindings:HTTP-POST%26redirected%3Dtrue)

UWorld

(https://gradschool.uworld.com/mcat/)

Kaplan Test Prep

(https://www.kaptest.com/mcat?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=KTP_SEM_GSA_MCAT_BR_Gen_ALL&utm_content=Prep_Test&gclsrc=aw.ds&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=237515316&gbraid=0AAAAAD7171ge269VDcz9Vtt4oxsBi_zII&gclid=CjwKCAjwisnGBhAXEiwA0zEOR3htdZkAFunDYNPrmQ8MH6MJZdYI62OnwIvD6OUSxL0IEXXNrvx7HBoCN3EQAvD_BwE)

Scholarships

NHSC Scholarship Program (https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/scholarships/overview)

- An NHSC Scholarship is a strong experience for an ADEA application because it demonstrates a deep, long-term commitment to serving high-need populations, which aligns with the mission-driven focus of many dental schools.

HPSP Scholarship Program
(https://www.medicineandthemilitary.com/applying-and-what-to-expect/medical-school-program)

- the Health Professions Scholarship Program, is a U.S. military program that offers a full scholarship for students pursuing health professions, including medicine, dentistry, and nursing, in exchange for a service commitment in the Army, Navy, or Air Force. The scholarship covers full tuition, fees, and a monthly living stipend, and recipients also receive a bonus and are reimbursed for books and equipment. In return, scholarship recipients are required to serve as a commissioned officer in the military for a set period after graduation

HDAF Scholarship
(https://www.hispanicdentalassociationfoundation.org/scholarship-application)

- The Hispanic Dental Association Foundation (HDAF) Scholarship is an award for Hispanic and Latino students pursuing a career in dentistry, dental hygiene, or related fields. The scholarships aim to support students with a strong commitment to serving underserved communities and are awarded based on scholastic achievement, community service, and leadership. Eligibility generally requires being a member of the Hispanic Dental Association and enrolled in an accredited program in the U.S. or Puerto Rico

Veterinary School Resources

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC)

(https://www.aavmc.org/)

American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)

(https://www.avma.org/education/veterinary-school-admission-101)