



Admissions Policy: Students
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Responsible Officer: Dean of Admissions for the
College of Medicine & Director of Student
Admissions
Policy Owner: Director of Student Admissions
Policy Contact: Director of Student Admissions

Policy Statement on Admissions Committee & Interviewers Roles & Responsibility

Charge

The charge of the Admissions Committee of the College of Medicine is to evaluate and select the members of the incoming first-year medical school class and any applicants entering as transfer students or students with advanced standing into the third-year. (SUNY Downstate only admits students into the first-year or the third-year.) The Admissions Committee reviews and creates any policy regarding admissions, generates admissions procedures and processes, and supervises the admissions process, operated by the Office of Student Admissions.

The Admissions Committee of the College of Medicine is charged by the Dean of the College of Medicine with the full and sole responsibility to ensure the high academic standards of the College of Medicine and to admit a class of students whose interests, abilities, skills, and character are consistent with the mission of the College of Medicine, including serving the people of the State of New York, and those and who fit the goal of diversifying the workforce in medicine.

In all decisions made during an Admissions Committee meeting, a quorum of at least five committee members, at least three of which are rank-and-file faculty, are required. In all cases, over 50% of those making decisions must be rank-and-file faculty (as opposed to administrators or students). Although the committee may break up into two informal subcommittees for presentation of applications, at the end of each meeting, all members from both subcommittees reconvene as a committee of the whole to discuss and approve the scoring and decisions presented during the committee meeting.

The source of the committee's authority is the Dean of the College of Medicine who gives the final authority for making all admissions decisions to the voting members of the College of Medicine Admissions Committee.

The full Admissions Committee grants limited authority to the Admissions Oversight Subcommittee (AOS), which consists of a subset of current faculty-at-large members of the

Admissions Committee, including the Chair of the Admissions Committee, the Co-Chair of the Admissions Committee and up to three additional rank-and-file faculty members of the Admissions Committee. The Director of Student Admissions works with the committee to process the decisions. The Admission Committee formally delegates authority to the AOS to make final admissions decisions from students from the Wait List.

Committee Members Responsibility

The Admissions Committee of the College of Medicine annually reviews relevant policies for admissions. These include an annual review of the pre-requisites, admissions policies and procedures, Student Admissions websites and a process of continual quality improvement. This includes a regular review of courses and experiences required for admission.

After the Admissions Committee extends acceptances to approximately 300 applicants, the Admissions Committee formally approves the remaining applicants with an average committee vote between 3.0-5.0 to be placed on the waitlist. The waitlist is ordered (though not in a final rank order) according to the average Admissions Committee score.

The Admission Committee formally delegates authority to the AOS to review the wait list for admissions consideration based on the average committee score and personal attributes previously approved by the Admissions Committee to create balance in a class and to support one or more of the missions of the school. These attributes include being a New York State resident, being from a group under-represented in medicine, being a first-generation college graduate, having a low socioeconomic / disadvantaged status, having served in the US armed forces, and having experience in serving urban communities.

During the first full Admissions Committee meeting of the next application cycle, the Chair of the Admissions Committee formally informs the Admission Committee on the number of applicants accepted from the waitlist and includes the characteristics (e.g., rank order, contribution to school missions, and creating a gender balance in the class, etc.) of the waitlist individuals that were accepted and matriculated to the College of Medicine.

Reporting

The Admissions Committee reports to the Dean's Advisory Committee, and annually reports to the Executive Committee of the Faculty. The Presiding Officer of the Executive Committee and the Chair of the Executive Committee's Subcommittee on Admissions or their surrogates attend the first meeting of the Admissions Committee each year. At this meeting, they receive the statistical data for the preceding and entering classes. In addition, every year, the Chair of the Admissions Committee presents official data about the undergraduate grade point averages, MCAT scores, and other characteristics of the entering class. The Committee also tracks the progress of the last five classes.

- Entering Class Quick Statistics Report is provided to the Dean of the College of Medicine, the President of SUNY Downstate, Admissions Committee Members,

Presiding Officer of the Executive Committee of the Faculty, and Chair of the Subcommittee of Admissions of the Executive Committee of the Faculty.

- Outcomes Report is provided to Dean of the College of Medicine and Presiding Officer of the Executive Committee of the Faculty.

Membership

The Admissions Committee consists of 23 committee members. Twelve faculty currently serve on the Committee and are selected following an email solicitation to the faculty at large, to current interviewers, and through an annual nomination by members of the Admissions Committee. Four second year medical students and four fourth year medical students are also selected to serve on the Admissions Committee from October to April. In addition, three administrators serve on the Admissions Committee by virtue of their position, the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, and the Director of Student Admissions.

Committee members serve an annual appointment to the Committee and are eligible for renewal with no term limits except for the student members, who are selected annually and serve for only one term.

Faculty members of the Admissions Committee are selected through a two-step procedure. First recommendations are solicited from current members of the Admissions Committee and through an e-mail solicitation sent through the faculty list-serve (which includes all active College of Medicine faculty members) inviting faculty to serve as interviewers and as members to the Admissions Committee. All recommendations are reviewed by the Admissions Oversight Subcommittee (described below) to discern interest, availability to interview and ability to attend meetings. A faculty appointment to the committee must be confirmed by their Chair/Director to assure the faculty member will be afforded the time required to meet the interview/meeting commitment of being an Admissions Committee member. The Admissions Committee as a whole reviews and approves a slate of candidates for appointment to the Committee and a final list of faculty is submitted to the Dean for appointment or rejection. If approved, the final appointment (or reappointment) to the Admissions Committee is rendered by the Dean of the College of Medicine.

The **Chair** of the Admissions Committee is selected from among the faculty-at-large members who have served on the Admissions Committee for at least one cycle by a majority vote of the Committee on Admissions and confirmed by the Dean of the College of Medicine to serve for a three-year period. The Chair can be re-appointed to multiple terms. The Chair also holds the title of Dean of Admissions for the College of Medicine.

The Admissions Committee also elects a second faculty member from the Committee to serve as the **Co-Chair** of the Admissions Committee. The Chair and Co-Chair both also serve as member of the Admissions Oversight Subcommittee.

Student members of the Admissions Committee are selected following a solicitation sent to all second-year and fourth-year medical students asking them to self-nominate (though students may also nominate their fellow students). The Director of Student Admissions collects the applications, which are reviewed by the Admissions Oversight Subcommittee (AOS) (described below). Students selected must be in good academic standing with the College of Medicine. The AOS recommends up to four second-year medical students and up to four fourth-year medical students to the full Admissions Committee for appointment. These appointments are confirmed, once selected, by the Dean of the College of Medicine. Students serve for one term during their second or fourth year of medical school. (Students who serves as a second-year student member can, however, re-apply for membership on the committee in their fourth-year.) Student members of the Admissions Committee do not interview applicants or present admission files to the Committee, but otherwise participate fully in committee discussions and have a vote in all admissions decisions.

The **Admissions Oversight Subcommittee** (AOS) is a subcommittee of the main Admissions Committee formed from a subset of current faculty-at-large members of the Admissions Committee, elected by the members of the main Admissions Committee. Members of the subcommittee are charged with the oversight of the process of selecting new committee members; the recommendation of all faculty appointments and reappointments; and final ranking of admissions decisions processed from the wait list. The AOS subcommittee includes the Chair of the Admissions Committee, the Co-Chair of the Admissions Committee, and up to three additional faculty members of the Admissions Committee. The Director of Student Admissions works with the committee to process the decisions.

Training

As part of the appointment/reappointment process, all faculty and administrative Committee members are oriented to the Admission Committee policies and admissions processes during the first committee meeting of the academic year, which is generally held in September.

New Faculty Committee members attend a one-hour training with members of the Admissions Oversight Subcommittee (AOS) during the summer prior the Admissions Committee meetings beginning. This training includes how to prepare an application for presentation, a review of the admissions committee policies, procedures, voting criteria, conflicts of interest, implicit/unconscious bias training, academic premedical pre-requisites, holistic assessment of an application, changes to the AMCAS application/regulation, the roles of each member of the committee, evaluation forms, and the importance to the selection process of other, non-academic, characteristics.

The Chair and an additional member of the AOS of the Admissions Committee also conducts a re-orientation for all faculty members and administrators returning (and newly appointed) committee members prior to presenting any candidates. This training reviews, the admissions committee policies, procedures, voting criteria, and conflicts of interest

(including, specifically, any changes to the process from the previous cycle); reinforces implicit/unconscious bias training; reviews changes to the AMCAS application/regulation; and reinforces the roles of each member of the committee. At this meeting, the statistical data for the preceding classes are also presented.

Student members, who serve a one-year term during their second or fourth year, are required to attend a one-hour orientation conducted by the Chair and an additional member of the AOS of the Admissions Committee on the same items as the new faculty members prior to attending their first committee meeting. Student members do not interview or present candidates for admission, but they do participate fully in the committee discussions and voting.

Procedures

The first meeting of the Admissions Committee will include a business component dedicated to the presentation of procedural matters to be discussed and approved by the committee. At other times during the year, the total committee will be consulted regarding procedures or individual applicants as needed.

Review of applications

A completed application consists of:

- AMCAS Application
- Letters of recommendation
- MCAT score reports
- Supplemental application & processing fee
- Any additional information requested by the screener (initial reviewer, see below).

Six experienced screeners, including the Chair of the Admissions Committee, review applications to the College of Medicine. Applications are reviewed in a holistic manner. Attention is given to the difficulty of the curriculum, the grades, and the performance on the MCAT exam(s). Potential for success in medical school, personal characteristics including evidence of community service (altruism) and very good communications skills are also considered in judging suitability for the profession of medicine. In keeping with the mission of the College of Medicine, a candidate's service to the community and challenges faced in obtaining an education are positive attributes. Moreover, Clinical and Research Experiences strengthen the application.

Interviewing policies

The Admissions Committee reviews criteria for interview selection prior to the start of the admissions cycle. These criteria will be adhered to over the course of the admissions season. The interviewer pool should include members of the Admissions Committee as well as faculty, administrative staff and students. Interviewers should consult the Chair of the Admissions Committee or members of the AOS when dealing with a challenging or controversial applicant's file. The interview is important to the applicant and the selection process and it is the interviewer's responsibility to maintain a professional and engaged approach to interviews.

The interview day experience should provide the applicant with the opportunity to ask questions about the school, the curriculum, financial aid, housing, and an opportunity to tour the campus and facilities.

Interviewers for the College of Medicine are trained to carry out a structured interview, guided by a mandatory orientation, interviewer manual and interviewer report form. Interviewers complete a comprehensive applicant assessment and interview report, which becomes part of the applicant file and is critical to the final disposition decision made by the Committee.

Interviews last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Subsequently, by phone or Skype, applicants are involved in a 30-minute Peer-to-Peer conversation with a currently enrolled medical student.

Interviewer Training Sessions take place each year in the summer and fall and on an ad hoc basis during the year. Sessions will last at least one hour and include a review and discussion of all rules and regulations regarding interviewing, a thorough review of the AMCAS application and interview report, holistic admissions, implicit bias training, and the curriculum description. New interviewers must attend a one-hour interviewer training session prior to being assigned their first interview. All interviewers receive an annually revised Handbook about interviewing information and are invited to attend a mandatory training session. All interviewers must attend a refresher training session if there are major changes, e.g. a new curriculum or application process.

All interviewers sign a statement on conflict of interest and must recuse themselves from interviewing any candidate who is a relative, an acquaintance, or for whom they cannot be impartial or when a conflict of interest exists.

All returning and newly appointed interviewers are required to fill out a standard Interviewer Report form which is reviewed annually by the AOS and revised as needed.

Interviewer Responsibilities

Under the leadership of the Chair of the Committee on Admissions, members of the AOS ensure that all interviewers have been properly oriented to admissions procedures, confidentiality, and legal requirements.

- Interviewers must not ask the applicant questions regarding controversial issues which may be misinterpreted as the sole reason for his/her rejection later.
- Interviewers must not ask questions that violate federal laws or regulations.
- Interviewers must not share any personal thoughts on the candidate's likelihood of acceptance.
- Individual interview evaluations will be kept confidential and only shared with the appropriate members of the admissions committee.
- The rating form and its contents will never be shared directly with the applicant.

Presentation and Voting Procedures

Committee members are trained to holistically review and evaluate an applicant comprehensive file including the interview and peer-to-peer reports. Every week, the Committee meets to assess interviewed candidates, and these detailed assessments are conducted by a minimum of 5 committee members guided by a team leader. A committee member presents each interviewed candidate. All members of the Admissions Committee use an iPad to holistically review the current AMCAS application, letters of recommendation, supplemental information, prior application materials, interview reports (faculty and student), and any supplemental materials provided by the applicant. After each presentation, the members discuss the applicant and then electronically assign a numerical score ranging from 1 to 5 (“reject” to “accept immediately”) by secret ballot. The average score for each applicant is displayed after the members have voted. The teams may pose questions or request additional information before rendering a decision and the Director of Student Admissions, on behalf of the Committee, will then follow up with the applicant and represent the information once obtained.

Committee members are required to recuse themselves from any deliberations and voting on any candidate who is a relative or an acquaintance and for whom they cannot be impartial or when there is a conflict of interest. Committee members must leave the room when their children or family members are being presented

Each member has one vote, which is confidential. Candidates are scored for acceptability on a numerical scale.

For the purpose of candidate presentation, the committee may be divided into two subgroups with no fewer than five members including at least three faculty members. No matter the number of members conducting the review, the majority of any group voting must be members of the faculty. In some instances, either at the request of any committee member, or because the applicant is a relative of an alumnus, a member of the faculty, a politician, or another significant individual, the applicant is reviewed for a vote by the entire Committee. All members from both subcommittees reconvene as a committee of the whole to discuss and approve the scoring and decisions presented during the committee meeting.

Acceptance Procedures

Traffic rules of AAMC are followed regarding the timing of all acceptances.

Candidates attaining a score of “acceptance” by the Admissions Committee will receive an accept letter starting February 15. Acceptances will be offered on a weekly basis until the class is filled. At this point, a hold list is formed. In June, an alternate list is formed from the hold list. Based on the Committee scores, applicants are accepted to fill vacancies in the entering class from the alternate list until the class is matriculated.

Conflict of Interest

The medical school ensures that there are no conflicts of interest in the admissions process and that no admissions decisions are influenced by political or financial factors by educating all admissions committee members on the risk of external influences with regards to their appointment. Committee members are oriented annually on conflicts of interest and are trained to identify and report any perceived or real conflict of interest to the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, Chair of the Admissions Committee (who also serves as Dean of Admissions for the College of Medicine), and the Director of Student Admissions. During the orientation, the members of the Admissions Committee review developed policies and procedures to ensure admission processes and decisions are free from political and/or financial conflicts of interest and are in compliance with nondiscrimination laws and regulations.

All committee members and interviewers are required to sign a Conflict of Interest policy annually. All committee members agree to recuse themselves from deliberations and voting on any candidate who is a relative, an acquaintance, or when they cannot be impartial on a candidate for any reason. The whole committee (and not a subgroup of the committee) must be present when relatives or offspring of alumni or current faculty/staff, as well as on applicants related to politicians, are presented for admission.