

Finding the Right College to Get Your Student to Medical School

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For many high school seniors, their dream is to make it to medical school. While it is true that you can get to medical school from any college, some colleges make the process much easier. So how do you find those colleges that will help your student with their medical school dream?

First, an understanding of what medical schools are looking for is important. The two most important factors for medical school admissions are the college GPA, particularly the GPA in math and science courses, and the MCAT score. In addition, medical schools want to see students who have healthcare related volunteering, some scientific research experience, and letters of recommendations from professors.

While none of this is too surprising, let's look at how a particular college can influence those factors. Since grades are important, you may think that colleges with the most grade inflation would have a greater likelihood of getting their students into medical school. However, medical schools are aware of the colleges that have the greatest grade inflation and will often discount the grades from those colleges and focus more on the MCAT scores.

On the other hand, lower grades in a "tough" major, like engineering, are problematic as well. Medical schools like to see a 3.5 GPA and they will not be impressed with a significantly lower GPA even if your major typically has lower grades.

It is important to note that many students at smaller colleges, such as liberal arts colleges, score better on the MCAT than students at larger universities, presumably because they have learned the basic sciences better in the smaller classes.

Another advantage that smaller colleges have is that students are much more likely to get to know their professors well. Medical schools require recommendation

letters from professors or a pre-med committee. I have often seen students at larger universities who have had trouble getting this recommendation because they did not know any of their professors well enough to ask for a recommendation.

You need to be aware that not all colleges handle recommendations for medical school the same. Some pre-med committees will write recommendation letters for any student who requests such a letter.

Emory University is a good example of a college that writes recommendation letters for all of their students and is very open about the success of their students, depending on grades and MCAT scores.

Other committees will only write recommendation letters for their strongest students. This of course skews the acceptance rate for those colleges. If you see a 90% or better acceptance rate from a college, the odds are high that they only recommend their best students.

The other major issue is the availability of undergraduate research. Medical schools do not care if the research performed by the student is cutting-edge research. They just want to see some type of experience with scientific research. At major research universities, much of the research is reserved for graduate students. At the smaller colleges that is not an issue.

There are many colleges that do a good job of helping students get to medical school. Many of the strongest are smaller colleges, so make sure that your student understands this before deciding where to apply.

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