Students’ Top Factors in Selecting Medical Schools

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Decision Making and Medical School Admissions

• Choosing a medical school is a complex process, but available data can provide insight into which factors students consider most important when selecting the medical schools they will attend.
• Data on decision making may allow institutions to be more successful in recruitment and admissions as means to address projected physician workforce shortages.
• Furthermore, these same data can illustrate variations by race and ethnicity, which can be of particular value to medical schools hoping to create more diverse and inclusive classes.

Top 10 “Positive” or “Very Positive” Factors in Choosing a Medical School

1. General reputation of school (91%)
2. Interviews/meetings with students (90%)
3. Interviews/meetings with faculty (88%)
4. The school’s teaching methods and/or curricula (87%)  
5. Geographic location of school (81%)
6. Ability of school to place residents (79%)
7. Interviews/meetings with administrators (76%)
8. Community-based medicine (73%)
9. Faculty mentorship (71%)
10. Opportunity for research experience (68%)

Students from Racial and Ethnic Minority Backgrounds Place Greater Emphasis on Diversity Issues

Percentage of students reporting that the presence of diversity and the availability of diversity programming were “positive” or “very positive” factors in selecting their medical school

- Literature links diverse classrooms with educational, social, and cognitive outcomes, and many medical schools are seeking to create more diverse and inclusive environments.
- Although nearly 30% of the general population in 2011 identified as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and American Indian or Alaska Native, these groups combined constitute only 15% of medical school matriculants.  
- The results of the AAMC-administered Matriculating Student Questionnaire (MSQ), which allows researchers to explore differences in medical school choice based on race and ethnicity, show that many students from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in medicine who matriculated into medical school in 2012 value the existence of programs geared towards minority or disadvantaged students. Additionally, a majority of these students reported that a diverse faculty and student body were “positive” or “very positive” factors in their decision to attend a school.

Implications for Medical Schools

• Many of the top 10 factors (listed above) are those that can be addressed by medical schools; for example, medical schools can change their interview formats or alter teaching strategies. This ability to adapt has important implications for schools’ recruitment and admissions.
• MSQ data indicate that students from diverse backgrounds value the presence of diversity and diversity programs; therefore, investing in such programs can be of particular value to medical schools hoping to create more diverse and inclusive classes.

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References:

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