University of Minnesota Med-Peds FAQ

Initial Application Review

Test Scores
USMLE scores are only one of many pieces to the application puzzle. We understand that the main use of USMLE scores is to predict the ability to pass the boards, that this is an imperfect predictor, and that they only partly represent a student's medical knowledge. We don't have a cut-off for USMLE scores, although some Med-Peds programs use 220 on Step I as a cut-off.

Clinical Rotations
Clinical grades, especially in Medicine and Pediatric core rotations, are an important aspect of a student's application. We also look at grades more broadly, as well as the trend in grades over time. Clinical site, location, and away rotation do not play a major role in the application process. In terms of electives, our philosophy is that a graduate of a medical school should be a broadly trained physician -- there is plenty of time to specialize as time goes on.

Extracurricular Activities/Awards/Honors
Research and extracurricular activities are important in the context of the goals and interests of the applicant. If someone has an interest or a passion for research, community service, health disparities, global health or anything else, they should pursue that interest for its own sake. Put another way, we are looking for a demonstrated commitment to an endeavor, and what that endeavor is matters less than the commitment.

Letters of Recommendation
Letters of recommendation should come from the clinical faculty who knows the applicant best. Ideally, this person can speak to an applicant's clinical skills in the context of their experiences with other applicants. The most useful letters come from faculty who are experience clinicians and letter writers, but who also have a strong personal connection to the applicant. We require 3-4 letters, and do not require a chair letter.

Additional Questions
- How do you view Longitudinal Integrated Curricula [LIC] (eg. RPAP, MetroPAP, UCAM, new VA LIC, VALUE)?
  - These curricula are not viewed differently than the standard curricula for medical school, except that they more clearly define an applicants clinical interests.
- Does being a UMN graduate help or hurt me? What about not being from MN?
The University of Minnesota is an excellent medical school, and overall being a graduate of UMN is helpful. For example, we interview all applicants from the University of Minnesota. Not being from Minnesota does not play a role in our deliberations.

Interview Day/Ranking

- When should I expect to hear about interview invitations?
  - We typically send invitations to interview in the beginning of October or late September. We have a rolling, iterative interview invite process to allow for letters of recommendation and the MSPE to come in.

- How do you use the interview in the ranking process?
  - The interview is a very important aspect of determining who well an applicant will fit into the program. The interview significantly influences how an applicant is ranked, but not disproportionately to the “body of work” that is the overall application.

- What is the biggest mistake you see students make on interview day?
  - Interest and engagement are very important, both with the program and with other applicants, the residents, and faculty. Showing interest means knowing about the program ahead of time (from the website, for example), asking questions of everyone they encounter, and participating in the day overall. More specifically, applicants will interview with faculty and the program director, and should have questions specifically for these people.

- What questions would you like to hear on interview day?
  - The best questions are the ones that take the personal interests and experiences of the applicant and combine them with inquiring how the program can get the applicant to where they want to be in four years. In other words, the applicant should be interviewing the program as much (actually, more) than the program is interviewing the applicant.

- What is the single greatest thing that can bump the applicant up the match list, and the single greatest thing that can bump the applicant down?
  - The “soft skills” of professionalism, communication, teamwork and curiosity can make a big difference in where an applicant falls on the match list. Conversely, being arrogant, self-centered, aloof, or caustic is a huge red flag. Especially when someone behaves differently in front of leadership compared to other applicants, residents, or the program coordinator.

Final Question

- What is your program’s ratio of applicants : interviewed : ranked : matched?
  - We have about 250 applicants, interview about 90, typically rank 90, and match 10.