

# LOWELL HOUSE PREMEDICAL MEETING FOR CURRENT APPLICANTS

## September 2005



*these are guidelines for students who have submitted applications and are awaiting interviews*

Welcome back! At this point, you've mailed in your applications, and your house letter and recommendation letters have been mailed to the schools. What comes next?

### Secondary Applications

Most schools will send you a secondary application. This is an additional application form particular to each school that is meant to complement the generic AMCAS application. These are generally simpler than the AMCAS application, but some schools do require an additional essay or mini-essays. Getting secondaries in earlier allows more flexible interview scheduling – be timely!

### Getting Ready for Interviews

Once all your materials are in, schools will begin inviting you to interview. Generally, it is up to the school to decide the interview date. So, allow lots of flexibility with time and money to make these interviews happen. Applicants who are abroad can include a note with secondaries about which dates are more convenient. A handful of schools offer regional interviews so that you don't have to make a long trip to the school to interview.

**TRAVEL:** Interviewing is expensive! Check on-line and other travel services for cheapest rates (eg. <http://www.orbitz.com>). Book as early as possible. If possible, cluster interviews on the same trip (ex. 3 California schools in one week). Ask the school for advice on how to arrive from the airport (shuttle bus, taxis). Sometimes trains or buses might be a great alternative to flying.

**DRESS:** Dress conservatively. Men – business suit. Women – skirt suit (or pant suit).

**LODGING:** Some schools will give you the option of staying with a medical student or staying at a local hotel. Staying with a student can give you a better sense of the school, and is cheaper. Hotel arrangements through the school can often give you reduced rates.

### The Interview

Please see back side. Also, check OCS website for excellent handouts & workshops.

### Acceptances

Accept the first school that accepts you, generally with a deposit that is refundable before a certain date. Try not to hold too many positions at schools. Make sure that by **May 15<sup>th</sup>**, you are accepting **ONLY 1** school.

### The Wait List

Some schools will put you on a wait list rather than making a decision whether or not to accept you. Remember that you can still send significant letters of recommendation and reports of your achievements (e.g., awards for thesis; excellent grades; publications). Some students write letters of intent for their top choice school. Wait lists get sorted out between May and August.

### OVERALL ADVICE

Stay organized! Check to make sure schools have received secondaries, letters, transcripts, MCAT scores. It is up to you and can make the difference in admission. Be careful about overscheduling classes and extracurriculars during the Fall semester.

Remember that we are always here to address your concerns and to help you. Talk to us. Let us know where you are interviewing and where you're accepted. **Contact us by December if you aren't hearing about interviews, and by February if other things aren't going so well.** We may be able to help with your top choice school. **BEST OF LUCK !!**

## The INTERVIEW



**WHAT TO EXPECT:** The interview day will generally consist of 2 interviews (3 or 4 for M.D./Ph.D.) with faculty, often 1 interview with a student, and a tour of the school. The faculty interviews are generally one-on-one, though a handful of schools have panel interviews. Interviews generally continue from October to April.

**A GREAT ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:** OCS workshops on interviewing (Oct. 18, 22, 25). Sign up by emailing [mhilton@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:mhilton@fas.harvard.edu). Also, binders on current healthcare issues as well as alumni testimonies from various school interviews. More information at:

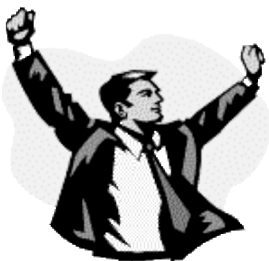
<http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/careerresources/byfield/healthmedicine/index.htm>

### GENERAL “PEARLS” OF ADVICE:

- The point of an interview is: 1) to clarify/verify details of your application and 2) to get a sense of interpersonal skills, personality, and other qualities not on paper. Be relaxed and be yourself.
- Know your application. Be ready to talk about a low grade or any weaknesses in your application. Be ready to talk about any of your extracurriculars. Think of the top 5 most important things about yourself that you want to communicate. These things can help guide your answers. Review responses to Lowell Q I.
- Interviews range from formal/structured to informal/feet-on-table. Remember to always remain **professional, confident, enthusiastic** and **relaxed**. Avoid appearing cocky or apathetic.
- Don't be surprised if the interviewer has not read your application. Be prepared to give a 2-3 minute summary of who you are and why you want to be a doctor.
- Keep current about changes in medicine. Read up on managed care, current political debates on health care (e.g., stem cells, cloning, gene therapy), and other health issues.
- Honesty is crucial. It's better to say “I don't know” than to try to bluff your way out of a question. If you don't know an answer, say so. It is helpful to have an area of expertise so that you can steer the conversation if you're getting stuck on another topic.
- Remember the name of the interviewer. Shake hands and establish eye contact from the start. Keep your hands still, avoid nervous fidgeting. Shake hands when finished.
- At the end of the interview, you often will be asked if you have any questions. Prepare for this: read about the school before going (curriculum, research opportunities, clinical settings, surroundings), and try to ask a question or 2 that demonstrates your interest in this specific school. Try to talk to as many students as possible during your visits to get a sense of the school. Feel free to ask about financial aid.

### MOST FREQUENT QUESTIONS:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to be a doctor?
- Why are you interested in our school?
- Have you had any clinical experience?
- What do you expect to be doing 10 years from now? Career goals?
- What do you plan to do if you are not accepted to medical school?
- What is your biggest weakness? biggest strength?



**BOTTOM LINE – RELAX & BE YOURSELF!!** You're at the interview because the school has some interest in you. Think about the question before you answer. Be positive and you'll do great!

