

Syracuse University

College of Arts & Sciences

Advising and Career Services

How to Select Schools

Professional School: Finding the Right Fit

Applying to professional schools in the field of health is an arduous process, and one that requires tremendous thought and research. The time and financial commitment to an institution is substantial. Fully familiarize yourself with programs of interest. If you are pursuing a specialty, research schools recognized for those fields. Ultimately, your goal is to find the school that is the best *mutual* fit in furthering your education, and preparing you for a successful career in the field.

Basic Guidelines

Apply to those schools having criteria for admission that fit your own credentials or qualifications. Criteria are published in Medical School Admission Requirements, Osteopathic Medical College Information, Official Guide to Dental Schools, and Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements. In addition, research individual schools' websites.

Know which state is your state of residency. Apply to your state school(s) and/or regional schools. Pay attention to private versus public institutions. If you are not a resident, unless you have outstanding qualifications in the way of GPA or admission test scores, or unique personal or family history, use extreme caution applying to state schools which accept fewer than 10% out-of-state residents.

Consider how much it will cost to apply; primary and secondary application fees, interview and travel costs (flights/hotels/food.) Unless you discover that a school gives regional interviews, do not apply to the school if you are unwilling or cannot afford to travel there for an interview; there is no financial aid for interviews.

Be very objective when evaluating your credentials; it is a certainty that admission committee members will be objective. Self-assess your standing before choosing where to apply. Consider your GPA, test scores, the rigor of your academic plan, and the overall dimensionality of your experience. The admissions committees will do the same.

Do not apply to so many schools that you cannot keep up with every detailed request. Secondary Essays and Supplemental Applications require additional essays and fees.

Do not apply to Canadian schools unless you or your parent(s) can claim Canadian citizenship, or you are truly exceptional.

If you are considering foreign schools, be aware that some will accept you almost immediately and expect a substantial fee to hold your place in the class. If you are applying to schools in the U.S. and beyond the border, you might delay your applications to foreign programs while you await feedback from U.S. schools to which you apply first.

Lastly, we recommend that you apply to carefully chosen schools that vary in competitiveness.

Select Schools That You Would Like to Attend

When researching schools to find the best mutual fit, some of the factors you might consider exploring are:

Organization of curriculum: Is the curriculum based on problem-based learning, block or non-block scheduling? Are there clinical courses? Some schools use a “systems” approach. Explore options!

Grading system: Do you have a preference for grades A-F or P/F, Honors system?

Clinical experience: What are the types and time of exposure to clinical work? What facilities are they associated with?

Research and/or independent study experiences: What are current studies/projects that are going on right now? Who is directing them and what are their interests and credentials?

Curriculum or evaluation: Are there other special features of evaluating performance? What types of electives and/or dual programs are available and encouraged? What is the held philosophy or perspective on medicine?

Student-faculty relationships: How is student morale? What is the typical size of the class and is there a diversity of cohorts?

Geographic location: Urban, suburban, rural? Does the school provide housing or help in finding it? How close are clinical facilities? What is the cost of living in that particular area?

Tuition, Fees and Living Expenses: This is widely varied based on public vs. private. Examine closely the fees and weigh the cost of living or options for financial aid.

Support Services: Are there multicultural and academic support systems in place? Opportunities for mentorship? Other resources available to students?