

The well written and informative essay is a necessary component for an outstanding medical school application. The best essays share common components which include the applicant's reason for choosing medicine as a career, significant events influencing this choice, relevant life experiences, demonstrating maturity in the preparation for a career in medicine, and actions or activities that the applicant has engaged in to gain knowledge and experience necessary to make an informed decision toward a career in medicine.

The best applications to medical school often have a theme and elements of that theme often have a common thread moving through many of the elements considered by an admissions committee such as applicant's essays, letters of recommendation, the interviewer's report, and extracurricular activities. Applicants who have a significant experience in service activity and an exposure to clinical medicine are often reassuring to admissions committees looking to identify candidates who are committed to the welfare of others and who have made an informed decision about medicine only after adequate clinical exposure. Key letters of recommendation from faculty, coaches, employers or directors of service organizations often nicely enhance the overall theme of an application being discussed in essays and during the interview.

One example is an athlete who has a sustained involvement during their collegiate career in pursuit of an organized athletic endeavor. Supporting letters from their coaches and demonstrated leadership within the team or activity reassure admission committee members of the applicant's commitment to the endeavor. Service might include coaching youth and a clinical exposure could be similarly related in sports medicine.

Another example would be a significant commitment in the arts could follow the same application structure almost in parallel. The applicant who participates in a school supported orchestra with a sustained commitment over time may similarly have service activities either teaching or exposing others to their musical art or artistic endeavors. Novel or innovative service and clinical experiences are often easily woven into an application to ensure admissions committee members that the applicant has come to the decision to pursue medicine only after significant experiences and careful discernment.

A third example could include leadership in a school related extracurricular activity. Again, a sustained and significant involvement that might include leadership demonstrates to committee members the applicant's commitment to a focused area of activity. Examples could include student government, student publications, service organizations, Greek societies, intramural athletics, dance troops, cultural or ethnic clubs, etc. Weaving these themes into personal essays and the interview helps tie the application together.

Finally, ensuring that each author of a letter or recommendation has full knowledge of your activities and depth of participation is helpful to ensure that letters of recommendation will further carry forward the theme of your application.

These are but a few examples of how to prepare a successful application. Fortunately for our patients there are numerous paths to medicine and the field is enhanced by applicants with diverse backgrounds, activities, and areas of interest.