Compiling a Competitive Application to Medical School

Medical schools are looking for a number of important attributes in their applicants:

**Academic strength.** In assessing academic ability, medical schools evaluate overall GPA, BCPM (biology-chemistry-physics-math) GPA, and MCAT score. Moreover, they assess the depth (challenging, higher-level courses) and breadth (diversity of disciplines) of coursework taken.

**Letters of recommendation.** Lehigh provides a Committee Letter, or institutional letter of support, for students applying to medical school. Students will need to request 3 to 5 evaluations from faculty who know them well and who can attest to their academic talent, persistence, work ethic, creativity, etc. Students should plan to get to know professors beyond consistent attendance in class and success on tests/papers.

**Clinical experiences.** Participation in health-related experiences, especially patient care, is essential to demonstrate both a familiarity with the medical profession and the altruistic nature so important in the medical field. Volunteering (hospitals, nursing homes, EMT, e.g.) and shadowing are among the ways to obtain crucial health-related experiences.

**Community service.** Participation in community service activities demonstrates a commitment to helping those in need. Also, it often allows volunteers to interact with, and learn from, individuals from a diversity of cultures.

**Research.** Going beyond what is learned in the classroom and conducting research---whether in scientific or nonscientific disciplines---can be important to a med school application. A willingness to engage in research demonstrates not only curiosity and creativity but also other skills like problem-solving and critical analysis, time management, resilience, and collaborative ability.
AAMC Personal Competencies

While exploring activities outside the classroom, students are encouraged to keep in mind the personal competencies, or qualities, that the Association of American Medical Schools (AAMC) has identified as being important for entering medical students.

**Integrity and Ethics:** understand and adhere to the ethical principles governing a profession or institution

*What is the importance of ethical behavior to you? Do you follow the rules?*

**Reliability and Dependability:** satisfy obligations, be responsible

*How have you demonstrated your ability to be responsible/accountable?*

**Service Orientation:** identify and reach out to individuals needing help

*In what ways have you cared for others?*

**Social, Interpersonal, and Teamwork Skills:** work effectively with others, be attentive to others and respond appropriately

*How have you worked in partnership with others? Can you both lead and follow in a group setting?*

**Desire to Learn:** be open to challenges, seek out and incorporate feedback

*How have you demonstrated your ability to become the life-long learner required in medicine?*

**Resilience and Adaptability:** be able to recover from failure, adjust to changes in conditions and behaviors

*How do you handle stress and change? When have you been steadfast in your determination to succeed?*

**Cultural Competence:** sensitivity to multicultural issues

*How do you interact with people who are different from you?*

**Oral Communication:** be able to express your thoughts effectively

*How have you successfully communicated your thoughts in conversation and in presentations?*