



PHARMACEUTICAL FEATURE

**HARVARD MEDICINE** **Strategies for Selecting a Medical College**

[By Roshan Tolani]

Medical schools, like individuals, differ in many aspects—in size, in infrastructures, in philosophies, in faculties, in programs, and in the types of the students they get. There are around 125 medical colleges in the U.S., and it is a challenge to select the best college.

Choosing a medical college is not based entirely on one’s personal desires; students’ grade point averages, SAT scores, and other academic merits can be important to the admission process. As medical schools vary significantly, it is important to strike a balance between the best schools and one’s needs and professional interests.

The knowledge that Harvard Medical School is the best for research, the University of Washington for primary care, and the University of California for assisting students with grants or scholarships can be useful when selecting an appropriate medical school from the huge repertoire of options.

**Selection Criteria**

Students seeking medical degrees usually have varying professional objectives. To achieve their long-term career goals, students must select the right schools with utmost care. Researching the following factors will ensure that their choices meet their criteria:

**Academic Program**

- Time when students begin clinical experiences
- Availability of medical school courses
- Size and focus of the program
- Number of the credit hours students must complete
- Elective offerings
- Instruction and evaluation systems

**Institution’s Profile**

- Institution’s strengths and specialty programs
- Student-faculty ratios
- Ratio of full-time to part-time faculty
- Research opportunities
- Type of institution—public or private

**Student Population**

- Number and merits of students
- Admission procedures
- Students’ attitudes
- Diversity of culture

**Campus Life**

- Academic facilities
- Housing and hostel facilities
- Extracurricular activities
- Student support services

**Geographic Location**

- Availability of amenities
- Hospital affiliations
- In-state vs. out-of-state considerations and cost differences
- Opportunities to study elsewhere
- Social and cultural activities in the area

**Fees and Financial Aid**

- Tuitions and fees
- Books and supplies
- Living expenses
- Financial assistance

**Other Miscellaneous considerations**

- Placement records
- Early decision programs
- Special or joint degree programs
- Deferral policies
- Opportunities for global experiences

**Application Strategies**

To maximize the chances of acceptance to one or more medical schools, it is critical to think strategically and practically about the schools to which one applies. At the time of applying to medical colleges, students should consider the following points:

- If academic medicine is your career, give more weight to the school’s reputation.
- Don’t apply to schools you are not likely to attend if admitted.
- Apply to a broad range of schools.
- Evaluate your competitiveness as an applicant.
- Reconsider applying to schools where acceptance is not realistic.
- Make sure that you are eligible to apply.



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**Useful Resources**

The following resources can assist students in their searches for ideal medical colleges:

- Medical school admission requirements
- AAMC Curriculum Directory (<http://services.aamc.org/currdir/start.cfm>)
- Medical school marketing materials
- Minority Student Opportunities in U.S. Medical Schools (MSOUSMS) (<http://www.aamc.org/students/minorities/resources/msousms.htm>)

- Campus visits
- Discussion with senior students and faculties

**ON THE NET**

Selecting a Medical School  
[web.mit.edu/career/www/guide/medschool.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/career/www/guide/medschool.pdf)

Medical Schools  
[edu.ericae.net/medical-schools.htm](http://edu.ericae.net/medical-schools.htm)

Planning to Get into Medical School  
[www.studentdoc.com/medical-school-plan-2.html](http://www.studentdoc.com/medical-school-plan-2.html)

Choosing the Right School  
[www.csu.edu/premed/choosingtherightsschool.htm](http://www.csu.edu/premed/choosingtherightsschool.htm)

Selecting a Medical School  
[web.mit.edu/career/www/preprof/medapply.html](http://web.mit.edu/career/www/preprof/medapply.html)

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