

# *Medical School Interviews*

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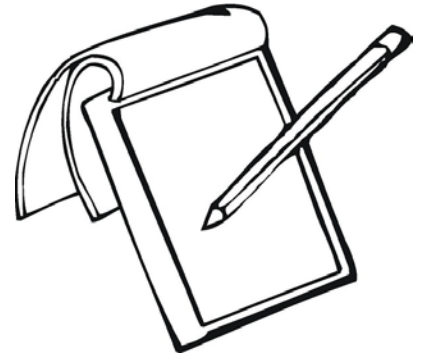


UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON**

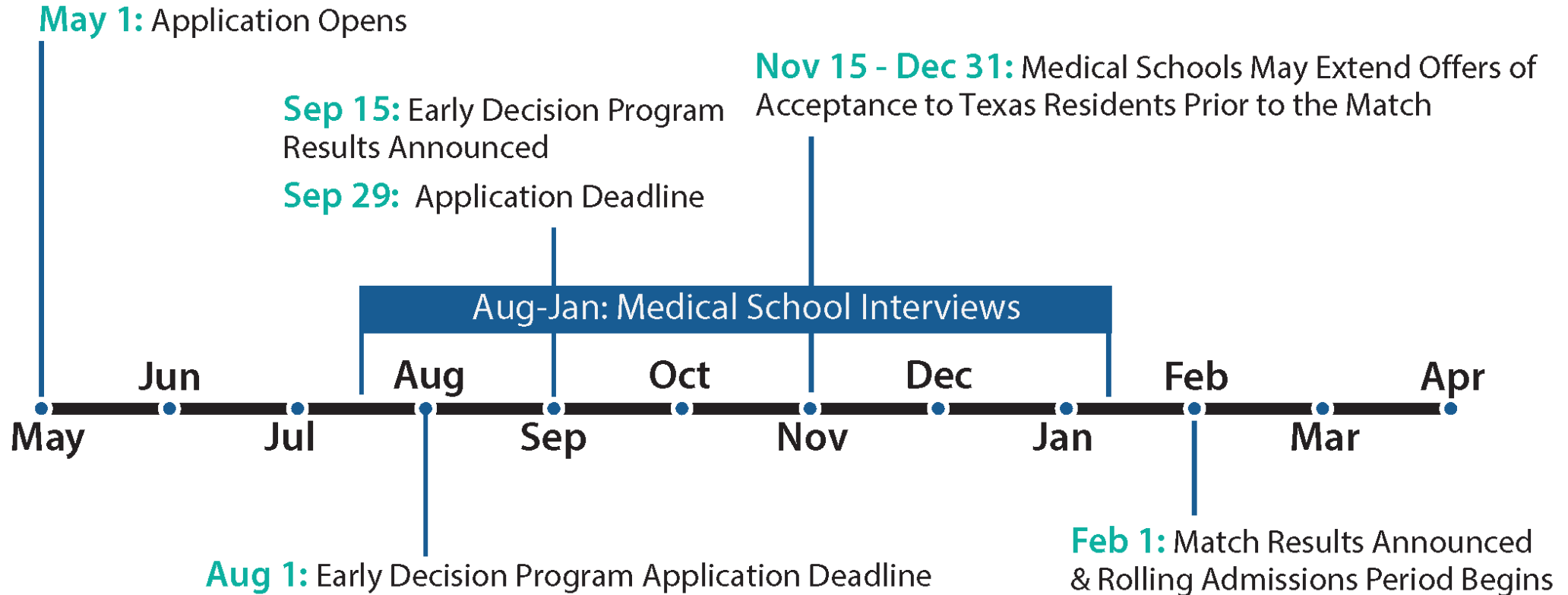
CULLEN COLLEGE of ENGINEERING  
Department of Biomedical Engineering

# Outline

- Overview of Timeline
- What's the point?
- Types of Interviews
- Preparing for Interviews
- Interview Day
- After the Interview
- Take Home Points



# Overview of Timeline

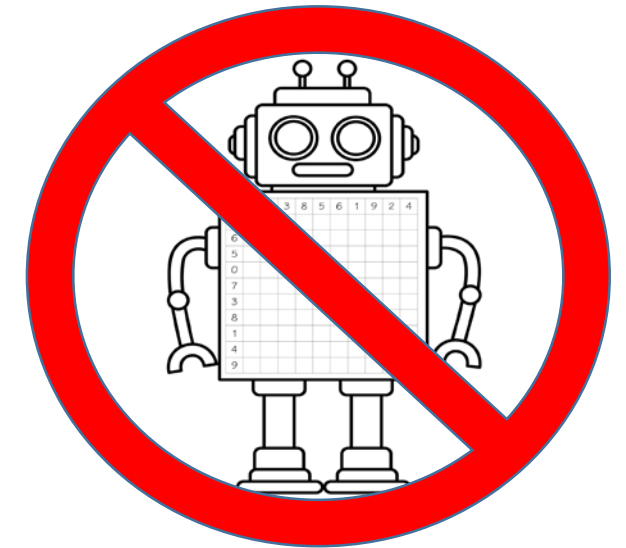


## ■ Key Points:

- Have your application completed and submitted as early as possible (but don't rush!)
- Do not plan to leave the country or expect flexibility with dates

# What is the point of the Interview?

- To assess your suitability for the medical profession.
  - What is your motivation for choosing medicine?
  - Can we picture you as a physician?
  - Do you understand what your life will be like as a physician?
- Academics are no longer the focus—it's about you!
  - How well can you communicate your ideas—especially with a stranger?
  - How do you handle stress and problem-solve?
  - How honed are your interpersonal skills?
- Key points:
  - They do not want robots!
  - Interviewers are trying to challenge you!



# Types of Interviews

- **One-on-one**
  - Usually two interviewers
  - Typically, one “open” and one “closed”
- **Group**
  - One applicant, multiple interviewers
  - Multiple applicants, multiple interviewers
- **Multiple-Mini Interview (MMI)**
  - Rotate through several stations (typically 6-10)
  - Tasked with a different scenario at each station
  - UT-Austin Dell Medical School and University of North Texas SOM (DO) use MMI
- Interviewers consist of faculty, staff, students, or community physicians.



# Preparing for Interviews (the 3 “knows”)

- **Know yourself!**
  - Study your application! Be ready to discuss in detail anything that you put on your application.
  - Have a good explanation for any grade missteps or withdrawals.
  - Be introspective. Consider your overall strengths and weaknesses.
- **Know the school!**
  - What types of interviews does the school conduct?
  - What is the school mission? How do you and your goals align with that mission?
  - What *specific* opportunities does this school offer you (e.g., community outreach, facilities, research, innovative curriculum)?
- **Know the profession!**
  - Be familiar with the medical profession and the wider health care arena.
  - Questions about the Affordable Care Act, stem cell research, obesity, the high cost of health-care, etc. can be a topic in your interview.
  - Ask yourself what you consider to be the biggest crisis in health-care right now? It is not important what your opinion is, as long as you can discuss it intelligently and articulately.

# Preparing for Interviews

- Practice, practice, practice
  - Mock interviews are a must! University Career Services conducts mock interviews.
  - Practice eye-contact, posture—do not over-practice your responses. *Learn to converse not rehearse!*
  - That said, be ready to talk about:
    - Your interest in medicine
    - Your interest in this specific program
    - Your hobbies
    - Your research
    - Your best and worst qualities
- The best candidates...
  - Research the interview structure
  - Are able to work with questions that don't have a "right answer"
  - Practice their interviewing skills during a mock interview
  - Read up on current events and policy issues

# Day of the Interview

- Be early! Try to scope out the location the night before.
- Be nice to everyone—literally everyone.
- Bring only small portfolio—leave phone in bag or car
- Dress professionally—your clothing should not be the reason they remember you!
  - Men: Dark suit (black, navy, gray). Trimmed facial hair. No cologne
  - Women: Dark two-piece matched suit, blouse, or pantsuit. Limit jewelry, perfume, and cleavage.
  - Try to minimize visibility of tattoos
  - Comfortable shoes (really encourage flats or low heels). You will be walking a lot.
- Don't be afraid to mingle and talk to people but be confident!
  - Avoid comparing yourself to other applicants (school, interview length, etc.)
  - You deserve to be there



# During the Interview

- **Be mindful of your body language**
  - Maintain consistent eye contact (but don't stare them down!)
  - Sit up straight
  - Listen actively (this means paraphrasing and taking time to respond thoughtfully to questions/responses)
  - Keep hands free of pens to limit tapping or clicking
  - No gum!
- **Avoid:**
  - Rambling—don't expect interviewer to cut you off or provide cues.
  - Negativity—don't disparage doctors you've shadowed or peers you've worked with.
  - Dwelling on prior interview or MMI station—stay focused on what's in front of you.
- **Think out loud when trying to solve a problem (process is more important than solution):**
  - Define the problem
  - What do you know? What do you need to know?
  - How are you going to gather information?
  - What will you do with information?
- **Be yourself—it's ok to talk about non-medical things that are important to or have influenced you**

# Common Interview Questions

- You'll almost always get some variation of:
  - Tell me about yourself.
  - Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?
  - What do you consider your greatest weakness? Greatest strength?
  - How would your friends (or family) describe you?
  - What would you do if you were not accepted into medical school?
  - Describe a situation where you failed.
- Are any questions off-limits?
  - Yes, interviewers can often pose challenging questions but should not ask inappropriate questions (i.e., those relating to personal disabilities, race, religion, sex, etc.)
  - Report the interviewer's name and the interview question to an admissions officer (usually program director) immediately or email within 24 hours.

# Questions to ask during Interview

- **To ask Interviewers:**
  - How did you end up at this school? Why did you choose your chosen specialty?
  - Why is your favorite thing about the school, and least favorite thing?
  - What do you see as the biggest positive and negative change coming in medicine, and how is your school preparing its students for them?
  - Where are rotations sites? University hospital available? Residencies programs?
  - Is research emphasized? Opportunities for research?
- **Other questions to ask during interview day (including students):**
  - How are students graded during pre-clinical years? Pass/Fail, ranked?
  - How is the curriculum set up? Team/Problem-based learning, Lecture based?
  - How often are exams (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly)?
  - Attendance policy/lecture recording?
  - What do students do for fun?



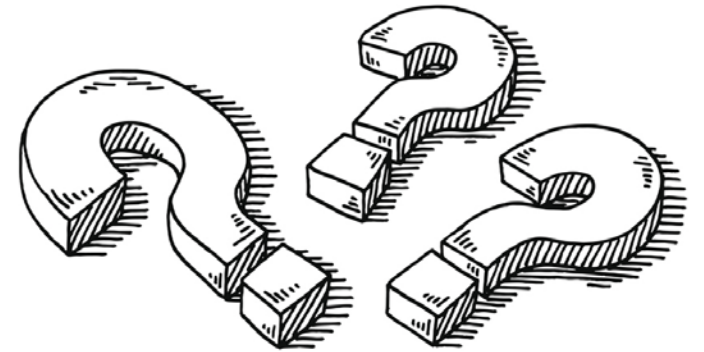
# After the Interview

- Breathe! You did it!
- Consider composing thank-you notes to your interviewers
  - Hand-written or email is fine (ask to see if one is preferred)
  - Suggest bringing cards with you to interview
- Write down notes about the experience—
  - Consider your feelings on the program, facilities, students, faculty, and city/state.
- Consider areas to improve on for next time—but don't dwell on negative
- Update your application with new info or provide a statement of interest
  - Always check with program before sending anything

# Take Home Points

- Interviews are for assessing your character and personality
- Get your application in early
- Practice, practice, practice. Schedule mock interviews early
- Think deeply about why medicine over other careers
- Know your application inside and out
- Interview begins the minute you step on campus
- Do your research about each program you're interviewing with
- Be yourself—no robots!
- Be patient!

Thank you!



*Questions?*

*Doesn't have to be just  
about interviews...*

# Additional TMDSAS Information

- **Essays**
  - Personal Statement (5000 Characters)
  - Personal Characteristics Essay
  - Optional Essay (include anything not directly addressed previously)
- **3 Letters of Rec or HPAC Committee Letter**
  - Option for 1 additional (shadowing)
  - AMCAS allows for up to 14
  - Can use Interfolio, regular mail, or through TMDSAS portal
- **Activities/Chronology section**
  - (everything from after high school and application)
  - You can repeat activities if they apply across categories
- **MCAT must be taken no later than September of application year**
- **Secondary applications can be completed immediately after submitting primary**