


**Preparing for the UWSOM Interview**

Eliza Sutton MD  
Executive Committee member  
UWSOM Admission Committee

**+ Online resources for advisors & applicants**

- <http://www.uwmedicine.org/education/md-program/admissions/advisors>
- <http://www.uwmedicine.org/education/md-program/admissions/applicants>
- <http://www.uwmedicine.org/education/md-program/admissions/applicants/interview>



## + Admissions Committee - overview

- Admissions Committee
  - 170 faculty, students, & community physicians
- Executive Committee (EXCOM):
  - 20 members, a subset of Admission Committee
- Each non-Washington WAMI state (Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho) has at least one representative on EXCOM

## + Application screening

- All completed applications are screened by 2 or 3 EXCOM members, using a standardized process, to determine if the applicant should be invited to interview
- 2 reviewers make independent determinations on the merits of an application
- If the 2 reviewers disagree, a 3<sup>rd</sup> reviewer breaks the tie
- Applicants with 2 positive responses will be invited to interview.
- Those who receive 2 negative responses will not be considered any further in the current admission season

## + Re-applicants & recusal

- Applications of people who have previously applied are screened and interviewed by committee members who did not screen or interview the applicant in a prior cycle
- Committee members recuse themselves from screening, interviewing, or otherwise being involved in admissions decisions for applicants they know, or whose immediate family they know

## + Spokane cohort admissions – new process for 2015-16

- WA applicants will be able to indicate on their secondary application if they would like to spend their Foundations Phase in Spokane
- These applicants will be considered as a cohort
  - They will interview in Spokane
  - They will be compared to other Spokane interviewees rather than to the entire WA applicant pool

## + Interview locations

- Interviews are held in Seattle and across WWAMI
- Applicants from *outside* WWAMI interview in Seattle
- WA residents, depending on their preferred site for Foundations Phase, may interview in:
  - Seattle
  - Spokane
- WAMI residents interview in their home states:
  - WY - Laramie
  - AK - Anchorage
  - MT - Bozeman
  - ID - Boise

## + Interview timing (2015-2016 dates)

- Applicants “screened in” will receive an invitation to interview any time from October until Jan, Feb, or March
- Interviews will be held:
  - WA (Seattle): mid-October to mid-March
  - WA (Spokane): 8 dates in December & January
  - WY: 1 week in January
  - AK: 1 week in February
  - MT: 1 week each in January and February
  - ID: 1 week each in January and February

## + Interview dates & locations

Location	Interview dates	TRUST interview dates
WA & out of region (Seattle)	Mid-Oct to mid-March	--
WA (Spokane)	8 days in Dec & Jan	WA TRUST - Feb 1-4
WY (Laramie)	Jan 11-14	During same week
AK (Anchorage)	Feb 1-4	During same week
MT (Bozeman)	Jan 4-8 and Feb 8-11	During 1 <sup>st</sup> week
ID (Boise)	Jan 11-14 and Feb 22-25	During 1 <sup>st</sup> week

## + The interview process

- Goal is to find out more about the applicant, particularly things that the application can't convey
- All WWAMI sites use the same basic interview format
- Each interview lasts 30 minutes
- Each applicant meets with 3 interviewers simultaneously
  - One EXCOM member (has access to entire file including any previous applications)
  - Two Admissions Committee members (can see current application but not grades or MCAT scores)

## + Interview process: WAMI regions

- WAMI regional interview committees
  - Two committee members from that state
    - One is, or is acting as, EXCOM
  - One WA committee member
    - May be WA EXCOM member acting as regular Admissions member
- Re-applicants may have different committee composition from that listed above, if necessary in order to create a committee of interviewers who were not involved in a prior admissions decision

## + Interview format

- Not a rigid structure
- Interview explores several specific areas:
  - Why does the applicant want to go into medicine?
  - Does he or she know something about the profession and about health care delivery?
  - How well does the applicant communicate with others? (Both conveying information and listening)
  - Can the applicant empathize with others?
  - Is the applicant able to analyze problems in real time and present alternative solutions?

## + Immediately after the interview

- Each interviewer rates the candidate independently, summarizing key points, then submits his or her evaluation
- The 3 interviewers then discuss their scores & observations
- The EXCOM member submits an overall evaluation encompassing views of all of the committee members
- If one interviewer has a significantly different impression from the others, the candidate may be invited to re-interview with a different committee
- All of the interview evaluations, individual and summary, are available to all EXCOM members during admission decision meetings

## + After the interview

- Applicants may send thank you notes, updates, and any inquiries to the Office of Admissions, but are asked not to contact their interviewers directly.
- After the next EXCOM meeting subsequent to their interview, applicants will hear their status:
  - Accepted
  - Rejected
  - “Still under consideration” (SUC) – some applicants will be held in that status until the last admissions decision meeting for their cohort

## + Preparing for the interview

- UWSOM website has a section on “Preparing for Your Interview”
- Highly recommend that applicants review this section & think about the questions beforehand
- Topics:
  - Motivation
  - Communication Skills
  - Empathy
  - Knowledge of Field of Medicine
  - Analytic Thinking/Problem Solving

## + Preparing for Interview: Motivation prompts

- What excites you about a career in medicine?
- What concerns you about a career in medicine and how do you get past your concerns?
- How did you decide that being a doctor was the right career for you?
- How have your experiences prepared you for a career in medicine?
- What personality characteristics do you have that will make you a good doctor?



## + Preparing for Interview: Communication Skills prompts

- Can you express an idea or thought concisely?
- Do you rephrase what someone has just told you to make sure you understood it correctly?
- Do you look for body language signifying emotional reaction such as agreement, disagreement, annoyance, happiness, fear, anger, excitement, disappointment, or despondency?
- Do you interrupt someone when they are speaking to you?

## + Preparing for Interview: Empathy prompts

- Can you imagine yourself in someone else's position?
- Do you consider how someone else might feel about a situation given their experience, culture, and/or social context?
- Can you replace your hopes and plans for someone with their own hopes and plans?
- Can you understand, accept, and value someone else's opinion when it is different from yours?

## + Preparing for Interview: Knowledge of Field of Medicine prompts

- What personal attributes do you consider most important for success as a physician? In research?
- What do you consider markers of success for a physician?
- What attributes do you feel are necessary to elicit hope and trust in patients?
- What does it mean to be a professional?
- What medical error(s) have you seen and what did you learn?

## + Preparing for Interview: Knowledge of Field of Medicine prompts

- Why do you think community service is a category on the AMCAS application?
- If you were putting together a health care team, who would be on it?
- How is the role of the physician changing?
- Choose one of the issues facing health care today and describe how you might go about addressing it.
- What do you think people in the US are most concerned about? How might this affect their health (or not)?

## + Preparing for Interview: Problem Solving/Analytic Thinking prompts

- The interviewers will want to know how you “think on your feet” and are as interested in your process as in your answer.
- If you have been asked a question or been given a patient scenario, rephrase the question or situation to make sure you understood it correctly. If not, ask for clarification.
- What do you know about the problem? (describe it)
- What do you need to know about the problem before you can provide a reasonable answer? What information are you missing? (tell the interviewers)

## + Preparing for Interview: Problem Solving/Analytic Thinking prompts

- Gather the information you are missing as much as is possible during a relatively brief interview.
- If the problem is within a doctor-patient role play, you can gather information from all those participating in the role play, the patient, the family, friends etc.
- Provide your answer or alternative solutions based on your understanding of the problem and the information you have gathered and show how these have influenced your decisions.

**+**  
**Preparing for Interview:  
Problem Solving/Analytic Thinking prompts**

- If you had all the money in the world and could snap your fingers, what problem would you solve?
- You are on a committee to solve a particular issue. You disagree with the direction being set by the chair of that committee, and strongly feel that it is incorrect. What would you do?
- How do you resolve conflict at work, home, or in class?
- What would you do if a patient brought you a costly gift?
- How would you handle the situation if a patient wrote you a love letter?

**+**  
**Preparing for Interview:  
Problem Solving/Analytic Thinking prompts**

- You are called to the ER to see a patient that has a problem supposedly in your area of expertise. When you arrive it becomes obvious that this patient has a completely different type of problem. What do you do?
- You catch a fellow student cheating on an exam. What do you do?
- Describe a moral or ethical dilemma that arose out of an interpersonal relationship. How did you handle it?
- There is a new drug to cure a certain type of cancer, but it is extremely expensive. How do you decide who should get the drug?

## + Final thoughts on the UWSOM interview

- The interview committee's style & questions may vary
- However, the goal is the same: find out more about the applicant in a way the application can't convey – find out about:
  - the applicant as a person
  - how he or she thinks
  - how he or she communicates
- The committee tries to make the applicant comfortable, understanding the situation is anxiety-provoking
- The committee is not trying to trick or trip up the applicant

+ Thank you!

Questions?