

**UAB GUIDELINES FOR PURSUING
A RESIDENCY
IN
OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY**

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*adapted from a document created by
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FOREWORD

We are pleased that you have decided to apply for residency training in Obstetrics and Gynecology. We are confident you will find your career in women's health care to be extremely rewarding and gratifying.

Residency training in Obstetrics and Gynecology is four years in duration. Part of the first year usually is devoted to nonspecialty rotations such as primary care, emergency medicine, and geriatrics. Subsequent rotations traditionally are divided between obstetrics, gynecology, gynecologic oncology, reproductive endocrinology and infertility, and ultrasound.

Despite the apparent disadvantages of a career in Obstetrics and Gynecology, such as erratic work schedules and high malpractice premiums, approximately 7% of all senior students in U.S. medical schools apply for Obstetrics and Gynecology residencies. Each year, a small percentage of students fail to match. In many instances, these unsuccessful outcomes have resulted from unrealistic expectations and poor planning.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with the information you need to make thoughtful, well-founded decisions about postgraduate medical education programs. Included are suggestions concerning electives for your senior year of medical school, selection of individual residencies, time deadlines, preparation of your curriculum vitae and personal statement, and planning of your interview schedule.

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TIMELINE FOR RESIDENCY APPLICATIONS FOR THE MARCH NRMP MATCH

DATE	GOAL
By late March	Select senior advisor
By early April	Finalize senior schedule and timeline for NBME Step II exam, ERAS submission, and interviews.
By JUNE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete C.V. to give to faculty writing letters of recommendations. • Begin to solicit letters of recommendations • Schedule appointment with Dean of Student Affairs to discuss the Dean's Letter of Evaluation.
By JULY 15	Prepare preliminary list of programs from FREIDA and APGO websites.
By JULY 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request information from residency programs by regular mail or via the Internet. • Consult with personnel in the Office of Student Affairs for information concerning ERAS. • Review draft of personal statement with advisor.
By SEPTEMBER 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize list of programs for ERAS • Finalize personal statement and list of faculty for letters of recommendations. • Complete application for submission via ERAS
By mid OCTOBER	Plan/Finalize interview schedule interview schedule
NOVEMBER-JANUARY	Interviews
By FEBRUARY 1	Complete interviews and consult with adviser.
By FEBRUARY 15	Finalize rank list.

SUGGESTED SENIOR COURSES FOR UAB STUDENTS INTERESTED IN OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY

- Subspecialty elective in Obstetrics and Gynecology (UAB Maternal-Fetal Medicine or Gynecologic Oncology)*.
- Ambulatory Requirement: Anesthesiology Preoperative Assessment Clinic, Dermatology, Emergency Medicine, Adolescent Medicine
- Surgery Requirement: Urology, GI Surgery, Plastic Surgery
- Medicine Requirement: General Medicine, GI Medicine, Cardiology
- Inpatient Requirement: above OB Gyn electives, above Surgery requirements
- Electives: above choices also qualify as electives in addition to Adult Infectious Diseases, Anesthesiology Critical Care,
- Research Elective--As a general rule, a limited research elective (i.e., one month in duration) is not recommended. Such an elective rarely leads to a substantive publication or enhances your chances for selection for residency training.
- "Audition Elective" in Obstetrics and Gynecology at another institution**

* Strongly recommended if you are uncertain about your choice of career. Should be taken within the first three months of the academic year.

** Strongly recommended if you are certain of your top selection and you rank in the bottom third of the class.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

Suggested Format

- Brief description of your background--i.e., place of birth, occupation of parents
- Explanation of why you originally became interested in medicine
- Explanation of why you developed a specific interest in Obstetrics and Gynecology
- Discussion of what makes you unique as an individual
- If indicated, an explanation for suboptimal academic performance, e.g., serious illness, pregnancy, death of a family member
- If indicated, an explanation for unusual constraints in selection of a residency program, e.g., couples match, special geographical considerations, career opportunities for partner
- Discussion of your future plans - if known
 - Preferred geographic location
 - Private practice vs. academic medicine
 - Type of private practice (solo, group, multispecialty group)
 - Interest in fellowship training
- Description of extracurricular activities - what you do to preserve balance in your life and remain "energized" for the study of medicine

PLEASE NOTE: BE CERTAIN THAT YOUR ADVISOR REVIEWS THIS DOCUMENT BEFORE YOU SUBMIT IT. POORLY WRITTEN PERSONAL STATEMENTS MAY DETRACT FROM AN OTHERWISE EXCELLENT APPLICATION.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Suggested Format

PLEASE NOTE: Most of the information traditionally included in the C.V. now can be provided in the standard ERAS format. However, you still should prepare a formal C.V. to give to the faculty preparing your letter of recommendation and for later use with applications for employment, licensure, or board certification.

- Name
- Local address, e-mail address, and telephone number
- Permanent address and telephone number
- Social security number
- Date of birth
- Marital status
- +/-Spouse's name
- +/-Names and ages of children
- +/-Place of birth

- Medical school (indicate date of anticipated graduation)
- Undergraduate degree (indicate if you graduated with honors)

- Honors (e.g., Dean's List, Phi Beta Kappa, Alpha Omega Alpha, scholarships). Indicate whether a specific scholarship is based on need vs. merit.

- Organizations (e.g., student member of AMA)

- Research experience. Indicate name of supervisor and specific purpose or title of research project(s).

- Publications

- Recent employment experience--if unique or if specifically relevant to your medical career. Military service (if applicable) Do not list part-time jobs from high school or college.

PLEASE NOTE: BE CERTAIN YOUR ADVISOR REVIEWS THIS DOCUMENT FOR CONTENT, ORGANIZATION, AND RELEVANCE.

GUIDELINES FOR SOLICITING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- The "Medical Student Performance Evaluation (Dean's Letter)" is a MUST for all residency programs.
- Some programs require a letter from the OB Gyn student clerkship director or a letter from the department chairman.
- When other letters are required, they should be written preferably by faculty members
 - *who know you well* and can comment in detail on both your personal qualities and academic performance.
 - in OB Gyn, other surgical subspecialties, Internal Medicine.
- DO NOT submit more letters than requested by the program.
- DO NOT solicit letters from residents or fellows.
- When soliciting letters, provide the faculty members with your C.V., personal statement, and your transcript (especially if favorable). Inform faculty members of any special constraints you may have such as a couples' match or narrowly defined geographic preference.
- Request letters ideally by September 1.
- Check with your Office of Student Affairs and verify that they have been electronically transmitted.
 - If a letter has not yet been submitted to the Office of Student Affairs for transmission via ERAS by mid October, contact the faculty member and politely remind him/her of the deadline.

CONSIDERATIONS IN CHOOSING A RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Please note: These items are listed alphabetically, not in order of importance. The actual rank order of importance will vary from one individual to another.

- Camaraderie among residents and between residents and faculty**
- Career opportunities for partner**
- Competitiveness—the program's and yours**
- Ease of transportation to and from work**
- Faculty--quality and accessibility**
- Fellowship opportunities after residency**
- Frequency of night call - less of an issue with resident work hour restrictions but you may want to know if the program adheres to these restrictions.**

- **Geographic location**
- **Living conditions**
- **Proximity to family**
- **Reputation of program**
- **Research opportunities**
- **Salary**
- **Size of city**
- **Size of program**
- **University vs. non-university program**
- **Weather**
- **Working conditions**

GUIDELINES FOR RESIDENCY APPLICATIONS

For students in upper third of class:

- Apply to a *minimum* of 15 programs.
- Select 5-7 "highly competitive" programs.
- Select 5-7 "moderately competitive" programs.
- Select 1-2 "less competitive" programs.
- Interview at a minimum of 7-8 programs.
- Prepare a final rank list of at least 7 programs.

For students in the middle third of class:

- Apply to a minimum of 20 programs.
- Select 4-5 "highly competitive" programs.
- Select 7-10 "moderately competitive" programs.
- Select 4-5 "less competitive" programs.
- Interview at a minimum of 10 programs.
- Prepare a final rank list of at least 8-9 programs.

For students in the lower third of class:

- Apply to a minimum of 25 programs.
- Select 10-15 "moderately competitive" programs.
- Select 10 "less competitive" programs.
- Interview at a minimum of 12 programs.
- Prepare a final rank list of at least 10 programs.

PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU ARE PURSUING A COUPLES MATCH, YOU SHOULD INCREASE THE NUMBERS SUGGESTED ABOVE BY AT LEAST 3.

THE INTERVIEW

The invitation for an interview is a clear indication that you are competitive for the residency program. However, most programs will interview 8-10 candidates for every available position. Therefore, prepare carefully for each interview. Use the interview as an opportunity to demonstrate that you are a mature, articulate and affable individual who has developed realistic, clearly defined career goals. The following guidelines should be helpful to you as you begin this exciting process.

- Be consistently respectful and courteous to the administrative staff who schedule your interview. A negative comment from an offended secretary can quickly sabotage an otherwise excellent application.
- Schedule your interviews carefully. Be aware of the dangers of inclement weather in certain states during the period of late November-January.
- If you plan to drive to your interviews, be certain that your automobile is in good working order. If it is not, consider renting a newer automobile that is in excellent mechanical condition. Plan your route so that you are not driving through deserted areas late at night.
- Arrange reservations in safe hotel or motel facilities.
- Be certain that you are on time for the interview. If you are unavoidably detained, be certain to telephone the residency coordinator and inform him or her that you will be late.
- Dress appropriately for the interview. Men should wear a conservative business suit or blue blazer and gray slacks, dress shirt, and a tie. Women should wear a conservative dress or business suit. Avoid mini-skirts, spiked heels, and excessive jewelry and makeup. Extremes of dress will attract exactly the opposite kind of attention that you desire.
- During the actual interview the most important rule is: *relax and be yourself.*

- Be animated and attentive throughout the interview. Be certain that you have several questions to pose to each faculty member and resident with whom you interview. Do not hesitate to ask the *same* questions of different interviewers. TRY YOUR VERY BEST TO AVOID AN APPEARANCE OF INDIFFERENCE OR FATIGUE, PARTICULARLY AT THE END OF THE DAY. THE APPLICANT WHO IS SIMPLY "GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS" IS ALL TOO EASY TO IDENTIFY.
- Do your homework. Have some knowledge of the program you are visiting and be able to explain why you chose to apply to that institution.
- Develop a list of questions for every interview. Questions might include the following:
 1. How have previous residents performed on the CREOG Inservice Training Examination and the written and oral board examinations?
 2. Have any residents from the program been accepted for fellowship training?
 3. Do all members of the faculty participate actively in teaching the residents?
 4. How many didactic sessions are presented to the residents each week?
 5. Does the department provide an allowance for purchase of textbooks or attendance at medical meetings?
 6. Does the department require that a research project be completed during residency training? What type of administrative and laboratory support is available for resident research projects?
 7. Is a night float system in operation?
 8. How frequently are the residents on call?
 9. Do the residents and faculty members seem to have good camaraderie?
 10. What are the strong points of the program?
 11. What are the weak points of the program?
 12. Is any faculty turnover expected, particularly at senior administrative levels (i.e., chairperson, program director, or division director)? If so, what impact will these personnel changes have on residency training?
 13. Have any residents left the program in recent years? If so, what was the explanation for their departure?
 14. Does the program have a parental leave policy?
 15. What career opportunities are available for the applicant's partner?
- In turn, be prepared to answer the following questions that faculty members may pose to you:

1. What is your background--birthplace, type of education, occupation of parents?
 2. What individual(s) do you consider to have been most influential in your life?
 3. How did you become interested in medicine?
 4. How did you become interested in the specific discipline of Obstetrics and Gynecology?
 5. How did you counter the arguments of those who told you this was not the best career choice because of erratic work hours and high malpractice liability?
 6. What strengths will you bring to a residency program? Conversely, what are the personal weaknesses that you would like to correct?
 7. What are your plans for the future, i.e., private practice, fellowship training, academic medicine, research?
 8. What activities do you pursue outside of medicine to maintain balance in your life?
 9. What role did you play in the research project(s) cited in your C.V.? What is your understanding of the purpose and major findings of this research project?
- Throughout the interview, be on your very best behavior. Do not chew gum, slouch in your chair or say "yeah" or "nah" when talking with the interviewers. Avoid assuming too great a familiarity with the residents. Avoid overly casual comments. Avoid any appearance of impropriety such as cursing, ordering an alcoholic drink at lunch, or flirting with another medical student or resident.
 - Be humble. Avoid *any* trace of arrogance.
 - Avoid inconsistencies in your responses to different interviewers.
 - At the conclusion of the interview, inquire whether or not you are expected to communicate again with the residency program director. Some residency directors will expect you to contact them if you remain interested in the program. Others do not expect further communication prior to the match.
 - If you decide to cancel an interview, be certain to notify the program director's office by telephone. Be sure you speak with a "real person" (not just a recorder). Failure to notify a program is an extremely discourteous act which deprives another applicant of the opportunity for an interview and inconveniences faculty members and administrators who have set aside time to meet with you. It also reflects on the reputation of your medical school and may jeopardize the ability of future applicants from UAB to secure an interview.

BUDGETING FOR THE INTERVIEWS

Interviewing for residency programs is an expensive undertaking. Your total financial outlay obviously will depend upon the number of programs to which you apply, their proximity to your home, and your ability to cluster interviews by region. Listed below are reasonable estimates for lodging, food, airfare, application fees, and clothing.

- Average expense for one night in a comfortable (but not elegant) hotel (hotels in large cities may be almost twice as expensive) \$ 75
- Average expense for breakfast, lunch, and dinner 30
- Average airfare for a single trip (Airfares are may be lower if you depart from Atlanta, Huntsville, or Montgomery) 250-350
- Average cost of a single-day car rental 30
- Average cost per mile for travel by automobile (gas, oil, tolls) .25
- ERAS fee (dependent upon number of applications) 200-300
- Preparation and printing of resume and photograph 100
- New clothing for interviews (suit, overcoat, shoes) 300-500

Consider the following suggestions for reducing your expenses.

- Drive to as many interviews as possible.
- When making airline reservations, try to use only a single carrier. Join that carrier's "frequent flyer" program if you are not already a member. Depending upon your number of airline trips, you may earn enough mileage credit to qualify for a free roundtrip coach ticket.
- To obtain the lowest airfare, try to make your airline reservation at least 14 days in advance and use travel search engines such as Travelocity to notify you

by email when the price drops below a certain price.

- If air travel is required, try to group together as many interviews as possible. As long as you depart from, and return to, the same location, additional stops in between may be relatively inexpensive.
- Be wary of reservations that require connections with smaller commuter airlines. These carriers do not always adhere strictly to published schedules, particularly in inclement winter weather.
- Take advantage of the hotel promotions offered by the airline travel programs.
- Inquire as to whether the department you are visiting has any discount arrangement with a nearby hotel.
- Please be aware that low interest loans are available to assist with interview expenses and relocation expenses. Contact the financial affairs officer at your medical school for further information.

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING THE FINAL MATCH LIST

- The NRMP algorithm was originally developed by a Harvard economist, who was an expert in "game theory." The algorithm is intended to be a "win-win game" and is not meant to favor either the program or the individual applicant. Please trust in the basic fairness of this process.
- Be certain that you have included an appropriate number and mix (i.e., highly competitive vs. less competitive) of programs based upon your individual qualifications and geographic/personal constraints. I recommend a **MINIMUM OF 7** programs for the more competitive student and a **MINIMUM OF 10** programs for the less competitive student and for anyone participating in a couples match.
- Please remember that the couples Match algorithm can match you **BOTH BY THE INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM AND THE CITY OF PREFERENCE**. Therefore, you can enhance your chances for a successful match if you include multiple programs in the **SAME** city.
- **RANK PROGRAMS ENTIRELY ACCORDING TO YOUR PREFERENCE**. Do not attempt to guess how programs will rank you and then adjust your rank list. Such efforts are fraught with uncertainty and often lead to major disappointments. Moreover, do not put perfect reliance on overtures made by program directors unless you are absolutely convinced of his/her sincerity.
- Do not rank any program in which you absolutely would not like to train. If you are uncertain about a program, ask yourself the question, "Would I rather go unmatched than train at program X?" If the answer is "yes," omit that program from your rank list.
- Trust your basic "gut instinct." It probably is more accurate than any numerical rating system you could devise.
- Please remember that you have signed a contractual agreement to abide by the outcome of the Match. You do a disservice to the residency program and you bring discredit on yourself and the College of Medicine if you renege on your

commitment. Moreover, if you violate the agreement, you may be subject to major sanctions such as not being allowed to participate in the Match program again.

- Our hope is for everyone to match. Unfortunately, occasional disappointments occur. Please be assured that all of the resources of the Student Affairs Office are available to help you should your initial match application be unsuccessful.

NOTES