

# OPENING A FILE WITH THE MCAC

**AMSA Mtg, Wed 2/14/24, 11 am, P-101**

Everything you need to know to apply to medical or dental school for the 2025 application cycle with the support of the Medical Careers Advisory Committee (MCAC):

- Process
- Letters of Recommendation
- Access to Advising Course
- Deadlines to Meet
- Other file requirements



[mcac@tcnj.edu](mailto:mcac@tcnj.edu)  
[www.mcac.tcnj.edu](http://www.mcac.tcnj.edu)



- **What does the MCAC do?**
- **Do I need the MCAC?**
- How do I get to medical (dental, optometry, podiatry, etc.) school?
- How do I become pre-med?
- **Where do I get reliable information?**
- What do I need to apply?
- Am I a good candidate for medical school?
- What courses do I need?
- Do I have to be a biology major?
- Do minors help?
- Do I need to shadow more than one doctor?
- Do I need research?
- When should I get started?
- What are my chances of getting in?
- How important is the MCAT?
- Is the GPA more important than the MCAT?
- Does my major matter at all?
- Is my C in Orgo going to keep me out of medical school?
- What is the minimum GPA to apply? Is there a minimum MCAT to apply?

- **Can you talk to my parents?\***
- How long should I study for the MCAT?
- Should I take an MCAT prep course?
- When should I take the MCAT?
- I want to stay (or leave) NJ?
- Which schools? How many?
- Does it help to be in state?
- **When should I apply?**
- Is it better to apply early?
- **How many letters of recommendation?**
- **Who get a composite letter?**
- **What happens if I don't get a composite letter?**
- What are my chances of getting in?
- Should I take the MCAT again?
- Should I apply to MD, MD and DO, or DO only?
- **What happens if I apply later in the cycle?**
- When should I think about a gap year(s)?
- **When will I know if I get in?**
- If I'm on the waitlist does it mean I'll get in?
- What happens if I don't get in?
- Are post-bac programs worth it?

# Medical Careers Advisory Committee (**MCAC**)

Sudhir Nayak, Ph.D.

Professor of Biology

Director, 7-Year Medical (BS/MD) and 7-Year Optometry (BS/OD) Programs

Chair, Medical Careers Advisory Committee


The College of New Jersey

# MCAC direct contacts

## MCAC Chair

- Sudhir Nayak, PhD
- Professor of Biology
- >15 years at TCNJ

## MCAC Administrative Support

- Ms. Helen Kull 
- General Advisor, Program Assistant, and Knower of (MCAC) Things
- Department of Biology
- >15 years at TCNJ

## Ad Hoc MCAC Members (examples):

Biology: Dr. Jeffery Erickson, Dr. Tracy Kress

Chemistry: Dr. David Hunt, Dr. Benny Chan

Engineering: Dr. Christopher Wagner

Public Health: Dr. Brenda Seals

Psychology: Dr. Andrew Leynes

**Who Are YOU?**

**Year?**

**Major?**

# MCAC

- Assist **TCNJ students and alumni** applying to medical school and other health professional schools
  - Help students **from any major**
- Provide validated resources and information
- Data-driven advising and mentoring
- Generate the **committee (or composite) letter**

# Help us help you

- We are invested in your long term success
  - **We want you to get in!**
- The TCNJ MCAC is different
  - We work with you to present the best version of yourself
  - We are open and honest with you about your chances
  - We make data driven recommendations and offer alternatives
- Use our resources to help you get started, stay on track, invest time wisely, and be awesome

# Health Professions Student Group

- **Group affiliation in PAWS**
  - Open to TCNJ Students from any major
  - **Contact Ms. Helen Kull at [mcac@tcnj.edu](mailto:mcac@tcnj.edu) to be added**
- Receive email newsletter with notices of events
  - Webinars, professions opportunities, information from MCAC, etc.
- Noted in PAWS - your advisor can see it as well
- Remember the following:
  - It **does not** provide automatic preferential treatment for enrollment
  - It **does not** negate the need for individual advisement by your advisor
  - It **does not** guarantee successful application or admission
  - It **does not** alone provide all resources, deadlines, and information required
  - Each student must seek out **validated** information and opportunities on their own



# “Opening a File” with the MCAC (and Everything Beyond...)

- How to obtain a Committee Letter (aka Composite Letter)
  - Do you need a letter?
  - Why would you want one?
- Are you planning to apply to med / dental / optometry / podiatry school?
- **MCAC advising is for everyone**
  - The Committee Letter is for students that are strong candidates

# 18 months, 18 months, 18 months

- **Work with MCAC 18 months** before you want to enter medical school
  - If you want to matriculate DIRECTLY to medical school after senior year then you start the process **mid-February of your junior year**
    - **Take MCAT May of your junior year (early August at the latest)**
- Considerations
  - Received a competitive MCAT/DAT/DAT/OAT/PA-CAT score
  - GPA and transcript
  - Letters of recommendation
  - Clinical experiences
  - Volunteering experiences

# Planning is EVERYTHING

- Issues
  - Must complete all pre-medical requirements by the end of junior year
    - **Do not take the MCAT “early”**
    - Take it when you completed the coursework and have prepared
      - MCAT prep (≈300-1000 hours)
  - Obtain sufficient clinical experience
  - Assume you have been volunteering
  - Assume that you will have good grades and challenging courses
- This is why 60% of students take a gap year
  - Have a plan but be flexible
  - What are you going to do during the gap year?
    - Improve chances?

# Letters of recommendation

- **Strong letters** > more letters > letters from specific people
- General guidelines (about 4-5 letters, no more than 6)
  - **Academic letters (X2)**
    - STEM -vs- non-STEM courses
    - Research, internship, etc.
    - Professors that know you\*
  - **Letter from a medical professional (X1)**
    - MD -> MD programs, DO -> DO programs, etc.
  - **Character letters (X1)**
    - Volunteering coordinators
    - Clinic coordinators
- Use the **MCAC Letter Request Form!**
  - Letters should be sent directly to [mcac@tcnj.edu](mailto:mcac@tcnj.edu)

# Letters of recommendation

- **Careful who you ask!**
- Accurate assessment of the applicant's suitability for medical school rather than advocate for the applicant
  - How long you have known the applicant?
  - What capacity you have interacted?
  - Direct or indirect observations
  - Focus on the details of the applicant
- Only include information on grades/GPA if they require context
- Focus on behaviors that impact suitability of the applicant for medical school
- Comparison to groups and rationale

# Letters of recommendation

- Contributions
  - Obstacles - attitude, resilience, adaption
  - Background - attributes, experiences, commitment
- Core competencies
  - **Thinking & Reasoning Competencies**
    - Critical Thinking, Quantitative Reasoning, Scientific Inquiry, Written Communication
  - **Science Competencies**
    - Living Systems, Human Behavior
  - **Intrapersonal Competencies**
    - Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others, Reliability and Dependability, Resilience and Adaptability, Capacity for Improvement, Service Orientation, Social Skills, Cultural Competence, Teamwork, Oral Communication

# Timeline

- **Spring (Feb through April)** - 18 months prior to start at med school
  - Inform MCAC of your intent to apply at [mcac@tcnj.edu](mailto:mcac@tcnj.edu)
  - Schedule appointment with MCAC Chair to discuss process and preparedness
  - Open file with MCAC, to collect transcript, mcat/dat/etc score, copy of application(s), list of intended schools, list of letter writers and other materials we request
  - **Register online to take the MCAT or other admissions examination (ideally in May)**
- **~ May 1**
  - AMCAS application portal opens
- **~ June 1**
  - AMCAS applications can be submitted to (similar situation with aacomas, aadsas, etc)
    - **Ideally within 2 weeks of opening or soon thereafter**
- **June 30**
  - MCAC File completion date for Early Decision (ED) applicants
  - Suggested target date for the MCAC to receive Letters of Recommendation

# Timeline cont.

- **Summer (after MCAT scores are received)**
  - **Target date for completion of your MCAC file (ideally June/July)**
  - Target date for the MCAC to receive your Letters of Recommendation
- **August 1 (one year prior to start at med school)**
  - AMCAS Early Decision application deadline
- **~ September 1**
  - **Final date for all applicant materials to be submitted to the MCAC**
    - The MCAT must be taken before the end of August
  - After this date, the probability of admission decreases significantly
- **October 1**
  - Date by which all ED acceptances will be announced



# Timeline cont.

- ~ **November 1**
  - Deadline for Letters of Recommendation to arrive at med schools
- **October through March**
  - **Students invited to interview**
  - Admissions Committees are filling class rosters
- **April through mid-May**
  - Offers are made
- **June – July**
  - Some wait-listed students may be offered seats as class rosters are finalized
  - Make arrangements for housing, loans, roommates, etc
- **August**
  - Most medical/dental/etc schools begin in August





Same old  
process



**CANVAS!**



~~TCNJ  
CANVAS~~



**“Free for Teachers”**

**CANVAS**



**“Free for Teachers”**  
**CANVAS**



**You can log in  
with your tcnj email,  
or another  
(gmail, etc)  
email address**



“Free for Teachers”

**CANVAS**



You must create a NEW ACCOUNT with a different password - NOT YOUR TCNJ ONE



You can log in with your tcnj email, or another (gmail, etc) email address



“Free for Teachers”  
**CANVAS**



- We will ask for the names and emails of those who wish enroll
- **MCAC 101:** What's Up, Doc? - Exploring and Preparing for Health Careers
  - Freshmen/sophomores
- **MCAC 201:** Seeking the Support of the MCAC
  - Juniors/seniors/alumni
  - Updated each cycle

**(Go to Canvas!)**

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# Scan code; then complete and submit form to be enrolled in MCAC 201

If the QR Code  
doesn't work for you,  
send an email to  
[mcac@tcnj.edu](mailto:mcac@tcnj.edu)  
and say "Enroll me!"

...



You will then receive an invitation from Instructure to enroll in MCAC 201 in Free for Teachers Canvas

**If you are not yet ready to apply, and would like access to MCAC 101, scan code below, then complete and submit form to be enrolled in **MCAC 101****

If the QR Code doesn't work for you, send an email to [mcac@tcnj.edu](mailto:mcac@tcnj.edu) and say "Enroll me in MCAC 101!"

...



**You will then receive an invitation from Instructure to enroll in MCAC 201 in Free for Teachers Canvas**

Questions?

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# Required Coursework MD/DO

- Standard
  - 2 semesters of Biology with laboratory
    - **BIO 201 and BIO 211**
  - 2 semesters of Inorganic Chemistry with laboratory
    - **CHE 201 and CHE 202**
  - 2 semesters of Organic Chemistry with laboratory
    - **CHE 331 and CHE 332**
  - 2 semesters of Physics with laboratory
    - **PHY 201/121 and PHY 202/122**
      - **Most do not require calculus based physics**
- Your grades in these courses are important