



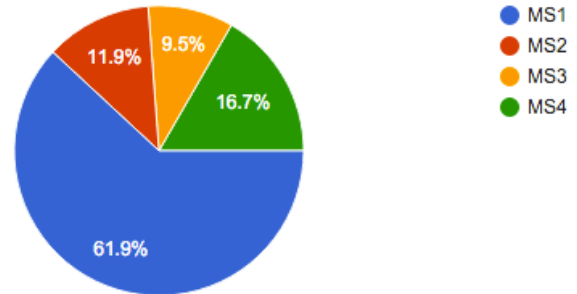
The PULSE, February 2016

The Gap Years, Family/Relationship Planning & Non-Traditional and Re-Applicants

Section I: About this Pulse

This issue of the Pulse was authored by the MSMP Board with feedback from 42 medical student mentors at the John A. Burns School of Medicine. Feedback from mentors was garnered via online survey.

Of the poll respondents, majority were MS1.



Section II: Gap Years

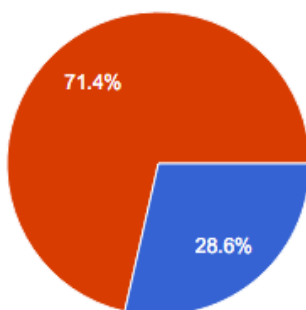
What is a gap year?

A gap year (or gap years) is basically the **time between when you graduate from college and when you matriculate into medical school**. Gap years can be taken intentionally or unintentionally and for a variety of reasons to be discussed later.

Should I take gap year(s)? How many people choose to take a gap year or more?

There is no right or wrong answer here. Some people decide to take some time off before entering medical school and others choose to matriculate right after their college graduation. Also keep in mind many people are not accepted into medical school on their first attempt at applying. These would be the “un-planned” gap year(s).

When asked the question “**Did you take gap year(s)? This would include both planned or unplanned gap years**” medical students responded:



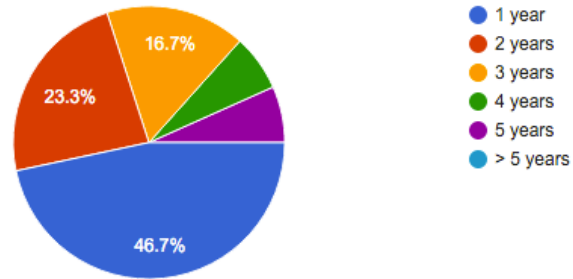
● No
● Yes

Note: **most medical students who responded to our survey did NOT matriculate directly into medical school** after their college graduation. Majority took 1 or more gap years.

How many gap years should I take?

The answer is that it's up to you. As previously stated, some people choose to matriculate into medical school immediately after graduating college. Some people decide on a career in medicine much later in life, so they may spend 5 years+ outside of college before entering medical school. For others, gap years aren't a choice. Again keep in mind that you are not guaranteed admission even if you apply to medical school and you may also take a somewhat unintended gap year.

Of those individuals that took AT LEAST 1 gap year, we asked the question: "How much time did you spend after your undergraduate graduation before entering medical school?"



What should I do in my gap year(s)?

Again the answer is that it's up to you. However, we would encourage you to take some of the following steps:

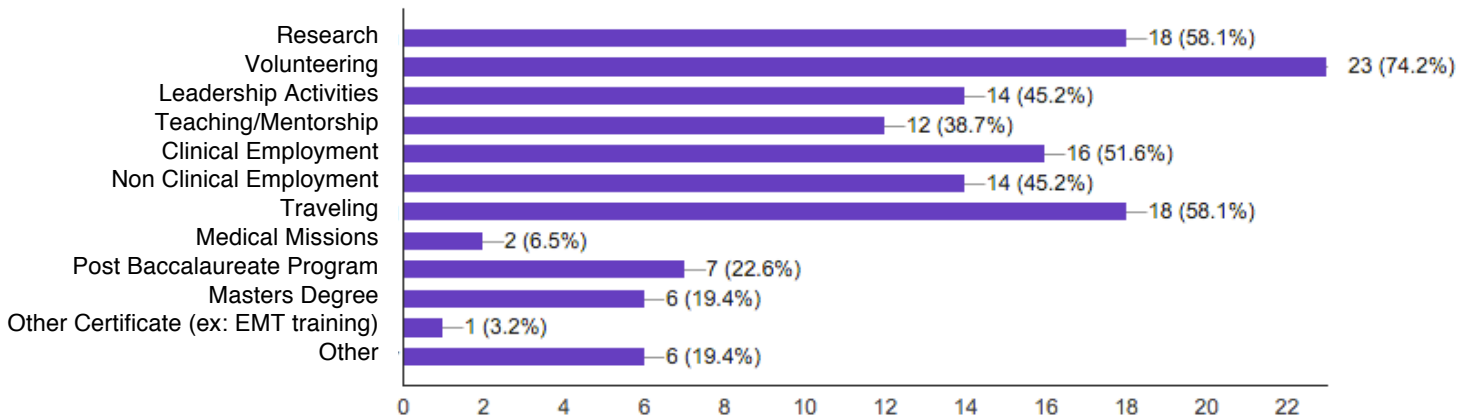
- Take a hard look at your application and find **areas that may need improvement** before you apply. This may also involve giving your application/resume to an objective individual to get feedback.
- Think about what you feel passionate about. **Don't be a cookie cutter applicant.** Do not do something because you "should" be doing it. While we encourage you to try new things, don't continue doing an activity if you feel you aren't contributing in a meaningful way or if you aren't finding some fulfillment from it.
- **Explore!** You should be participating in activities that help you figure out if medicine is right for you (though not all your activities need be "clinical" in nature). Keep an open mind when choosing your activities and also remember that what you put into your endeavors correlates directly to what you get out of it.

So what did JABSOM medical students do in their gap years?

We asked the question "What did you do with your time before matriculating into medical school?" and people responded:

"Other" Responses included:

- Science classes, art classes; Working at Epic (electronic medical record company); Farming, urban agriculture, community organizing; Cooking/Culinary School



Why do people take gap years?

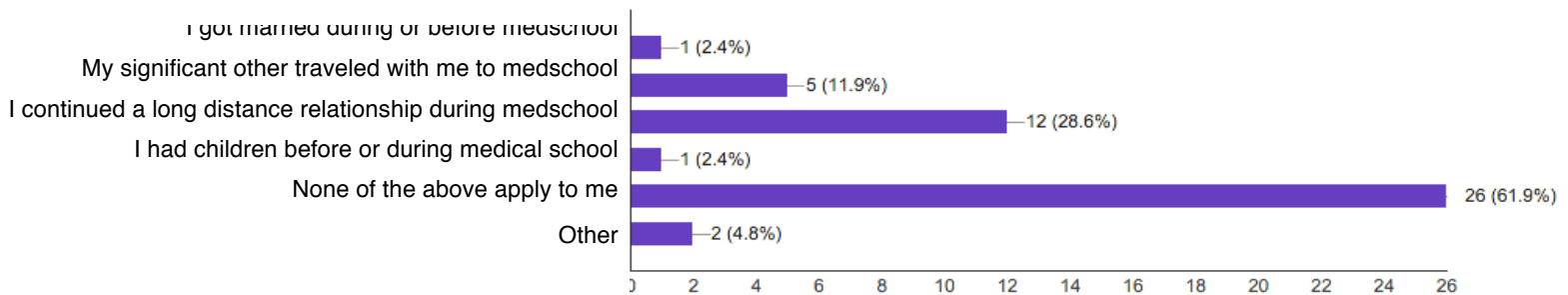
We asked medical students to describe why they took their gap years and they responded:

- Career change from non science to medicine
- Coming out of college, I didn't know that I wanted to go into medicine. I needed some time to explore some other paths before finding that this was what I wanted to do.
- Got masters degree
- Failed to get into med school
- I wanted to try other things and take some time off from school, which had burned me out. I figured I might find something else besides medicine to do with my life, otherwise I would try to apply later when I was confident enough to make the (huge!) commitment of medicine. I couldn't be happier with the time I spent out of school because I knew myself better, was more mature and knew what direction I wanted to take in med school
- I decided to go into medicine in my last year of undergrad, so I needed to take 2 extra classes after I got graduated with my degree. On the AMCAS application, I just told them which classes I was planning on taking. My acceptance was conditional on how I did on those classes, but it was fine.
- Strengthen application, re-take MCAT
- Wanted more "real-life" experience / work off some debt.
- Wanted to take a year off then had to reapply.
- I was attending graduate school in a field unrelated to medicine.
- Did an MPH then applied and didn't get in, then got an MA and got in.
- I wanted to be able to focus primarily on my application after graduating from college. It was also a wonderful opportunity to explore new jobs, clinical experiences, and places!
- needed more time to be ready for medical school
- Waitlisted the first time around
- I was working full time and needed to save money for medical school. I also needed to study for the MCAT, travel, and gain research experience.
- To take the prerequisite required science courses, study for/take the MCAT, and gain varied volunteer experiences.
- 2 years of research (I was reapplying during the 2nd year)
- to apply. i didn't want to apply during college coz it was too overwhelming. i'm glad I did not go straight through. life gave me more perspective.
- Needed a break
- I completed a master's degree to add research experience and provide other opportunities for me if medicine did not work out
- Had to retake MCAT in April of senior year. Super unsure if matriculating was a possibility.
- More health care experience, more time to strengthen relationship with girlfriend (who became my fiancé), 1 year "break" from the books to refresh mind before committing to studying everyday

Section IV: The Life Outside of Medschool: Friends, Relationships and Family Planning

So can you have a life outside of medical school? Spend time with family and friends? Continue a relationship? Begin a new one? Have a family?

The answer is a resounding **yes!** While finding a balance may be difficult, your life should not stop because of medical school. Maintain relationships with significant others, family and friends.



Those who replied “Other” generally commented that they remained single.

How can you maintain your relationships with family, friends and significant others while in medical school?

- We asked “**Please describe your experience in maintaining your relationship(s) with family and/or significant others while in medical school.**” People replied:
- The people who truly care and who are worth your time will be there for you through the hard times of medical school. don't get caught up or waste time on people who don't care as much about you. My husband is my rock and he keeps me grounded. He is a huge support. Communication is key with your significant other in med school. There is no time to hold grudges or fight. You have to squash things as they come and move on.
- Schedule specific dinner times / family only times at least once a week. let family know your schedule in a calendar so they can visualize when you are actually studying and how little you actually sleep trying to balance everything.
- I am not involved in a relationship. I work really hard to maintain my relationships with family and friends.
- Set time aside each week (whether it's dinners/hiking/picnics/etc.) for the people around you that support you throughout this process. Use this time to "detach" from study and to enjoy the company of those who care for you. This is important in maintaining a health relationship with family and your significant other, and is also an important time for you to relax and "recharge" before returning to your studies!
- Come into medical school with a strong relationship. Your bond needs to be strong for the road ahead. It's not fun dating a medical student. But you can always find time for your significant other!
- Absolutely manageable. My boyfriend and I found a daily call/video chat schedule that works for the both of us. Plus, we have strange quirks to our relationship that keep it

solid. We're also each other's support network, which helps to maintain the relationship in my opinion. As for family, I always commit to eating dinner with them every day. Occasionally, I'll go out for dinner with friends, but sparingly.

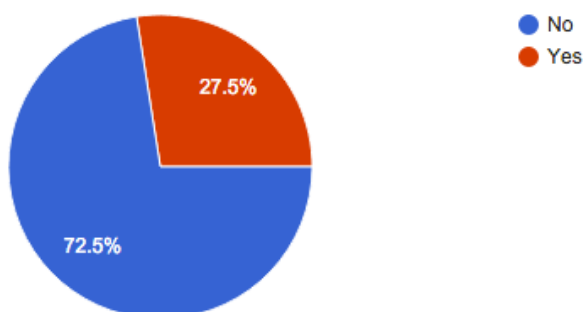
- Communication is very important in any relationship but especially with long distance. As a busy medical student, it is important to make time to communicate with your significant other, especially since you will not be able to spend as much quality in person time. It is also important to give them your school schedule so they know when exam time is and when you will be really stressed out. This also applies to family, make sure you spend quality time with them - it could be one family dinner a week - and make sure they understand the times of the unit when you will be most busy and stressed.
- It is a learning and growing experience. It is important to remain honest and communicate openly with your partner regarding your relationship expectations and goals. Being the significant other of a medical student is a demanding role.
- It's fine. Make time, don't forget about people who care about you.
- It's very easy to text family everyday and then skype/google hangout with the family once a week. Same goes with the close friends, and then visit them during major holidays. Also can do away rotations in 4th year at home to be close to everyone!
- Schedule time with family. Also, explain to family and friends my schedule and how busy I will be so they can understand why I don't go to many events
- I found it easier to be in a long distance relationship in my first year because it would have been distracting to have my partner here while I was creating new patterns and habits. Between Skype, texting and phone calls we are very connected, but guilt free when I have to study or work.

Section V: Re-Applicants

How many times do you think I will have to apply to medical school before I get accepted?

Nationwide, **majority of first-time applicants are not accepted on their first attempt** at applying to medical school. As you may see, that statistic is a bit different for JABSOM applicants, in particular because of the preference for in-state applicants. **We encourage you not to be discouraged if you are denied the first time.**

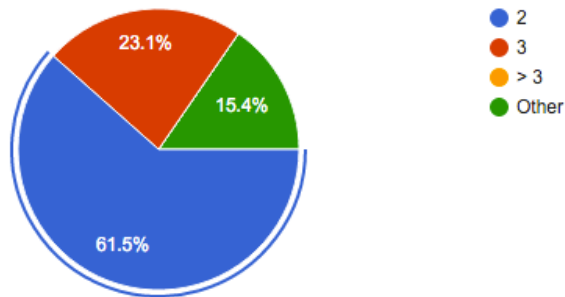
We asked the question “**Were you a reapplicant?**” and people responded:



IMPORTANT NOTE: again keep in mind that this reflects a sampling of the JABSOM medical student population alone. The national acceptance rate for first-time applicants is actually much lower.

How many times do people apply to medical school before being accepted?

The answer ranges quite a bit. We asked **re-applicants only** how many times they applied before being admitted, and they replied:



Note: Other generally corresponded to those persons who pursued a post-baccalaureate certificate (ie Imi Hoola).

Also note nationwide it is not uncommon for applicants to apply >3 times before being admitted.

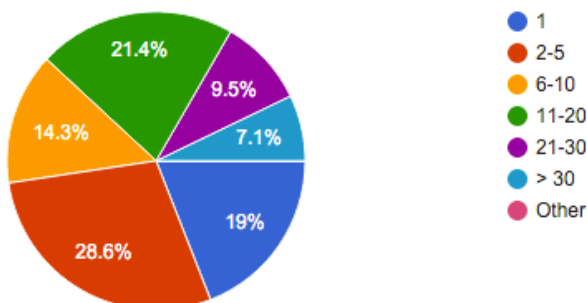
How many schools should I apply to if I want to maximize my chances of acceptance?

If you are looking to apply to JABSOM, the answer largely depends if you are an in-state applicant. JABSOM gives a heavy preference to in-state applicants and it is not uncommon (as will be seen in our chart below) for applicants to only apply to 1-5 schools. However, if you hope to apply nationally and expand your options, the general recommended range can span anywhere from 10-30. However, this largely depends on a few factors:

- Your general competitiveness as an applicant (ie your MCAT, GPA, extracurricular experiences, interview skills, etc)
- Your residence in a particular state (if you qualify for in-state preference)
- Your list of programs. It may be unwise to apply to ALL top-tier/“reach” programs or to limit yourself to a particular region or state (particularly the west coast or California which tends to be hyper-competitive).

We strongly recommend you speak with an academic advisor when determining your list of schools. Also consider where you realistically would like to go/live for the next four years. Try to keep an open mind, but also be honest with yourself.

We asked, “**How many schools did you apply to the year you were successfully admitted?**” and people responded:

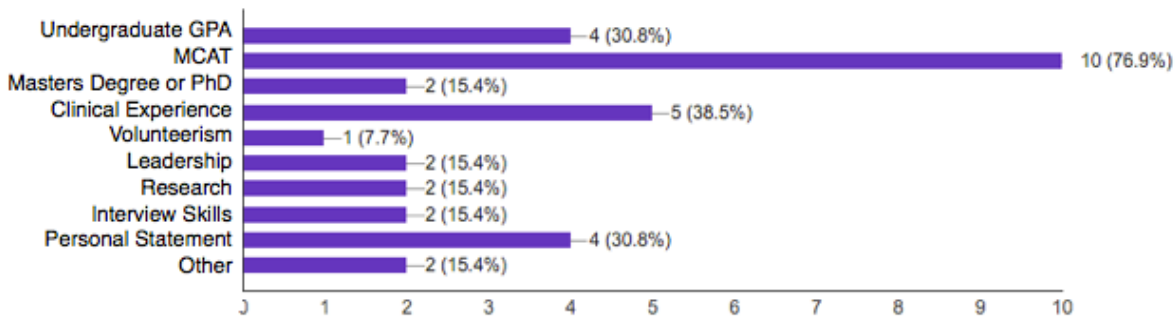


Note: nationally these numbers may look very different. This reflects the JABSOM medical student sample.

What should I work on as a reapplicant?

Remember to check with the admission committees at the schools you applied to. They can offer you valuable feedback on what you should work on if you'd like to improve your chances of acceptance during the next cycle. Also remember to STAY BUSY during your application year!

We asked the question, “**What areas were you advised to improve or work on before reapplying to medical school? Alternatively, what areas did you personally feel the need to improve on?**” People responded:



Finally, we asked re-applicants to offer some final words of advice to those individuals re-applying to medical school. They offered the following **words of wisdom**:

- Continue to improve yourself!
- Find out from the admission committees why you didn't get in and work on those areas. Be ready to answer interview questions regarding gap year and areas of improvement.
- Figure out how your application has improved and use that in your statement. Also use that as motivation in your interview process as you should expect to be asked about it. Also, walk in with the mentality that you deserve the program, as it will build confidence.
- Become a scribe or seek other clinical experiences
- Have your ducks in a row and make sure you are a strong applicant before applying.
- Learn from your mistakes and always strive to improve if a reapplication is necessary.
- Make sure you did not waste your gap year
- Talk to interviewers and mentors about weak areas in your application and have mentors review your app. Be open to recommendations and making changes.
- In your gap year, try to find out what is important to you and what your strengths and weaknesses are. It is a great time to really get to know yourself and present that person to the next round of interviews
- Study hard for the MCAT and get a stellar score