



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO
UChicago Medicine

Pritzker School
of Medicine

MS4 Class Meeting No. 3: Interviewing for Residency

Tuesday, Sept. 21, 2021 – 5:00 p.m.

Zoom

Announcements

Pritzker Chiefs

- The Chiefs are starting to plan for an in-person graduation and are seeking suggestions for a commencement speaker. If you have any ideas or connections to a potential speaker through your social networks, consider making a suggestion. Survey coming soon
- The Chiefs are also planning for an in-person Match Week, working with class reps for in-person events that week

Curriculum Update

- Dr. Farnan shared that the Pritzker EVOLVES curriculum renewal is in the data-gathering phase and invites everyone to submit thoughts, feedback, and ideas. The survey is open now: <https://redcap.uchicago.edu/surveys/?s=R33ANLAF4X>
- Working groups will be formed starting in December. The EVOLVES team will be looking for student involvement, so indicate on the survey if you are interested in being part of a working group.

Pritzker Space

- Kate Blythe is getting regular updates from project managers on projects in spaces for Pritzker students
- The S010 student lounge project in Mitchell is underway and moving quickly! New carpet going down now.
- The BSLC project is moving a bit more slowly but on schedule; expected completion Nov. 1

Interview Database for Residency Application

- If you have not already, consult with your career advisor to use the interview database as you strategize which programs to apply to. The database can filter four+ years of data to give insight into past results with students of your profile (including by specialty, Step score, MSPE designator, clerkship grades, etc.)

- This data comes in part from the **Residency Application Survey**, which will launch later this week (look for an email from Dr. Woodruff).

Space for Residency Interviews

- Space will be made available in the BSLC for students with extenuating circumstances at home (construction in building, too many roommates, poor internet, etc.). A form will be sent in early October for requests, and we ask that requests only be made when genuine need exists so as not to overwhelm our ability to provide space.

Virtual Interviews

- Dr. Lee will host a **Virtual Interview Town Hall Q&A** on **Monday, Oct. 4 at 5:15 p.m. on Zoom**. More details to come via email.

Program Directors Panel

UCM Program Directors present:

James Ahn, MD – Emergency Medicine

John McConville, MD – Internal Medicine

Lisa McQueen, MD – Pediatrics

Deborah Spitz, MD – Psychiatry

Tessa Balach, MD – Orthopaedic Surgery

Kevin Roggin, MD – Surgery

(The following responses are summaries of the responses provided; they are not verbatim answers)

How soon do you plan to send out invitations?

Psychiatry – Within a few days. Sept. 29-31 blocked to go through applications and expect to send invitations for first group by Monday, Oct. 4. Rolling process, so don't get worried if you do not get an interview the first day.

Dr. Woodruff: This is on the earlier side.

Pediatrics – Not in the first week of October, but first Interview Day is Oct. 19, so first week to 10 days will be review and then invitations.

Surgery – Similar to Pediatrics. Invitations likely out third week to late October.

Internal Medicine – Pritzker students will likely have an interview invitation out in the first week of October but more out by third week of October.

Emergency Medicine – Pritzker students will all have an interview. Interviews likely going out Oct. 18-20ish.

Orthopaedic Surgery – Universal interview offer day this year – Looking like Nov. 15; a few programs may be before or after.

Attire & Manner

Psych – Dress formally. Conservatively formal.

- Others agree with this.

Surgery – Also be aware of your surroundings, background and be in a noise-free environment if possible.

Psychiatry – An interview last year had a bed in the background – it was distracting and brought up questions of students' judgment.

Pediatrics – We understand circumstances vary, but your interviews should not be seen as less formal because this is virtual.

Dr. Woodruff: Last year a student recounted being asked to stand up at the end of an interview to see if they had dressed completely for the interview.

Dr. Poston: Cats and other pets are an inappropriate addition to any attire.

Social Events and other informal events – How essential are they for students to attend in virtual setting?

EM – This is a fact-finding mission for you, so there is a lot to be gained from these. But no matter what a program tells, this is still a formal event and any unflattering information will likely get back to the program.

Ortho – In an age of limited information, the more you can do to get to know the people in the program and the more they can get to know you, the more everyone understands what kind of fit exists. Some programs may try to do it on the same day as the interview.

Peds – From program's perspective, less data came from virtual social events than in-person events in previous years. Program did not keep track of who did or did not attend. Vast benefit is to the student more than the programs.

Surgery – For our program, it is exceedingly important. Residents are involved in the evaluation of the candidates, and opportunities are limited for this on the day of the interview. Our program's is the night before.

IM – In most IM programs, residents don't have a lot of say about how rank lists are compiled. You will learn a lot from residents during your time in a program, so it is important to attend these and learn about your fit with these people. Attendance is not tracked

Psych – Residents in our program do help select and rank order applicants, but last year less information came from these virtual events. We are not taking attendance, but "We notice when people don't come." Very few do not attend these; can mark you as "uninterested." These can be an opportunity to learn about if what a program says about itself is really true.

Dr. Woodruff – Given the lack of financial barriers (travel, hotel) that would normally exist, it's hard to justify not attending these unless you have some sort of personal or family conflict. It may

be something programs are looking at and it provides you important information, so these are a valuable opportunity.

Do interview invites include information about required events and all related social opportunities?

Yes!

Peds – We allow applicants to attend social events on other days if they can't make the one associated with their interview day.

How many interview days and how many times offered?

Psych – 13 interview days; will offer students 1-2 times.

IM – 16-20 interview days, offer students all days, but first come first serve.

Peds – 20 days, all offered, first come first served.

Surgery – Offer interviewees 3 dates.

EM – 14 dates, all offered, first come first served.

Ortho – Offer 2 times; you will get a spot no matter what if offered an interview.

What about rescheduling or cancelling an interview?

Surgery – Should do so *professionally*. Should never be cancelling outside an emergency within 2 weeks of the interview. Night before is a bad look.

Ortho – Rescheduling happens with our program through an online scheduling program.

IM – Agree with 2-week window

What are you looking for in the applicant when you meet them? What puts an applicant into the must have group?

EM – Personality traits aside, we look for intentionality in their application and interview; why they have done the things they have done.

Peds – Authenticity. We really want to get to know you, but this is a match for you all too. Be who you are! Don't feel the need to redesign who you are and what you have done on your application or in your interview. Don't try to be perfect for every program; think about what is perfect for you.

Ortho – I don't want five residents who are identical, who are trying to be the same person. I want five people who are unique and who align with our values. We can only get them from applicants that are being themselves. Also important to be yourself to understand if who you are, including your identity, will be a fit at a particular program.

Surgery – I want a candidate that is excited to be there. Excited and engaged. Do your homework about who you are meeting with and show genuine interest about being there. Most PDs want to match students that want to be in their program first and foremost.

IM – You won't be expected to know exactly what kind of internist you want to be. We do want to know what you are passionate about – something in med school that made you tick that you are really passionate about – and how you will pursue that interest in my program at the University of Chicago.

Psych – Passion. I am looking for passion. Everyone in psychiatry is going to want to know why you are interested in this field and what you care about. Looking for six unique individuals with varied interests who can learn from each other. Being able to share your passion is important.

Do program directors respond to personalization of PS for specific programs? Or is it over the top?

Psych – We respond to that.

Peds – Only if it really makes sense to the program and is not cookie cutter. Can feel gimmicky otherwise.

EM – Can't just be a copy and paste situation. Save it for the few programs you are truly passionate about, but overall it may not move the needle too much, so don't do it a lot.

Peds – Use this most to match up applicant with interviewers; if you can communicate your interests we can match you with a faculty member with a shared interest for a more fruitful interview.

Surgery – If you're going to personalize, be able to articulate why that particular program is of interest to you.

What is your favorite question to ask applicants during the interview?

IM – If you were the Dean of PSOM what changes would you make? Not looking for you to trash your medical school, but you should have some thoughts and opinions on what could be different at this point.

Dr. Woodruff: When asked about your experience in med school or college AVOID speaking badly of any program. PDs may worry you will speak badly of their programs. This can be a trap question.

Surgery – What about my talk particularly resonated with you? Or where do you see yourself in 15 years if everything were to break right? We want to know how we can help them get there. Also: Tell me about something that you didn't put in your application.

Ortho – A question about failure or a time your values were challenged or you had to step up and do the right thing.

Psych – Tell me about an experience you had with a patient over time where something about the relationship shifted. Looking for capacity to *have* relationships with patients.

EM – Also don't speak poorly about OTHER institutions. How would you contribute to our diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Peds – What’s the hardest job you’ve ever had is always a fun question. Mostly want to hear responses that are not rehearsed.

Dr. Puri: Have a fairly succinct answer prepared for “Tell me about yourself.” Less than a minute or so.

What’s the best question an interviewee has asked you?

IM – Any question that asks me to reflect on the program. Examples: What am I proud of about my time with the program? What has kept me at UChicago?

Surgery – Question not to ask: What big changes are coming in your program? There are other ways of finding that out.

Peds – A list of questions you plan to ask can feel stilted, like it’s no longer a conversation. Good questions are ones you could not ask at every single program; not the generic ones.

Ortho – Dig into something unique about the program or unique about my role.

EM – The more authentic, the better. Describing yourself and asking how you could be successful in that program is usually a good approach.

How do programs think about issues related to social justice and asking questions about it during interviews? What about mental health?

Psych – Social justice questions are welcome. If you have had time off for wellness or mental health issues on your application, be prepared to discuss it.

Surgery – Avoid confrontational questions. Politics is not usually useful. Avoid the standard “What are you doing to promote diversity?” You can get a sense of that from faculty and residents.

Ortho – If something is important to you, then it’s important to ask and learn about it. If how a program engages in social justice is important to you, ask about it, but avoid a confrontational approach.

Peds – Ask the questions. If you have to hide something that is part of the core of who you are, you are not going to be happy at that program.

IM – If asked a political or inflammatory question, it’s good to take a side but acknowledge the value of the other side. Don’t bring these up if you don’t have to.

How do you respond when someone asks an "illegal" question? (Where you have applied, ranking, health, family planning, etc.)

Surgery – A rogue faculty member could ask an inappropriate question, but respond as professionally as possible. “I appreciate your interest in that, but I’d prefer not to discuss that.” We agree with reporting these.

Peds – If you encounter this, we want to know. We want to work with the faculty member to correct it. It helps to let us know. If you are not comfortable letting us know, let Dr. Woodruff know and he can get that back to the program.

What irritates you during the interview season?

All: Phones! Don't be distracted by your phone.

Ortho – Cancelling an interview on short notice

Psych – Appearing uninterested.

IM – If there are tech issues, just roll with the punches. If you can't handle tech issues, PDs will question how you handle a tough residency. Don't get frustrated.

Psych – Never say anything bad about the coordinator or staff.

Surgery – Limit post-interview interaction with programs. Emails that are not helpful can be annoying. Emails to say a program is your No. 1 may be helpful.

OK to mention location preference?

Peds – Do so with caution. Talking up Chicago but not specifically the University of Chicago is a pet peeve.

Surgery – Be cautious advocating for a significant other. Can be a very big ask.

After the interview – What is appropriate post-interview communication?

Ortho – We tell students NOT to contact us after the interview; we make and finalize our rank list the last night of interview.

EM – Don't bother with post-interview communication other than to tell a single program you are ranking them No. 1.

Psych – It makes no difference to me. But I don't like when people tell us they will rank us first and then lie.

IM – We tell students we do not expect direct communication and we will try to limit communication. If you are ranking a program No. 1, send that email but limit other communication.

Peds – Don't use copy and paste in your thank you notes! Mistakes get made every year.

When to send an email telling a program you will rank them No. 1?

Surgery – I think you should send that #1 email/letter only after you have done ALL your interviews.

IM – Agree with Surgery.

Ortho – Yes, after ALL your interviews.

Peds – Finish all your interviews before sending this.

Should applicants send updates on publications or other parts of application?

Surgery – No

Ortho – No

EM – Nothing groundbreaking tends to come in. Not worth it.