

### Important Dates:

- Please return to the [Road to Residency](#) website on a regular basis to keep track of important dates. They are also on slides 9-11 of the presentation

### Financial Aid Updates

- Financial Aid will be reaching out in the Fall to schedule a loan repayment strategy session to discuss how to approach loan repayment beginning in residency. You can also schedule with Richard Wilson any time via his Calendly link: <https://calendly.com/rtwilson/>
- If you have not completed your FAFSA yet, **please do so ASAP** so disbursements can occur without delays. Reach out to [Richard Wilson](#) with any questions or concerns.
- If you have already received your loan package for 2026-2027, go in and accept the loan amount.
- If you encounter any financial challenges related to residency application costs or interviewing costs, please reach out to the Financial Aid office directly. (See Slide 40)
  - Specifically, more programs returned to in-person interviews last season, mainly in competitive surgical specialties (Dermatology, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic Surgery, Urology, Ophthalmology, Otolaryngology, some General Surgery and IM/PSTP).
  - If travel costs are a barrier, additional funds are available; reach out to Richard to discuss and understand the process of obtaining additional support.

### Residency Process Updates

- Take your ERAS/Graduation photo if you haven't yet! Everyone should have a scheduled time slot by now. These slots are limited, so it is very important you make your scheduled time. There will not be any additional make up opportunity.
- If you have your first MSPE meeting scheduled, do everything you can to KEEP that time. The schedule is full, so there is very little flexibility for cancellation/rescheduling at this point. Look out for an invitation for your second review **in person** in the second half of July into August.
- CVs – If you have sent your CV to Tyler for review and received feedback, please send him a REVISED copy as soon as possible. These are important for our holistic review process. If you have not sent your CV for review, do so at least 2 business days ahead of your first MSPE meeting. **ALL FINAL CVs are due June 30**, regardless of MSPE meeting date.
- Tyler will begin holding weekly **ERAS office hours starting June 18**. Look for an email soon detailing how to sign up for a time to discuss and/or review your ERAS (or ResidencyCAS or SF Match) application.
- ERAS Tokens will be sent to you **June 4 or 5**. You can register your token immediately but you do not necessarily need to begin your application. There will be an optional virtual walkthrough of each section of the ERAS application (and some of ResidencyCAS) in late June.
  - **Note for OB-GYN & Emergency Medicine applicants:** You will not apply to OB-GYN or EM programs through ERAS. Your application will occur through **ResidencyCAS**. You will still be sent an ERAS token regardless in case you are dual applying, are undecided, or later consider a backup application via ERAS.
  - **Note for SF Match (Ophthalmology) applicants:** You will likely not need to apply through ERAS. However, some Ophthalmology programs are still “joint” programs and require you to submit an ERAS application as a technicality for your PGY-1 year. This would occur after your match occurs, so you will be sent an ERAS token in case it is needed.

### Career Advising Updates

- See additional Career Advisor Q&A from tonight's meeting!
- You should be meeting with your Career Advisor to finalize your specialty choice if you have not already + sending your personal statement for review with the next month or so.

### Pritzker Chiefs

Stanton Greenstone, Rowan Hussein, and Hillary Schiff are your new Pritzker Chiefs! They encourage you to reach out to them any time you need to via email, phone, pager, telepathy, etc.

### Additional Fourth-Year Leadership

Changes to the curriculum have accelerated pre-clinical curriculum, meaning M2s don't have as much time to lead activities and organizations before beginning clerkships. Meanwhile M4 year is expanding, giving M4s an opportunity to step in, with more experience and wisdom, to fill the gap created. This includes free clinics and student orgs, and M4s should consider where they can put their experience and expertise to work as leaders in the PSOM community during their final year.

## RESIDENCY APPLICATION OVERVIEW

*Please review the slideshow for a complete review of the meeting; the following notes are meant to expand on certain slides.*

- **Important things to start with**
  - Two organizations most students have to interact with for the Main Match
    - ERAS (Electronic Residency Application System)
    - The NRMP (National Residency Matching Program)
  - Others:
    - OB-GYN & EM: ResidencyCAS
    - Ophthalmology: SF Match
    - Urology: AUA (rank list only)
  - Two dates to remember
    - September 2 (date we expect your application to be nearly complete—2 weeks of padding; submission opens this day)
    - September 23 (date that applications are transmitted to programs)
      - **OB-GYN & EM: Sept 17** application deadline
- **Addressing these up front: Pitfalls to avoid during residency application**
  - **Lack of organization:** It is critical to stay on top of your application components and deadlines. Failing to be organized in this process leads to mistakes—sometimes quite costly.
  - **Lack of engagement with career advising:** It is a common thread among unmatched students that many were not actively engaged with their career advisors and the overall career advising program. We do all this to help you be successful, so take advantage!
  - **Inadequate transparency with specialty advisor:** It is critical that you are honest and forthcoming with your specialty advisors (including grades, step 2 score, potential application weaknesses, etc.) so that they can offer a reasonable and accurate assessment of your competitiveness. Withholding information from them, especially anything unfavorable, hinders their ability to advise you appropriately.
  - **Reluctance to hear feedback:** If an advisor offers critical feedback of your application or a less favorable view of your competitiveness, it is not because they don't believe in you but rather because they want to help you prepare an appropriate application. You can still aim high while *also* being realistic about your application and taking feedback into consideration.
  - **Inadequate diversification of program list and/or program signals:** Again, it is important to hear feedback on the competitiveness of your application and diversify your



program list to include an appropriate mix of “reach,” “target,” and “safety” programs. Similarly, you should diversify your program signals, as these are your strongest tool for generating an interview and using them all only on competitive programs—even as a strong applicant—can result in fewer interviews than you should be getting to safely match.

- **Interview challenges:** All students will complete a mock interview with their career advisor. If it is recommended you get more practice, see that as an opportunity rather than a criticism of you. Even strong interviewers benefit from extra practice.
- **Slides 9-11** Please review all timelines and deadlines
  - Do not wait until the last possible moment to certify and submit your application!
- **Slides 12-13:** All necessary paperwork and references are posted on the Residency Resources page on our website. A limited number of physical copies of the [Residency Process Book](#) are available from Tyler.
- **Slide 15-17:** Determine your priorities through researching programs online, and through talking to faculty, residents, career advisors, and recent alumni.
  - The **June 11 Class Meeting** will focus specifically on building your program list and the resources available to help you do that.
- **Slide 16:** Also use the [Residency Explorer tool](#), a free resource accessible through the AAMC using verified data on a huge range of application data.
  - Ob-GYN: Consult the [Alignment Check Index](#) from the AMA
- **Slide 18-19:** For preliminary year advising, you can go to your Career Advisor or faculty in that specialty (internal medicine; for transitional programs, contact Dr. Woodruff).
  - Your Career Advisor can help you determine the appropriate number of prelim programs to apply to ensure you have a separate PGY-1 year if your specialty requires it.
- **Slide 20:** Apply broadly, *then* narrow down your list. Do not narrow it before you are offered interviews. Create groups of goal programs, realistic programs, and low-risk programs—this is not the time to be picky.
  - If a program you really want offers both categorical and advanced programs, apply to both—don’t cut your options short. You can decide how to rank them later, once you interview.
  - It is reasonable to keep your personal lives as priorities as you research residency programs. Don’t feel like you have to prioritize reputation if personal or family priorities are also important.
  - You define what “quality” is—a high-quality program for one student may be less desirable for another.
  - You may also want to have a low risk or back-up specialty if you are applying in a very competitive specialty. This is a decision that you should discuss with your career advisor or Dr. Woodruff.
- **Slide 22:** Components of the application – take note of the components YOU are responsible for (Application, PS, LORs, photo, USMLE transcript) and those that Pritzker is responsible for (MSPE letter, Pritzker transcript).
- **Slide 23:** Changes to the ERAS Application for 2026-2027
  - See Slide and [Road to Residency](#) page
  - Specialty specific questions in ERAS for anesthesiology, neurological surgery, and plastic surgery



- When sending a program signal in anesthesiology, physical medicine & rehabilitation, plastic surgery, or radiation oncology, you will be asked to provide a short statement why you are signaling that program.
- **Slide 24-25: Personal statements:**
  - Do **NOT** use generative AI to write your personal statement. Using it for brainstorming, editing, and proofreading is OK.
  - Tell the program about *you* and why *you like the discipline*; do not just talk about the discipline itself
    - For instance, do not say, something like, “I like Internal Medicine because it is a field that provides comprehensive care to patients over a long period of time...”
    - Instead, say, “I am interested in the field of Internal Medicine because when I did my clerkship, I met a patient who... and that experience taught me...which ended up being incredibly meaningful to me because...”
    - This shows more about you as a person and introduces you to the reader
  - The personal statement can also prepare you for the interview process by forcing you to think about your priorities and your motivations
  - Make sure that your Career Advisor reviews your personal statement. **Do not submit a personal statement that has not been reviewed by at least your Career Advisor.**
  - **Clarification:** 12-point, Arial font, single spaced is recommended to closely replicate one page in ERAS. If you paste your PS into ERAS and it’s less than one page, you have a bit more room if needed. If it is more than one page in ERAS, you probably need to trim further. The general estimate of this is 600-650 words
  - **Personal Statement Workshops: Monday, May 18 at 5 pm (BSLC 115) and Tuesday, June 9 at 5 p.m. (Zoom)**
- **Slide 26: How many letters do I need?**
  - Aim for 3 **clinical** letters; you really only need 4 if you did a research year or a PhD program
  - Letters from Endeavor Health faculty are fine
- **Slide 27: When you approach a faculty member to write a Chair’s letter, tell them upfront you would like them to write the Chair’s letter**
  - For EM, Neurological Surgery, and OB/GYN, you need 2 clinical letters plus the SLOE, which counts as a Chair's letter. Urology, Dermatology, and Plastic Surgery are piloting a SLOE in ERAS this year.
- **Slide 28-35: LORs**
  - Requesting an LOR is both verbal and written: you ask the faculty member (in person if possible) if they can write you a **strong** LOR,
  - If the faculty members says, “yes,” you then email them a Letter Request Form (PDF, downloaded from the application), along with your CV and Personal Statement (it is OK if they are drafts). If they say no, that’s OK—you'd rather not have their letter; it will not be very strong.
    - We **do NOT recommend** using the “Email Letter Request” option in ERAS. Sending a separate email with a Letter Request Form attached allows you to also include your CV and Personal Statement + better track what correspondence you have had with your letter writers.
    - A template email is written and available on the Road to Residency website.
    - Faculty members expect to hear from students about writing LORs; ask and ask early, without being nervous



- Ask face-to-face if possible. It allows you to demonstrate professionalism and respect, and to engage in a conversation about your goals.
  - Reminders are OK—once you do your initial ask, you can send a reminder two weeks before 9/11 to confirm the deadline and ask if they need more information
  - Only in certain circumstances should you ask for more letters than you might use. Our faculty are busy and if they take the time to write you a letter, it should be used in your application.
  - The faculty member uploads the LOR directly to ERAS, ResidencyCAS, or SF Match
  - PSOM staff cannot see the LOR, but we can see whether it has been uploaded
  - We **strongly recommend having all your letters submitted by Sept. 11; ask for letters by mid-July and absolutely before July 31!**
- **Slide 36:**
  - 1) Only programs read your LORs; neither you nor Pritzker staff can read them
  - 2) Sending a draft of your CV and personal statement when you ask for an LOR is most helpful—faculty probably will not remember to start thinking about writing your LOR until they have those items in front of them. You can ask them if you can send them a reminder at some point
  - 3) If you do not hear back, work with your Career Advisor or Dr. Woodruff to prompt the letter authors. It is OK if your LORs come in after Sept. 11, but it is crucial that you have a complete application by September 24, when programs receive your application.
- **Slide 39:** Program Signals – this will be covered more extensively at the June 11 class meeting, at a live Q&A session, and in the updated Pritzker Program Signal Guide (coming this summer)
- **Slide 44:** Now is not the time to limit your list; you can always narrow your list of programs once you begin getting interviews. Apply broadly and err on the side of caution.
  - When we encourage you to add “low risk” programs, it is not because we do not have faith in you. It is because we want to maximize everyone’s odds of matching.
- **Slide 45:** Again, **focus on the things you can control**. There will be uncertainties in this process, so assemble your materials the best you can and know that you did your highest quality work.
- **Slide 47: Next class meeting on Thursday, June 11 (in person) – Building Your Program List for Residency Application** – This new M4 class meeting will focus on how to craft a program list for application that is appropriate to your situation and your preferences + the resources available to do it. We will discuss appropriate diversification of programs and program signals, which has become very important to a successful match.

## Q&A

- How do I determine what constitutes a “Dream” or “Reach” program vs. a “Target” program? How can I learn how competitive a program is compared to others?
  - Your Career Advisor and Specialty Advisor are great resources for this. Your Career Advisor, especially, because they have access to a database of information going back 8+ years that features student outcomes in the Match based on applicant profile (specialty, grades, Step scores, MSPE designators, AOA, etc.). This includes outcomes (interview/rejected/waitlisted) at specific programs. (This database is not accessible by students for confidentiality)



- Additionally, keep in mind that “Dream” program for you may not necessarily mean a highly competitive or “prestigious” program. Your “Dream” program should be one where you know you will be a fit, get the training you want, have the support you need, and can thrive as an intern and resident.
- The **Residency Explorer Tool** will be providing updated data in June 2026 on a program level that can help you determine how competitive you are for specific programs, with available data on Step scores, research, program signals, etc. A recently recorded webinar [introducing the Residency Explorer Tool is available here](#) (AAMC login required)
- Do my letter writers need to specifically recommend me for Preliminary year programs, or can they use their letter recommending me for a specific specialty advanced program?
  - We recommend that your letter writers specifically recommend you for Preliminary (or Transitional) year programs in their letter. They can use the same letter to recommend you for advanced programs/specific specialty by changing the intro and conclusion of their letter to mention that specialty specifically.
    - Example: A letter writer for a student going into Dermatology writes a letter recommending a student specifically for Transitional year programs. They write a separate letter specifically recommending the student for Dermatology programs. **Both** letters require a Letter Request Form and upload to your application; be sure to carefully label these letters in ERAS so you know which you are assigning to programs.
  - You *could* ask a letter writer to write one generic letter recommending you so that it could be used for Preliminary/Transitional programs and advanced programs, but you would lose out on the specificity that a letter for advanced programs allows, and that can be important to a strong letter.
- For a Chair’s Letter, who can serve in that role? Does it need to be a full Professor, or is an Associate Professor/Assistant Professor OK?
  - Most specialties are not concerned with the rank of the letter writer. What you should pay attention to is the instructions for individual specialty. In Internal Medicine, for example, the person who write’s your Chair’s letter is a faculty letter writer who you have worked with and then Dr. Vokes signs off on it. In Surgery, conversely, the Chair’s letter is written by Dr. Matthews, not a faculty at-large. Who you work with to get a Chair’s letter varies by specialty; refer to the [Residency Process Book](#) for specific specialty instructions.
- If you are applying to Preliminary and Categorical programs, you need 6-7 letters total, but is that from 6-7 separate people?
  - No, individual letter writers can write you multiple letters, so there will be overlap between prelim and advanced or categorical letters.
  - Example: You are applying in Dermatology, with Internal Medicine prelim programs, you cannot have 3 dermatologists write 3 prelim letters and 3 advanced letters because the IM programs want to understand your performance through the eyes of IM faculty. Thus, you could use 1 dermatologist for your prelim application, but you’d still need 2 letters from IM faculty for the prelim application (including a Chair letter).
    - Prelim app: 1 dermatology letter, 2 IM letters (+ research letter if appropriate)



- Advanced app: 3 dermatology letters (+ research letter if appropriate)
- 5 letter writers total (3 dermatology, 2 IM [1 of which is a Chair letter])