

AIG Residency Application Tips: October 13th, 2005 and Update April 2006

The Application:

- Personal statement: Address what makes you an individual. Do not fall into the trap of saying “I love physiology. I love pharmacology” even though you probably do. Also don’t describe to them what anesthesia is, they are anesthesiologists and already know. Say something that makes you stand out and focus on your strengths! Give interviewers points of interest to discuss, for example one student wrote of childhood use of ether to knock a bat out based on watching Macgyver. He said this was something that every talked extensively to him about (in a good way)
- Letters of Recommendation:
 - Choose people that know you well! Recent trend is to have department head letter, at this program they didn’t find this helpful in most cases and letters were often same/very similar between applicants. Look into other program opinions for yourself.
 - If you have choice try to use people who read letters frequently.
 - Do not choose all anesthesiologists, they see this as a red flag to look deeper at application for possible weakness. Recommend 2 anesthesia, 2 other preferably from “core rotations” (Med, Surg, OB, maybe Peds)
 - As an anesthesiologist you will spend your career working closely with surgeons and it may be very informative to hear about you from the perspective of a surgeon.
 - Do not forget to send a thank you to your letter writers! (An actual letter is preferred over email)
- CV: Be sure to include all jobs and activities you have been involved in, especially those things which play a major role in your life. Something may stand out to your interviewers and may make you a better candidate. Specific examples: summer job as a forest ranger, musical background, etc.
- Typical application numbers from Minnesota students are around 15, do more or less based on your relative competitiveness. (I looked online and according to ERAS the average was 19 for all anesthesia applicants)
- Turn in application early, it will give you the best choice of interview dates, saving you money.
- Most importantly – Make sure your application is complete!

The Interview:

- Dress appropriately in tasteful business attire!
- Read up on each program prior to the interview. You are spending hundreds of dollars for a visit, a little background checking is an important part of preparation.
- According to the three people present for the 2006 meeting they spent 700, 2,500-3,500, up to about 10,000 on the application process. The 10,000 was from someone who matched in radiology and went to 20 interviews. The 2500 sounded like an average.
- Be prepared to answer common questions such as:
 - Tell me about yourself
 - Why have you chosen anesthesiology?
 - What are your weaknesses?
- Be prepared to address anything in your application. If you have a bad grade or test score you should be prepared to explain this. It is generally in your best interest to talk about this in person rather than trying to explain it in your personal statement or via email.
- Have a list of great questions ready to ask about the program. For example, your interviewer may start the interview by asking, “What questions do you have for me?”. Even if you know the answer it may not hurt to ask a second interviewer the same question.
- Make a list of questions to ask each program, ask them of multiple people (differing answers = potential to be hiding things) and try to write answers down afterwards.
- Ask how long a program’s most recent accreditation has lasted. (at least figure that out) Short duration could mean problems that have not been resolved. Ask why accreditation was lost and steps to resolve in future if appropriate.
- Be prepared to ask the residents more subtle questions to find out what the program is really like. For example: Ask to see in-service examination scores, ask the residents if they have time to read, or ask when residents start to handle cases on their own.
- Formulate a data sheet that you can record notes on regarding each program. Type it up and bring a printed copy along to each interview. You can use this sheet to record notes and prevent the programs from

becoming one big blur. Fill it out on the plane on the way home. Important questions that you might forget to ask the residents include:

- What type of exposure do you have to pain clinics and cardiac cases?
 - Do you get to perform enough blocks (especially peripheral)? Where do these blocks come from (pain clinic, designated rotations, etc.)?
 - Do residents get a chance to learn fluoroscopy and ECHO techniques?
 - Do residents get fellowships? Do they get the ones they want?
 - What types of formal teaching are available? (Didactic sessions, conferences, workshops, etc.)
 - How often are residents able to get to these teaching sessions (Breaks given?)
 - What resources and facilities are available to residents? (Anesthesia library, journals, book allowances, etc.)
 - Who provides breaks? What hours are the residents working?
 - Do the residents work with CRNAs? Is it a good working relationship?
 - Housing costs?
 - Benefits (but do not give this too much priority, as it may not matter in the long run)
- What are these programs really looking for during the interview? They want to know if you are qualified (yes – you are qualified and are coming from a well recognized and respected medical school), if you will work hard, and if you will get along with others in the program and department.

After your interview:

- Send thank you note to interviewers you including specifics from interview if possible! Again, written is preferred over email.
- Stay in touch if you are really interested in a program! Try to direct your follow-up to people you interviewed with or had significant face time with.
- Sometime near the end of January, when you are creating your rank list, you may want to consider calling or sending an additional letter to programs at the top of your list. Let them know you thought highly of the program and that you plan to rank them high. Also, include a small digital photo in the corner of your letter so they can again place your face with your name.
- Should I take a second look? In this field it is not traditional to take a second look. In some ways it may show that you are really interested in a program, but it may also come across that you seem desperate to match. Just be aware that this may or may not come across as a good thing.
- Take advantage of phone calls! Dr. Prielipp and the entire faculty are here for you and they want you to get into the program of your choice. Therefore, they are willing to make a phone call on your behalf! It may seem strange, but all you need to do is ask! Probably try to limit this to one or two places.

What Type of Internship Should I Look For?

- Choose an internship based on your strengths and weaknesses. If you have a strong background in medicine but have no experience in the OR, it might be beneficial to do a preliminary year in surgery. If you have taken many surgical rotations but feel weak in medicine, maybe you should try an internal medicine year. If you feel well-rounded, a transitional year may be best.
- Keep in mind – you will learn important information and will gain valuable skills regardless of the type of internship!
- Going the easy route will NOT serve you better in the long run and will make your second year much harder.
- During your internship year you should take and pass the USMLE Step 3. This will be necessary for you to advance in your clinical anesthesia years.

Match list creation:

- List ALL programs you would consider going to. This puts you ahead of all the scramble people for a particular program, assuming they list you at some position, even if it is their lowest.
- You will make one main list. On this you will list all anesthesia programs, many of which require separate intern programs. For each of these programs you will be making a separate list for your intern year. If a program (like UofM) has both categorical and PGY-2 spots apply for both, as they make separate lists and may just put you on one of these.
- Apply for 10 intern year programs on ERAS, this costs the same as applying for one place and you can turn down interviews.

•Advice about which programs are good varies widely. Many practicing doctors will maintain views from when they applied, which may be way off base. The people who are very involved in the application process will have better ideas of current program strengths and weaknesses.

Regarding the Program at the U of MN (2005):

- 175 applications received to date:
 - 11 U of MN applicants (with at least 3 more expected)
- There were be 3 interview days
 - Applicants from the U of MN were randomized to interview on 2 of those days (November 19th and December 10th)
- On the Friday evening prior to your interview you will be invited to a dinner at the Radisson. This will provide the opportunity to meet other applicants and candidly ask current residents about the program.

General Advice:

- Be Yourself!
- Be Nice to Everyone! (Interviewers, secretaries, fellow applicants, etc.)