**Where should I apply?**

Step 1: Preferences

* What are your desires for your medical school experience?
* What is non-negotiable or a strong preference?
* What is included in your dream medical school?
* Examples:
  + Geographic location
  + Community/population
  + Class Size
  + Access to specific populations
  + Distance from home/family
  + Price
  + Curriculum/Grading
  + Research opportunities
  + Clinical exposure
  + Mission/Focus
  + USMLE Step Success
  + Residency Matches

Step 2: Mission/Fit

* Read through a program’s mission statement to make sense of their educational priorities and understand more about what the program expects of students.
  + Break it down to individual phrases.
  + Research the curriculum, student organizations, press releases, etc.
  + Find examples that help identify your own leadership skills and activities that you can mention in your secondary application.
* Review your own preferences, priorities, and goals to see how they might align with a programs mission.
* Take notes to look back on during the secondary application process, interviews, etc.

Step 3: ACE Assessment

* “A”: Academics
  + Necessary prerequisites are completed; calculation of the science GPA; entrance exams
* “C”: Career Field
  + Experience with the day-to-day work of a healthcare profession (shadowing, behind the scenes exposure, etc.).
  + Clinical exposure through direct interaction and/or contact with patients.
* “E”: Experiences
  + Interests (major, extracurricular), personal background (advantages/disadvantages, obstacles overcome), professional experience (outside of medicine), skills (leadership, teamwork), and personal identity, values, and beliefs.
  + *This is what distinguishes you from other applicants.*
  + *Most have similar experiences with “A” and “C” but it is your “E” that makes you unique.*