



Effective Practices for the Recruitment, Retention, and Education of Native American Medical Students

Question/Answer Section

Q1: We've been aware of the dearth of Native American physicians for decades, similar to some other minority communities, so, is there any discussion taking place to write a document about this? This would be akin to the recent AAMC publication, "similar to..."

MO: White paper with AAMC, University of Minnesota, Duluth,...

Q2: What resources are available to prepare for MCAT and other tests to bolster scores of professional bound students? Also, what is also the advice/strategies for AI/AN in medical admissions interviewing or other schools?

GH: AI/AN students are as diverse as other groups. Interviewing should take into consideration that some are urban, some rural, some are closer culturally to their specific tribe, some less so. Often there is more reticence in Native students due to cultural background but this can be overcome with any interviewer who is respectful of other cultural issues in interviewing.

MO: AAMC/Khan Academy. Advice for AI/AN in medical admissions is to go to a preadmissions workshop if possible. If not, have your personal statement read by as many as possible, read up on every school you have been offered an interview to, prepare as much as possible for the MCAT and talk with a medical school admissions officer/administrator before automatically retaking the exam for less than optimal results, practice interviews with counselors/admissions/professors/ and or other professionals to make yourself as comfortable in the setting as possible, do not rehearse your answers but be comfortable with lots of different questions, if you have specific cultural habits or norms, just explain them to your interviewer. For instance, some people are not comfortable with eye contact for cultural reasons---this is fine, just be sure your interviewer understands that. Do get shadowing experience. Do consider reviewing prerequisites at your intended school and comparing them to prereqs at other schools---if your school seems a little light on the prereqs, consider taking more sciences. Examples of coursework that you will see in medical school include immunology, microbiology, genetics, biochemistry, and statistics.

Q3: How are students from non-federally recognized tribes excluded? For example, at Duluth, tuition support is only provided to students from federally recognized tribes. For example, Lumbee Indians, who are not federally recognized, help staff IHS and other clinical spaces that serve federally recognized patients.

GH: The UM Twin Cities campus has in state tuition scholarships which it offers to out of state students recommended by members of the admissions committee. In regard to AI/AN students there is no difference between federally recognized tribes and others. I believe our history is too complicated to make this distinction.



MO: Duluth does not look to see if Native students are from a federally recognized tribe. We take the student's reporting at face value and do not discriminate against any non-federally recognized tribal member.

Q4: How does the new holistic admissions process impact American Indian and Alaska Native student results?

GH: In my experience it is very helpful if the admissions committee members are truly committed to the holistic process. Unfortunately, it often takes only a few who remain committed to the “numbers” as the best predictor of success to bring down an entire committee. I believe it is the responsibility of the Admissions dean or committee chair to champion the holistic process.

MO: I don't think all schools are using the holistic admissions process. Duluth is trying to and I think it is helpful for Native American and all underrepresented students in that it gives credit to other life experiences and values the contribution of strengths such as diversity that a student brings while also trying to ensure that we do not bring in students to fail medical school. So, MCATs and GPAs still count, it's just that we are also giving merit to other strengths.

Q5: How does the Supreme Court cases on Admissions impact Native American specific programs?

GH: Similar to other URM applicants. However, if the admissions committees are truly committed to the holistic admissions process, emphasizing the qualities and potential of the applicant will continue to mitigate the impact.

MO: Duluth recruits to fulfill its mission of serving Native American and rural communities. We do not discriminate against any student who can meet either of these missions.

Q6: Hi Mary, I realize you are working with our tribal colleges already, but is there a plan to resurrect Career Awareness Workshops on reservations in MN to inspire kids to pursue medical careers?

MO: Yes. The Center is in the process of bringing science lessons to Minnesota teachers of 7th and 8th grade students at the annual Minnesota Indian Education Association meeting as a more efficient means of reaching students. We also hope to bring together tribal clinic administrators and staff with all the medical students in a career fair like setting to help populate our statewide tribal clinics. Finally, we will be hosting a spring summit where we bring together students and teachers to advertise our programs as well as programs throughout the entire University of Minnesota Academic Health Center.

Q7: Is there information on percentage of AIAN students who do not finish medical school and reasons for leaving?

GH: I am not aware of the specific data. However, in my experience at Minnesota, the percentage of students who did not finish was on the order of 5% or less.



Q8: Is there information on how much Native students use social media to get information about schools, and are there any best practices?

MO: I don't know about any information about this topic but we have been using a Facebook page to advertise our programs and to promote other events/issues in Native health and education.

Q9: Are students at tribal colleges or other institutions a part of the traditional pre-health organizations like MAPS or are there specific Native American student organizations that exist?

GH: They are often engage with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society known as AISES.

Q10: One of our biggest challenges here at UW is our admissions committee's rigidity with application statistics like MCAT score and GPA. What have folks found to be the most effective way to get admissions committees to do a more holistic approach?

GH: At the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Admissions Committee we have used peer group comparisons- Comparing GPA/MCAT of Native applicants to other Native Applicants – AVG of those applying and those admitted. Also, rather than using just the absolute number, we look at likelihood in percentages of the applicant graduating in 4 or 5 years-this is available in AAMC Data

MO: Our most effective tool at Duluth has been to have representation on the admissions committee. We have also have the advantage of having Dr. Anna Wirta be part of the Center for the past twenty years. Having a persistent message from the same person/institution helps persuade the administration of the importance of a holistic review. Finally, we have an admissions dean who is very supportive of both the school's mission and the holistic admissions process.

Q11: When does the "Youth Initiative conference" in DC that Dr. Hill mentioned in take place? I'm interested in connecting with youth that may want to consider the dentistry as a healthcare career?

GH: The program takes place in August. Information is on the AAIP web site. We generally have Native dentistry participation.