Although the number of UCSD and other candidates applying to allopathic (M.D.) medical schools has gradually decreased during the last few years, the UCSD acceptance rate for Fall 2001 entrance to allopathic schools was 52%. (Osteopathic admission data is less complete and therefore not provided here.) Some candidates who were initially rejected are successful in gaining admission upon reaplication; but the decision whether to, when to, and how to reapply to medical school should be well thought out.

ANALYZING YOUR PREVIOUS APPLICATION

To be a successful re-applicant, you should carefully analyze your previous application to determine if there were any factors in your control that might have contributed to your non-acceptance. Common problem areas for candidates include:

- low overall or science GPA;
- low MCAT score(s);
- low grades in key classes;
- declining GPA;
- pre-requisites not met;
- inadequate clinical or community experience;
- commitment to helping people not evident;
- poor interview preparation;
- weak interpersonal communication skills;
- poor application essay;
- weak, inappropriate or absent reference letters;
- unclear goals;
- lack of motivation;
- late application;
- incomplete secondary applications;
- limited extracurricular achievements;
- light course loads.

Conduct an appraisal of your assets and liabilities; where possible, try to compensate for any weaknesses by developing related strengths. The strategy of school selection is also critical to your success. Applying to enough schools which match your GPA and MCAT scores is very important. Sometimes, however, even students who seem to do everything right, just aren’t admitted.

Before deciding to reapply, it’s important to have accurate current data on admissions so that you can make a realistic assessment of your chances for acceptance. At the very least, if you haven’t already done so, try to obtain the mean GPA and MCAT scores for each school in which you are interested, and also any preferences for state residents. This information is often found in Medical School Admission Requirements (available for reference in the Career Services Center) or you can call the medical school and ask for it.

Occasionally, students who seemed competitive may have received one or two interviews only, and may not have been admitted, or were merely wait-listed at a school or two without being subsequently admitted. You might gather some useful information about your application by phoning admissions offices to inquire about the admission committee’s decision not to accept you, to receive feedback about your application and interview, to seek advice on how your application may be improved, and whether or not to reapply.

STRENGTHENING YOUR APPLICATION

It may not be a wise use of time and financial resources to reapply until you have become a stronger candidate. Sometimes only one acute problem needs rectifying; in other cases many areas should be strengthened to be a well-rounded, generally competitive candidate. Following your analysis described above, you could consider the following strategies: retake the MCAT; increase the breadth and depth of your clinical or community experience; take on a leadership role in a service organization; get stronger, recent letters of reference; update the application essay; strengthen your interpersonal, communication, reading and writing skills; establish residency in another state; and reapply early in the filing period.
Sometimes additional courses (especially upper division or graduate level science courses) are necessary to demonstrate that you have the academic potential to succeed in medical school. If you applied at the end of your junior year, perhaps your final year’s grades will strengthen your record upon reapplication. There are also post-baccalaureate pre-medical programs designed to help enhance your GPA and prepare you for acceptance (some include intensive MCAT preparation and enrollment in courses with medical students), in addition to such programs for underrepresented or disadvantaged students.* And there is the possibility of a graduate degree in science, a master's program in public health, etc.* However, taking more classes or pursuing an advanced degree may not be enough to increase your chances of admission. Other experiences or strategies may be needed as well.

Information and advice about enrolling in post-baccalaureate or graduate programs as a means to obtain admission to medical school is available in Career Services, and on their home page at http://career.ucsd.edu/. You are strongly encouraged to consult with an advisor about this strategy. It is advisable to enroll only in a professional or graduate school program that you would enjoy and which you would be content to pursue as an alternative, if admission to medical school does not materialize.

SOME ALTERNATIVES TO M.D. PROGRAMS IN THE U.S.

DOCTORAL PROGRAMS:

- OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE
- FOREIGN MEDICAL SCHOOLS
- DENTISTRY
- PODIATRIC MEDICINE
- VETERINARY MEDICINE
- PHARMACY
- OPTOMETRY
- CHIROPRACTIC MEDICINE
- NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE (not licensed in California)

MINIMUM TWO YEAR TRAINING:

- REGISTERED NURSE
- NURSE PRACTITIONER (requires previous nursing education and experience)

TWO YEAR TRAINING PROGRAMS:

- PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT
- PHYSICAL THERAPY
- PUBLIC HEALTH
- NUTRITIONIST/DIETICIAN

MINIMUM ONE YEAR TRAINING:

- MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIST OR CLINICAL LABORATORY SCIENTIST

Career Services’ professional and graduate school advisors have provided information handouts, directories, and catalogs for many of these programs. To further explore any of these careers, visit the Career Services Center and http://career.ucsd.edu/