

The Match: Southwestern Style



A Book to Guide
UT Southwestern Medical
Students through the Match



Spring 2005



"Match Day 2005" finally arrives at UT Southwestern!



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KEEP THIS BOOK!

The Match: Southwestern Style will help you as you proceed through each phase of the residency matching process. Discard it only after Match Day: March 16, 2006! Using this book will make the Match experience more pleasant for both you and the authors.

Each year comments from graduating seniors have enhanced this book. Please suggest changes that will help it facilitate the residency matching process for future students by emailing your suggestions to james.wagner@utsouthwestern.edu.

The Match: Southwestern Style

Congratulations! Energized after the rigors of third year, you are nearing the beginning of the long-awaited Fourth Year of medical school. That's good news.

You will make some important decisions during your fourth year. Your decisions will significantly impact where you will train as residents. To make the most informed decisions about your graduate medical education, you must obtain as much valid and reliable information as you can. That's the purpose of The Match: Southwestern Style: To give you information that you can use to make wise decisions.

This booklet will:

- give you a timeline of important dates of the residency application/interview/match process
- give you recommendations to follow during the match process
- indicate ways to get information about residency programs
- suggest ways to assess residency programs before you apply
- provide information about the Early Match and the Couples Match
- cite resources that tell you about the NRMP residency application/match process
- describe how to obtain letters of recommendation
- give you important information about the dean's letter
- describe the Electronic Residency Application System (ERAS)
- give you information about writing your résumé and personal statement
- give you important information about scheduling interviews
- describe how to shine before, during, and after interviews
- provide hints on travel and lodging during the application/interview process
- suggest guidelines for post-interview program correspondence
- explain how to arrange and submit your rank order list, and
- discuss Match Week activities

One caveat: Each reader will identify important questions that are beyond the scope of The Match: Southwestern Style. Thus, you must use this book and your network of peers, residents, faculty, administrators, and other support personnel to ensure that you're happy on March 16, 2006.

Congratulations on reaching this milestone, and best wishes for a productive and exciting fourth year.

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Overview of the Residency Application/Interview/Match Process

The following timelines identify the major events of the NRMP Match and Early Match. Use them to see what's ahead and "check-off" events as you do them. Complete the tasks "on time" to reduce stress and enhance likelihood of matching.

	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
NRMP Match	Research program information	Register With NRMP via web	Complete application and apply to programs via ERAS. 10/10/05: Deadline for reading dean's letters. LOR's and photos turned in.			Interviews			Enter NRMP Rank Order Lists 1/15 -2/22, 2006	MATCH DAY: March 16, 2006!

Early Match	Request information and applications	Submit applications	Interviews			ROL submitted during Dec and Jan	Match results released in mid-late Jan
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Important information for both NRMP and Early Match Participants

- ① On November 1, the Student Affairs Office releases dean's letters to programs (transcripts are transmitted in early October).
- ② Identify each program's application deadline, since application deadlines vary significantly.
- ③ Contact programs to determine how they schedule interviews. Some programs will interview only after receiving the dean's letter on November 1, but others (e.g., early match programs) will interview before November 1.
- ④ Check your email daily after applying! Most programs will contact you via email to schedule an interview.
- ⑤ Note and attend to all program and UT Southwestern deadlines.

2006 Match: Recommendations

Southwestern students do very well in the Match, with only a very small number of students not matching in a specialty the first time around. A high match rate makes everyone happy and reduces the number of those who have to “scramble” for a residency.

Following the recommendations listed below and discussed in The Match: Southwestern Style will increase the likelihood that you match. Unfortunately, there are no guarantees. But, experience has shown that the majority of students who approach the Match process with common sense and heed good advice will match.

Follow these recommendations:

1. Talk with a faculty advisor in your chosen specialty to identify the number of programs and, based on your geographic preferences, the particular programs to which you should apply.
2. Learn about those programs via program brochures, the Web, residents, etc.
3. Apply to an adequate number of programs (categorical and preliminary if your specialty requires) including ones for which you are more than competitive.
4. Interview at an adequate number of programs. If you are applying for an advanced position, you must be certain that you apply to a more than adequate number of preliminary positions. These are becoming fewer and fewer, and therefore, more competitive.
5. Residency programs are required to provide applicants with the contract they would be expected to sign if they matched with their program. Examine this contract carefully to become familiar with the terms you would be expected to accept before you decide to make a multi-year commitment to that program.
6. Rank all the programs at which you are at all willing to train.
7. Inform the programs at which you are at all willing to train that you are interested in being a resident in those programs.
8. Cautiously interpret any telephone calls or letters from programs that tell you they will rank you highly. It is to a program's advantage for you to rank them highly, and students can draw dangerous conclusions from positive letters from programs. Do NOT cut your rank list short based on a false sense of security, or advice from others. Remember, programs cannot tell you how they will rank you and should not expect you to tell them how you intend to rank them. You are precluded from doing this by the same agreement with the NRMP.

9. Do everything you can to avoid having to “scramble” for a residency. Although there are always positions available, there is great uncertainty as to the availability of preferable locations or even specialties! Students who scramble have very little control over their future.

10. Here are the average number of applications per U.S. applicant by specialty in 2005 (information provided by ERAS/AAMC).

SPECIALTY	#	SPECIALTY	#
Anesthesiology	23	Pediatrics	17
Dermatology	48	Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation	17
Emergency Medicine	26	Plastic Surgery	28
Family Practice	11	Psychiatry	16
Internal Medicine/Pediatrics	14	Radiation Oncology	33
Internal Medicine	17	Radiology	43
Obstetrics/Gynecology	21	Surgery	25
Orthopaedic Surgery	48	Transitional	8
Pathology	17	Urology	42

11. Some helpful definitions:

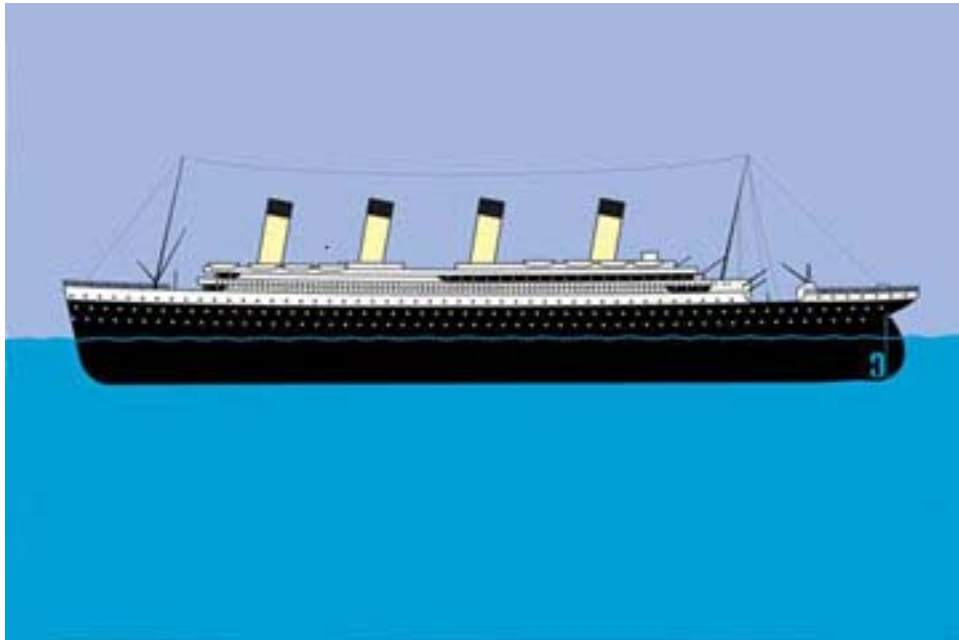
- **Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS)** – Process by which you **apply** to residency programs.
- **National Resident Matching Program (NRMP)** – Process by which you **register, rank, and match** with a residency program.
 - **Types of positions offered through the NRMP:**
 - **Categorical (C)** – begin in the PGY-1 year and provide training for specialty certification.
 - **Preliminary (P)** – begin in the PGY-1 year and provide a year of broad clinical training prior to advanced programs.
 - **Advanced (S)** – begin in the PGY-2 year after completion of a required preliminary year of training.
 - **Scramble** – Process during match week in which students who do not match through the NRMP find a residency position.
- **San Francisco Matching Program (CAS)** – Process by which you **register, apply, rank, and match** for residency positions in: Neurological Surgery, Neurology, and Ophthalmology.
- **American Urological Association (AUA)** – Process by which you **register, rank, and match** with a residency program in Urology.

Getting Information about Residency Programs

You must obtain as much information about programs as you can to determine where you want to train. Use the resources below to obtain more insight into programs' strengths and values.

Program Literature

Programs' brochures and websites will often describe their intellectually fulfilling educational activities, outstanding faculty and residents, state-of-the-art clinical facilities, and attractive local interests. Beware, though. Students from previous classes have told us that some programs do not match their marketing materials.



Carefully interpret program brochures. The *Titanic's* brochures said *it* was unsinkable.

Books

The Graduate Medical Education Directory is often called the "Green Book" because it has a green cover. This book is updated annually, and copies are available in the Office of Student Affairs (B-5) and the Library. The "Green Book" describes the characteristics of an accredited program in each specialty and lists, by specialty, programs in each state and provides the address, telephone number, and number of residents for each program.

Information Available Via the Internet

The World-Wide Web puts many Match-related resources at your fingertips. You can access the material in the library or in the privacy of your home. Just:

1. Go to the UT-Southwestern homepage (<http://www.utsouthwestern.edu/>).
2. Click on “**Library**” (located in list of Campus Services).
3. Click on the “**Residency Resources**” link in the left menu bar.
4. Click on “**Web Resources**” in the left menu bar.

Check out the following Web resources:

- ☑ ACGME Residency Program Requirements: Tells you what each residency program must do to train you. Includes the minimum and maximum hours on duty and on-call, minimum hours of study, and minimum hours away from it all.
- ☑ FREIDA (Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive Database): A database of residency programs searchable by both multiple states and multiple specialties. In addition to other details, FREIDA will tell you: the total number of residents by year and by program, the type of programs (i.e., university, university affiliated, and community), number of applications received for PGY-1 positions, number of interviews conducted for PGY-1 positions, number of faculty, educational environment, educational features, work schedule, program policies, benefits, how graduates from this program have performed on board examinations, and the variety of patients served.

Group Meetings

You will receive information about the NRMP process in various group settings. In early July, Drs. Wagner and Parker will host an “M&M Talk” to discuss a variety of aspects of the senior year and the Match. Also during the late spring and summer, many of the clinical departments will notify you of sessions in which they share specialty-specific Match information and discuss how they can advise and help you.



Dr. Cox celebrates a successful match.

Finding a Faculty Member to Advise You

During the spring and summer, many of the larger clinical departments will hold meetings for those interested in their specialties. In these meetings they will describe how their faculty mentoring system works. You will be notified of those meetings, and, if you are unsure about your specialty choice, you can attend the meetings in two or more departments. These meetings are usually the first step toward being assigned to a faculty advisor.

Having a strategy for selecting programs to which you apply will save you time, energy, and money. First, find a faculty advisor. Next, use this person to help you determine the number of programs to which you should apply. Knowing you and your goals can help your mentor identify programs to which you should – and *shouldn't* – apply. Your faculty advisor will be interested in your Step 1 score, your class rank (preliminary class ranks are distributed in July and finalized in October), and the types of programs you find attractive (e.g. big/small, urban/rural, academic/community, etc.)

Here are some other screening questions you might consider:

- Are you considering enough competitive programs?
- Are you considering enough programs for which you are competitive?
- Is the program in a setting you enjoy (e.g., urban, suburban, rural)?
- Is the program in an area that offers cultural and other activities you enjoy?
- How easy is it to travel to and from the city where the program is located?
- Is the program's salary sufficient for the area?
- What is the program's accreditation status? (e.g., is the program on probation?)
- Has there been substantial faculty or resident turnover?
- Does the program have a solid academic component as evidenced by the percentage of its graduates who pass the board specialty exam?
- What are the program's strengths and weaknesses?
- If you want to conduct research, do you share the same interests as the program's faculty?
- What do current residents or recent graduates say about the program?
- Is the variety of patients seen by the program's residents consistent with the training experience you want?
- Are there adequate numbers of patients?
- Do you want to live where the program is located?

The Early Match

Although most residency programs participate in the NRMP match, some participate in a match that occurs earlier. Early match residency programs fall into three categories:

1. **Military Match** - for students who are participating in the Armed Forces Health Profession Scholarship Program who are required to apply to military residency training programs:
 - Air Force:** <http://ci.afit.edu/>
 - Army:** <http://meded.amedd.army.mil>
 - Navy:** <http://nshs.med.navy.mil>
2. **San Francisco Match** - an organization that offers a Centralized Application Service (CAS) for students applying in neurology, neurological surgery, and ophthalmology. CAS functions in a manner similar to the NRMP match, but there are some important differences that will be explored here.
<http://www.sfmach.org/>
3. **American Urological Association Match** - for students applying for a urology residency. <http://www.auanet.org>

General Early Match Timelines

Military Match

MS3 year:

April: Student Affairs hosts an orientation.

May: Begin working on gathering the pieces of the complete application. Write personal statement, which will be included in folder for faculty asked to write letters of recommendation. Request transcripts from undergraduate institutions. Apply for USMLE Step 2; both the Clinical Skills and Clinical Knowledge exams should be taken before September.

June: You will receive a letter from the military describing the application process.

MS4 year:

July: Obtain your ERAS information from the student affairs office.

July-September: Use several of these blocks for electives at military residency sites. Be prepared to ask faculty at these away sites for letters of recommendations. Begin requesting letters of recommendation.

Early September: Apply via ERAS.

Mid-October: Application must be complete (including USMLE Step 2 score).

October–November: Interviews.

Mid-November: Military rank list due.

Mid-December: Military Match.

Special Issues:

Letters of Recommendation – Some residency programs require up to four letters, which means some will need to come from faculty on senior rotations. Students should alert faculty supervising them early in the fourth year rotation they may be asked to write letters of recommendation. Frequently letters will need to come from faculty from

those rotations on other campuses. Be sure the faculty knows that this letter needs to be completed by the beginning of October.

San Francisco Match

MS3 year:

April: Student Affairs hosts an orientation.

May: Register with the appropriate match. Begin working on gathering the pieces of the complete application. Write personal statement, which will be included in folder for faculty asked to write letters of recommendation. Request transcripts from undergraduate institutions.

June: Print and read instructions from CAS. Begin requesting letters of recommendation.

MS4 year:

July: Obtain your ERAS information from the student affairs office.

Mid-August–Early September: CAS “Target Date”, which should be viewed as the application due date. Provide enough time to complete the application and gather the necessary information.

September: Apply through ERAS for backup and/or preliminary programs.

October–December: Interviews.

Mid-January: CAS rank list deadline. Be sure the student affairs deans have accurate contact information for you (cell phone, pager, home phone).

Mid-Late January: CAS Match. A student affairs dean will call you with the results of the match.

January: Apply for USMLE Step 2; both the Clinical Skills and Clinical Knowledge exams should be taken before graduation.

Special Issues:

AOA status –MS4s are elected for membership in the Alpha Omega Alpha national medical honor society in late August, which may be after the CAS application has been submitted. Some specialties ask for AOA status on the application. If this occurs, just indicate that your AOA status is not known (there is a checkbox for this) and forward a copy of the AOA membership letter to the CAS when available.

Letters of Recommendation – Most programs require three; the department chair in some departments traditionally writes one of these letters for all UT Southwestern applicants to that specialty. Be sure the faculty knows that this letter needs to be completed by the beginning of August. Be sure the faculty saves the letter that is written for the August deadline so it can easily be re-formatted for the ERAS application.

ERAS – Students applying and matching via CAS will need to **apply** for backup or preliminary program spots via ERAS (Electronic Residency Application Service).

NRMP – Students will need to register for the NRMP for **matching** with backup and preliminary year programs.

Pictures – Some residencies require students to send pictures directly to each program that grants them an interview.

AUA Match

MS3 year:

April: Student Affairs hosts an orientation.

May: Register with the AUA match. Meet with the urology department chairperson, who will be writing a letter on your behalf. Begin working on gathering the pieces of the complete application. Write personal statement, which will be included in folder for faculty asked to write letters of recommendation. Transcripts from undergraduate programs are generally not required for the urology match.

MS4 year:

July: Obtain your ERAS information from the student affairs office.

Mid-August: Apply via ERAS.

Early September: Many programs have this date as a deadline for complete application.

October–December: Interviews.

January: Apply for USMLE Step 2; both the Clinical Skills and Clinical Knowledge exams should be taken before graduation.

Mid-January: AUA rank list deadline. Be sure the student affairs deans have accurate contact information for you (cell phone, pager, home phone).

Late January: AUA Match. A student affairs dean will call you with the results of the match.

Special Issues:

AOA status – MS4s are elected for membership in the Alpha Omega Alpha national medical honor society in late August. In general, they should be aware of their AOA status by the time their ERAS applications are finalized. If this is not the case, the student should contact the Dean's office before finalizing their ERAS.

Transcripts – The AUA Match requires that transcripts be received from schools by early September. Students applying to urological residencies need to contact both the Dean's and Registrar's office to ensure this transcript is uploaded into ERAS by this deadline.

Letters of Recommendation – Most programs require three; the department chair traditionally writes one of these letters for all UT Southwestern applicants to urology. As the deadline for some urology programs is in early September, the faculty being asked to write letters should be told to submit the letters in ERAS form to the Dean's office by August 31st at the latest. Letters uploaded to ERAS after a urology program has downloaded the student's application may not be considered.

ERAS – 2002 was the first year urology programs used the ERAS application service.

All students applying to residencies in urological surgery must now use ERAS. Although this is quickly changing, there are a handful of programs in the country that still require paper applications or supplements to the ERAS application. Information on ERAS participation can be found on the AUA website. Students should call their prospective programs to verify application deadlines and the need for supplemental materials.

NRMP – Students will need to register for the NRMP for **matching** with backup and preliminary year programs.

The Couples Match

Who Benefits from the Couples Match?

Pairs of students graduating the same year with important reasons to spend at least the next several years together (i.e. married students) will want to maximize the chances that they will end up in the same city after graduation from medical school. The Couples Match is a program offered by the NRMP. Unfortunately, students in the Early Match have no similar program, but there are several general concepts that can benefit all student “couples” applying for residency.

General Concepts

The first important concept is to be open about your couples matching with another applicant. That is, **briefly** touch on it in your personal statement, **briefly** mention it in every interview, and **complete the section in ERAS** that indicates you will be participating in the couples match and with whom. This can only help the application by encouraging “crosstalk” between residencies on the same campuses or in the same cities.

The second concept is to focus on geographic areas with several training options (i.e. big cities with several residency training programs like NY, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, etc). This will increase the number of combinations of programs the couple can list on their rank list.

For couples in which one partner is participating in the Early Match, there is no formal couples match mechanism. The early matcher should rank programs so the NRMP matcher’s choices are maximized (e.g. big city programs first). The early matcher will find out location of residency first (January). The NRMP matcher will then rank programs according to the early matcher’s match.

Prior graduates recommend alerting the **NRMP residency** that the early match member of the couple matched on their campus and reminding the **Early Match residency** that the spouse is vying for a spot on that campus.

How to Apply to the NRMP Couples Match

You must have a mutually agreeable partner who wants to be in the same *geographic area* – not necessarily the same residency program or hospital – to participate in the couples match. Both members of the couple must be applying for residency programs participating in the regular (i.e. NRMP, rather than early) match. There is a \$15.00 Couple Registration Fee for each partner. The couple matches to the most preferred pair of programs on their Rank Order Lists where each individual is offered a position. Both partners in the couples match apply to residency programs in the same way as individual applicants and should agree on the cities where they apply.

Interviews

You may either schedule your interviews together to check out housing, schools, cost of living, transportation, or you can interview separately and compare notes later.

Ranking the Programs

Ranking the programs is the primary difference between the couples match and regular match. But, this step does not happen until late January. Each partner in a couple pays a \$15 fee to be processed. If one partner withdraws from the Match, the remaining partner's Rank Order List will be processed in the Match as an individual.

Each person in the couple ranks his/her interviewed programs in priority order, indicating the partner's preference if the site is matched. Each partner **must** have the same number of ranked preferences. Individuals listed as a couple are treated solely as a couple. Therefore, if they do not obtain a match as a couple, their lists are not run separately to find a match for each individual. **If both individuals match to advanced programs, their Supplemental Rank Order Lists are not treated in the Match as a single unit.**

1. At the top of the list, align each choice with a corresponding choice from the couples partner. Partner X is ranking only one program in Denver (Choice 1), but Partner Y is ranking three different programs in Denver (Choice 1A, 1B, and 1C). For example:

Partner X	Partner Y
Choice 1	Choice 1A
Choice 1	Choice 1B
Choice 1	Choice 1C
Choice 2A	Choice 2
Choice 2B	Choice 2

2. At the bottom of the list, align a choice with a backup option: If one partner matches with a priority choice, the other partner must be willing to match at a preliminary position, scramble, or not start a residency that year if he/she does not match. The scramble option assures that while one partner may match, the other could go unmatched if no suitable choices were in that geographic area. Each partner **must** have the same number of ranked preferences. Couples match criteria apply to categorical, preliminary and advanced training programs.

Partner X	Partner Y
Choice 19	Choice 19A
Choice 19	Prelim 1A
Prelim 1	Choice 19A
Choice 19	No Match
No Match	Choice 19A
Etc...	Etc...

Couples are encouraged to complete the **Couples Rank Order List of Paired Programs** worksheet prior to entering their final rank order list.

Drs. Parker and Wagner can offer further advice on tips for a successful couple's match, and also have names of couples who matched last year and are available to talk about their experiences. Mr. Chuck Kettlewell in the Registrar's Office is also an excellent source for information on the NRMP Couples Match.

More information about the Couple's Match can be found at the NRMP website at <http://www.nrmp.org>. Click on **Residency Match; US Seniors; Couples**.



A "couple" of happy people congratulated by Dr. Wagner.

Registering for the NRMP Match

All students must register with the National Residency Match Program (NRMP), **even if they are participating in the early match.** Early matchers will not know whether they need the NRMP until after the early match occurs in December or January, long after NRMP registration is due. It is easy to withdraw from the NRMP match if it is not needed.

Registration will be done via the NRMP website. The Student Affairs Office will alert you to the dates registration opens and closes by distributing instructions when they are received from the NRMP.

Registering with the NRMP is separate from the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS): The NRMP processes matches from rank-order lists submitted by both students and residency training programs that result from the interview process.

Students who decide to no longer participate in the match after having registered with the NRMP must notify the Student Affairs Office of their decision and withdraw from the Match.



The NRMP Match is big news!

Resources for Learning about the Match

The National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) process begins when you register and ends when you open the envelope that contains your program's name and location. This process appears daunting, so it's realistic to have questions about what to do. Fortunately you have many resources that can make the process less stressful. Use them!

The Match: Southwestern Style is just one resource for learning about the Match. Refer to it often. The resources listed below can also help you navigate through the Match.

Website: The National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) has information about the Match on their website at: <http://www.nrmp.org/>.

People

You have at your disposal a variety of human resources who can help you with Match-related issues. Because individual experiences and personalities vary, you might want to obtain more than one opinion about a program or a Match-related topic. However, be careful of "flippant" advice that differs from what you read in this book. "Flippant" advice can be very dangerous.

Faculty: Faculty are part of a specialty's network. Since they know you and the strengths/needs of specific programs, faculty can identify the programs you should pursue and avoid. Faculty can also review your CV and personal statement and suggest ways to make the Match process go smoother.

Current Fourth Year Students: Talk to the fourth-year students before they graduate. They have experienced the process and can give you "insider" information about parts of the process. They can tell you about interviews, the questions they were asked, and how they selected their top programs. Many specialty interest groups will host meetings that feature MS4's who have matched in that specialty.

Friends or Acquaintances: You may know people who have recently "Matched." They can also give you personal insights into the process.

Residents: The residents with whom you work can also give you excellent information about the process. Residents in the specialty you seek can suggest factors to consider when evaluating programs and recommend ways to deal with the stress of the Match.

Administrators: The associate deans in Student Affairs are also excellent sources of information about the Match. They will answer your questions directly and honestly. They understand your concerns, so ask for their assistance!

Books

Getting into a Residency by Ken Iserson, M.D. (Galen Press). Dr. Iserson, an EM specialist, describes all aspects of the residency process in his book. It has excellent sections on interviews and dealing with challenging interview questions. Use the book to learn about the Match process.

First Aid for the Match by Tao Le, et al. (McGraw-Hill). Includes:

- *Insider advice from students who have successfully made it through the Match.
- *Latest trends in each of the specialty fields.
- *Information on specialty selection.
- *Updated specialty coverage, including specialty trends in education, research, and clinical practice.
- *Sample personal statements for each specialty.
- *Listings of resources available over the Internet.
- *Travel advice section with information on discount airfares and hotel lodging.
- *Compilation of commonly asked interview questions, broken down by specialty.

Copies of both books are available at the Library.

Letters of Recommendation

Background

Residency programs usually require two or three letters of recommendation plus your dean's letter. Also, programs typically ask that the persons who write your letters of recommendation be personally familiar with your clinical skills. Some programs even request a letter of recommendation from the chair of the department from your specialty. Chairs realize this and are happy to write a letter for you.

How to Ask Faculty for Letters of Recommendation

It is important that faculty write strong letters of recommendation for you. This is critical because while some faculty may invite you to see your letters before they are mailed, most will not. To avoid receiving uncomplimentary letters, ask the potential letter writers: "*Do you feel comfortable writing a letter for me?*" instead of "*Will you write a letter of recommendation for me?*" This technique gives faculty an "out" if they believe they cannot write you a strong letter. However, it is not appropriate to say, "*Will you write me a strong letter?*" You don't want to anger potential letter writers!

Ensuring Strong Letters of Recommendation

Help faculty write an accurate and personalized letter by giving them your *photograph*, *curriculum vitae*, and *personal statement* in a labeled file folder (shown below).

Affix <u>curriculum vitae</u> (CV) on this side	Attach your <u>photo</u> here Affix <u>Personal Statement</u> here Write your <u>name</u> on folder's tab →
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Your photo, CV, and personal statement should be visible when the file folder is open

In addition, give the letter writer plenty of time. Hurried faculty write hurried letters. Also, do not ask someone to actually write your letter until you are fairly certain that you are going to use it. Doing this saves them time and effort, and it reduces potential embarrassment for you.

What to Give your Letter Writers

You will be responsible for presenting each letter writer with the following:

- Personal information (see above).
- "Request for Letter of Recommendation/Cover Sheet" and pre-addressed return envelopes – picked up in advance from the Student Affairs office (B5).

Letters of Recommendation and ERAS

Letters of recommendation (LORs) to be submitted through ERAS will be processed by Ann Wentz in the Student Affairs Office (B-5).

Some important things to know about letters of recommendation:

- A maximum of 4 LORs can be sent per program (the usual number is 3).
- Do not send more letters than are required.
- If you are applying in more than 1 discipline, ask the letter writer not to mention a specific discipline you are applying to in the letter.
- The Request for Letter of Recommendation/Cover Sheet lists the procedures required for faculty preparing a letter for ERAS: the letter should be on letterhead, addressed to “Dear Program Director”, include the student’s name and AAMC ID number, include whether the student waived right to see the letter, the cover sheet should be attached to the LOR, and returned in the pre-addressed envelope to Student Affairs office.
- It is strongly recommended that you “waive” the right to see the letter. Programs expect this.
- Faxed letters are not acceptable.
- Pre-addressed envelopes are available for both On Campus and Off Campus letter writers.

Letters of recommendation cannot be attached to your file until you have submitted your application, chosen your programs, assigned your documents, and certified your application. Letters are processed as they arrive in the Student Affairs Office. **Your application does not need to be complete for letters to be transmitted.**

Although the Student Affairs Office temporarily stores the letters of recommendation (LORs) after they have been scanned, the letters still belong to the authors. This means the Student Affairs Office cannot release the letters to entities outside of ERAS; in this situation, the letters must come directly from the writers. Letters of recommendation are disposed of after graduation.

For individual programs that do not participate in ERAS, letters of recommendation must be mailed directly from the faculty member’s office.

The Dean's Letter

Who Will Write Your Dean's Letter?

Early in the summer you will be assigned the student affairs dean who will write your "dean's letter" (now, according to the AAMC, to be entitled the "Medical Student Performance Evaluation" or MSPE – but we'll still refer to it as a "dean's letter"). It is not necessary that your dean's letter writer know you personally.

Nature of the Dean's Letter

Residency programs to which you apply require a dean's letter. The dean's letter is meant to be a letter of "*evaluation*," rather than one of "*recommendation*". That means the deans cannot do the subjective bragging about you they would like to do. The dean's letter is written by someone who has permission to review your school records – past and present – and can relay objective information to the programs. Your clinical clerkship evaluations compose a major part of your dean's letter. The remainder of the letter is information that you were asked to supply to Student Affairs in writing in the spring. You will then be asked to schedule a meeting with the appropriate dean in the summer (you will receive more information about this). You will have an opportunity to review your dean's letter before it is distributed to programs. This review allows you to know what it says and to identify any clerical or factual errors.

Contents of the Dean's Letter

All UT Southwestern dean's letters usually consist of a sequence of similar sections. The first paragraph is usually one of introduction, like:

"It is a pleasure to write this letter of evaluation of the achievements in Jane Doe's developing medical career. Jane has completed the first three years at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School. Jane graduated *summa cum laude* from X State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in biology in 2001."

The next paragraph(s) focus on the students' extracurricular activities, during both undergraduate and medical schools. These interests usually center around athletics, church, community service, employment, and/or campus activities. Unusual circumstances during these time periods (like another career before medical school, long periods not in school, and/or academic difficulties during the first two years of medical school) are also commented upon.

Since program directors are most interested in how students performed when participating in patient care, the next section, which comments on the performance in the third year, is the largest part of the letter. The paragraphs follow the chronologic sequence of the MS3 clerkships, and draw heavily from comments submitted by supervisors during this year. The chronologic sequence allows the reader to appreciate the growth and improvement that is inherent in this third year.

The final paragraph is a summary that recognizes patterns of strengths (and weaknesses – remember this is a letter of *evaluation* rather than *recommendation*) apparent in the text of the letter.

When Dean's Letters are Sent

The AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) rules require dean's letters to go out no earlier than November 1st. Period. Some programs may pressure students to send a dean's letter before this time; this is not possible.

Other Material Sent with the Dean's Letter

An official transcript and a bar graph showing the grade distribution in all of the courses your class has taken will be sent to programs in addition to your dean's letter. Many programs do not review applications until after receiving this packet, though they may prefer to have everything in by then so they are "ready to roll."

Mailing Labels for Non-ERAS Programs

A very few programs may not participate in the Electronic Residency Application System (ERAS). If you apply to one of those programs you must provide the Student Affairs Office and the writers of your letters of recommendation with mailing labels for those programs.

The Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS)

Background on the ERAS (Note: These two paragraphs are from the “ERAS ® 2006 Residency Applicant Information Sheet”)

What is ERAS?

“The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) developed ERAS® - the Electronic Residency Application Service, to transmit residency applications, letters of recommendation, Dean’s letters, transcripts, and other supporting credentials from applicants and medical schools to residency program directors using the Internet.

How does ERAS Work?

“The ERAS solution is made up of three components: the applicant website MyERAS, the Dean’s Office Workstation (DWS), and the Program Director’s Workstation (PDWS). Using a current web browser, applicants complete an application, select programs, and create and assign supporting documents using a secure site. They then submit these files to ERAS for processing. School staff uses the DWS to scan and store the applicant’s transcripts, Dean’s letter, and letters of recommendation and transmit them to the ERAS Post Office. Residency programs use the PDWS to connect to the ERAS Post Office to download applications, and to review those using criteria they establish.”

ERAS Facts for the Class of 2006

- Most PGY1 specialties (Army and Navy included) will use ERAS.
- Urology will participate in ERAS.
- Beginning this year, Otolaryngology will participate in ERAS (and NRMP).
- Other Early match specialties (Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Ophthalmology) do not participate in ERAS.
- Note: There are a few programs that do not participate through ERAS. Students who apply to one of these programs must contact the program office directly for their application requirements.

To participate in ERAS you need:

1. *ERAS Instructions.* The Student Affairs Office will distribute this information early in your senior year.
2. *An e-mail address.* Be sure to check your e-mail: Most students who used ERAS reported that they received interview invitations via e-mail.
3. *Access to a computer.* “You can use ANY computer with an Internet connection. The computer must have Internet Explorer version 5 or Netscape 4.77 (or higher) or a compatible (AOL version 5.0 or greater will work).” (Also taken from the “ERAS ® 2006 Applicant Information Sheet”)

4. *ERAS ID and Password.* The Student Affairs Office will provide you with an ERAS Token to access MyERAS on the web for the first time. Once you access the site you will be given instructions on entering an ID and password.
5. *Photograph.* You must provide Student Affairs with a photograph for your ERAS application. Student Affairs will send you a memo informing you of your options for obtaining photographs. Be cautious: Some professional photography studios do not allow their photos to be scanned. If a studio allows scanning of its photos, you must bring a signed release form from them to Student Affairs. Look sharp in those photos: First impressions count!
5. *A personal statement.*
6. *Letters of recommendation.* Student Affairs will scan your letters into an ERAS application.
7. *Your ERAS fee.* The fees are based on the number of programs an applicant selects within each specialty. Carefully screen programs before applying. Applying to an excessively large number of programs wastes money. On the other hand, applying to too few programs just to save money puts one at risk for not matching. Check with your faculty advisor to insure you have applied to enough programs. The NBME (National Board of Medical Examiners) charges an additional flat fee to transmit USMLE scores to programs (regardless of the numbers of transcripts requested).



Joyous students who did it right!

Writing Your *Curriculum Vitae* and Personal Statement

Who Needs a CV and Personal Statement?

You need a CV, even if you apply via the ERAS, because most letter writers want to see your CV and personal statement before they write your letters. Sure, ERAS will print a CV-like document based on the data you enter. However, the document that ERAS prints may not contain the same categories or specific information that you want to include within a category. For example, to count a “publication” ERAS requires the article’s citation information (i.e., journal title, date, and page numbers). It does not accept “submitted” or “in progress” entries. So, if you want to include this type of information on your CV you should prepare one.

Get Feedback from Faculty in Your Specialty

You should have your advisor from the specialty you are pursuing review your application materials. This advisor will best know areas to cover/emphasize for that specialty. This person can work with you to “fine tune” your materials so that they also reflect the true “you.” Be ready to write several drafts and check the final version for grammar and spelling!

Books

Résumés and Personal Statements for Health Professionals by Dr. Jim Tysinger. This book will help you identify your marketable traits and effectively communicate those traits in your CV (i.e., academic résumé) and personal statement. Read the sample résumés and personal statements contained in the book to see how others have written their materials. Copies are available in the Library.

First Aid for the Match by Tao Le, et al.

Information Available Via the Internet

www.aamc.org/careersinmedicine , Student code is 11STU168

Scheduling Interviews

Contacting Programs for Interviews

Programs schedule their interviews in many ways. Some programs will contact you, while others expect you to contact them. Several years ago some Southwestern students reported that some programs had almost filled their interview positions before our students contacted them. When uncertain, telephone the program and politely ask how they schedule interviews. You cannot rank a program at which you have not interviewed!

When Should I Interview?

You should schedule interviews during the month that you have taken off for that purpose, whenever it is in anyway possible. Students participating in the regular match will typically take December or January off for interviews. Most residency programs will work with applicants to find a mutually convenient time for the interview if the initially offered date is inconvenient.

Should you find that you must interview someplace(s) during any rotation, **following these steps are essential:**

- Request permission from the appropriate **course director, attending, and resident** as soon as you know there is a conflict between a rotation and an interview.
- Be prepared to show evidence that there are no alternatives to scheduling the interview at that time.
- Be polite, and offer to make up the time if the course director requests.

Remember that no course director has to give you time off, and required courses never grant time off. The decision as to whether you have fulfilled your responsibilities is his or her call. The more responsible and considerate you are, the more smoothly the process will go for everyone.

Key Points to Remember

As the interview process goes on, your enthusiasm for traveling to and visiting another program/hospital may wane. You may also rationalize that programs at which you have already interviewed have made positive promises (always to be taken with a large grain of salt!) about how they will rank you. Resist temptation and keep interviewing based on your initial interviewing strategy! Remember, you can only rank programs at which you interview. If you absolutely cannot attend an interview, inform the program well in advance and thank them for their consideration. Student Affairs hears about it when students “no show.”

Remember these points regardless of when you interview:

- Excellent applicants impress regardless of when they interview.
- You must maintain contact with the programs at which you want to train regardless of when you interview. Let programs know that you’re interested!

Travel and Lodging

Flight Arrangements

“Cluster” interviews in the same locale (areas of the country) to save time and money. Accumulate those frequent flier miles while you can. The AAMC has an agreement with American Airlines to offer discounts to senior students traveling to residency program interviews. Information about this discount will become available during the fall. If you are traveling to interviews near Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year’s, consider making these reservations the earliest as they will be the most costly.

The Bed and Breakfast Program

Wes Norred organized a Bed and Breakfast Program to help reduce expenses for UT Southwestern medical students who are interviewing at distant sites. You will have access to a directory of our alumni living all across the nation. These adventuresome souls have offered to house you during your interviews in their cities. Alumni who sign up for this really want to be used! This is a great way to save money, make new friends, learn about the area, and experience the lifestyle of a graduate.

To access the Bed and Breakfast Directory go to www.utsouthwestern.edu/ and at Search type in “Bed and Breakfast”. Your student affairs user ID/password are required.

Three things merit attention. One, be sure to alert the alum well in advance of your visit. Two, notify the alum quickly if your plans change after arrangements have been made. Three, be sure to send “thank-you” notes to the alum for making this valuable program work for everyone.



Some students are staying in Dallas, and others are not.

Excelling in Interviews

Interviews are pleasant experiences for the vast majority of students. In fact, many interviewees say that the interviews should be called “marketing discussions” because program directors and faculty really try to “sell” them on their respective programs. Interviewers do this because they want to give you the information you need to make the decision that they would hope for (i.e., for you to rank them high on your list), and they want you to tell others how great they are. In fact, being invited to interview means that the program considers you to be someone in whom they are interested.

The interview gives both you and the program a chance to see if you “fit”. This fit is important because you will work long hours with the faculty and residents for years. What composes this “fit”? Perhaps it’s a mixture of compatible philosophy, backgrounds, similar interests, and personality type. Whatever it is, many students state that they can sense if they fit with a program within an hour after being around a place.

Thus, it’s in your best interests to excel in interviews. Excelling means being yourself and discussing information that reinforces the “fit” between you and the program. Here are some things you can do to excel on interviews:

Remember the Basics

Relax. Get to the interview site *early* and find where you are supposed to be.

Check yourself out in front of a mirror to make sure that you look presentable. Dress conservatively, males with a well-fitting suit and tie and females with a business suit. Take a bath before the interview. Pack extra shirts, ties, panty hose, and a needle and thread. Carry your interview attire on the plane – don’t check it in your baggage (airlines frequently misplace luggage!). Refrain from consuming beverages or food during an interview unless you’re really coordinated and not prone to accidents. Look interested during the interview by leaning forward and paying attention to the interviewer.

Be nice. Being nice, being informed, and showing interest will increase your chances of being ranked high by a program. Programs want to “fill” during the Match, but they don’t want to get a complainer, late-arriver, jerk, etc. So, they put those folks on the “reject” list. You are under the microscope during any interaction with a program (including a telephone call). So be nice and appear interested and appropriately enthusiastic during all aspects of your interview. Be kind to everyone, including ancillary personnel, and don’t complain about anything. Smile lots, ☺, and say “thank you” even if that sandwich is stale!

Seek out contact with residents. These are the folks with whom you will be working. Ask yourself whether they seem happy, inspired, and challenged. Do you “fit in”? Are they the type of residents you would be proud to call colleagues?

Get Ready for These Questions

Interviewers differ widely in terms of the questions they ask. A few will ask questions that are impossible to anticipate. Fortunately, most ask predictable questions for which you can prepare a framework of an answer. Check out Iserson's Getting Into a Residency for more questions and plausible responses. Here are a few questions for you to consider.

“Tell me about yourself.” This open-ended question should be answered in no more than a minute. Identify categories that you can discuss. Examples include: Undergraduate education, medical school experience (e.g., basic science courses you liked and why, and your favorite clerkship), your research interests (if you have any), and your personal interests. Watch the interviewer. If the person appears to want more, tell them. Otherwise, wait for them to ask another question.

“What questions do you have about this program?” This is where an in-depth knowledge of the program pays off. Ask the questions that will inform you about the program, but avoid touchy issues like salary and benefits.

“What do you see yourself doing in 10 to 15 years?” The interviewer wants to get a general idea about your career plans. Talk in general terms by using the following terms as they apply to you: caring for patients, interdisciplinary setting, clinical research, coordinating, managing, expanding my knowledge base, community involvement, professional involvement, and personal interests.

“Name your three greatest assets.” Respond with honesty, humility, and confidence. This is no time to be shy. Assets like “working with others,” “being able to delegate,” “being able to prioritize and accomplish goals,” and “empathy for patients and other health care providers”, or however you want to phrase them, are what most programs want in their residents.

“What are your three greatest faults?” Turn your faults into strengths. For example, don't say: “I have trouble managing my time.” Instead, say: “One of the things that I'm currently working on is feeling comfortable when I delegate something to someone. In the past I spent too much time following up insuring the work was done. I now spend time insuring the person knows what's expected and can actually perform the task.” (rephrase in your words)

“Why are you applying to this program?” Before the interview specify one or more reasons for interviewing in that program and be ready to discuss them.

“Why do you want to go into this specialty?” You should reflect on why you are pursuing a career in a particular specialty and prepare a brief and inspiring response to this item. (Hint: NEVER say: “I want to be a _____ because I didn't like anything else!”)

Practice Interviewing

Ask someone to conduct a “mock” interview with you. Dress as if it’s a real interview. Note the questions that you handle easily, and get guidance on those that are difficult for you.

Review the Information You Have About the Program Before the Interview

Summarize all you know about a program on one page. Review this summary the night before and the morning of the interview. An interviewee who knows specifics about the program and asks intelligent and thoughtful questions communicates enthusiasm and interest. Be familiar with the types of patients served, the attendings’ clinical interests, and articles attendings have recently published, but interviewers don’t appreciate interviewees who appear to refer to this information to “get points.”

Interview Date:	_____
Program Title:	_____
Address:	_____
Building/Room:	_____
Telephone Number:	_____
Fax Number:	_____
Program Director:	_____
Key Faculty:	_____

Reasons Interviewing:	_____

Marketed Strengths:	_____

Possible Needs:	_____

Look For:	_____

Prepare a one-page synopsis of a program to review just before your interview.

Remember Names

Call the faculty “Dr. Lastname” until you are told differently. Record the name of each person who interviews you or spends time with you. Write down key aspects of your interaction (e.g., “talked about fly-fishing and made me feel comfortable”). Keep these notes, because you should...

Write “Thank You” Notes to Interviewers

Immediately after the interview write a thank-you note to each person with whom you really “bonded” and refer to the conversation (verified by your notes, above) to make it more personal. An example of a sample thank-you note follows. (Ours is typed, but write yours in your best handwriting.)

<p>Date</p> <p>Dear Dr. Block:</p> <p>I thoroughly enjoyed talking with you during my interview at your program last week. I appreciate the way you made me feel at ease during that fast-paced day. It was nice to talk with someone who shares a mutual interest in pottery. Your collection is impressive! It was also good to talk with you about your interest in (mention something dealing with medicine that you discussed, perhaps clinical research).</p> <p>Thanks again for making the interview so pleasant.</p> <p>Your FirstName LastName</p>
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Caution: Any person who talks to you during an interview visit might be asked to comment about you. Therefore, guard your comments and questions carefully, especially with residents. Get the name and telephone number of a resident with whom you establish rapport during the interview. You can use that person to obtain more specific program information (like benefits) without seeming too pushy.

Post-Interview Correspondence

Interviewees and residency programs frequently exchange correspondence after interviews. While both interviewees and residency programs should follow guidelines from the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP) regarding correspondence, both groups struggle with knowing what, if anything, to say in post-interview contacts.

Post-Interview Correspondence to a Program

A program wants to know if you are interested in going there. Therefore, write the program director and state how much you enjoyed visiting the program and describe, in detail, key program features that appeal to you. Follow-up on interviews with “thank-you” cards to key interviewers to show your interest. Remember, though, that your rank list is a private matter. You can indicate that you really like a program, but don’t tell a program that you intend to rank it #1. It is important for you to know that, in the past, a small number of students have gotten themselves in trouble by giving ranking information to programs. Avoid this situation!!

Some programs will even tell you that you must notify them that you want to go there. If they tell you that, definitely inform them that you are interested.

Post-Interview Correspondence from a Program

The correspondence a program sends to interviewees following the interview varies widely among specialties and programs. While some programs send positive letters to *everyone*, others send *nothing* to anyone. Some programs may even telephone interviewees to answer any questions the people may have about them.

Be prepared for anything! Don’t get depressed if you hear nothing from a program. It is just too difficult to decipher what nothing means. Conversely, don't get too excited if you get a positive letter or a telephone call from a program. Such communications, though nice to get and ego-stroking, assures you of nothing, so be sure NOT to change your cautious behavior based on any program comments.

The letters that follow are two examples of correspondence sent to a recent graduate who ultimately did not match with either program:

“A brief update regarding our effort to attract a strong PGY-2 class for 2002. To date we have received 206 qualified applications and anticipate a few more. Although pleased with the number of applicants, we have been particularly impressed with the quality of the 55 applicants we have already interviewed. Our Residency Selection Committee recently completed its initial meetings. Although obviously early in the process, the committee authorized me to convey our positive interest in your application and our expectation that you will rank competitively on our final NRMP list. I will keep you informed of our progress. If there are questions or if it would be useful to discuss any of this don’t hesitate to contact me.”

“At our recent Admissions and Progressions Subcommittee meeting, we formally approved your application to our residency program. Under the terms of the Match Review Board, we will offer you a position through the National Residency Matching Plan. While we will not do our final ranking until shortly before the match submission date, you are clearly an outstanding applicant. I am personally very eager to see you join us in July. If there is anything I can do which might increase your familiarity with -----, I would be very pleased to do so. We have a lot to offer, and our best bet for attracting people like yourself is to make every effort to inform you about our program. Good luck with your important and difficult decision. I hope we get to work together starting next July.”

The Rank List

Entering Your Rank Order List

After you've decided the order in which you will rank the residency programs at which you interviewed, you must communicate this ranking to the NRMP. You will enter your rank order list directly into a computer at the secure NRMP Matching System website.

You may enter your rank order list on the NRMP website from mid-January through mid-February 2006. You can enter your rank order list in one or more sessions and change anything on the list up to the deadline. Do not tamper with the ranking at the last minute – this is viewed by the NRMP as “uncertifying” the list. You can also print a copy of your rank order list at any step during the process. After you have entered your rank order list you will be asked to certify your list. You are the only person who can see your list unless you give your AAMC ID and password to someone else.

Important Guidelines

Number One: Seek good guidance throughout the process – even after your interviews. You may have false impressions or misinterpretations of how secure your position is in some programs. Do not remove or re-order programs from your list based on anything a residency program tells you. Show your advisors the list of programs you plan to rank (the programs do NOT have to be in rank order) to help ensure to the highest possible degree that your list is sound, appropriate, and long enough.

Number Two: Rank 'em like you want 'em. The NRMP handbook contains a rather lengthy explanation of the mechanics of The Computer and the process by which students and programs match. The gist of it is this: There is no advantage in ranking a less desirable program higher than your #1 choice just because your #2 program ranks (or says it will rank) you higher.

Number Three: This should be your thought process when and if you consider not ranking a program: "I would rather be tortured than to go to that program." Every year several persons do not match and are forced to partake of “The Scramble,” and too short a list is often the reason. While the scramble is by no means the end of the world, it is stressful and should be avoided. It also leaves you in the position of having to take whatever you can get (along with the others who are scrambling).

Number Four: You should never knowingly set yourself up for the scramble. For instance, if you are applying for a residency or residencies that require separate first-year spots, apply to a more than adequate number of preliminary or transitional programs. There are fewer spots than there used to be, and they are becoming increasingly competitive. Do NOT plan to scramble for them! Planning to scramble puts you at a great disadvantage for getting a spot that will work well for you, as well as being unfair to your classmates who do not match and legitimately need administrative and faculty time to help them scramble for a residency.

Match Week Process

Monday: “Macro” Match Results

The “Macro” Match results (i.e. whether a student matched, not where a student matched) are available to the Student Affairs deans on Monday, shortly before you receive an email notification from the NRMP (you can also access this information through the NRMP website). Those students who do not match on Monday need to “scramble”, and will be invited to B5 to meet with one of the deans to discuss individualized plans.

Tuesday/Wednesday: “The Scramble”

On Tuesday, the NRMP website will have a link that contains names of residency programs in each specialty that did not fill. These resources will get you going on this two-day process. By Thursday, all is well. But the scramble is not the desired route – neither in process, nor generally in outcome – so approach your rank list with thoughtful consideration *and* safety.

Thursday: Match Day

Match Day, usually a day of great celebration, is one day that you will remember perhaps even into senility. March 16, 2006 is your Match Day. After a morning class “anticipatory” party, everyone meets at the mailboxes at 11:00 a.m. at which time the envelopes are opened, and the festivities continue. The results will be available on the Web an hour later than the results will be available in the student mailboxes.



Friends enjoy the fruits of a successful Match. Best wishes to the Class of 2006!