April 6, 2020

Message from HPO Director, Dr. Elizabeth Vogel regarding MCAT, P/NC and How to help

Hi All:

I know you are all feeling stressed and nervous about COVID, both in terms of the health and safety of your community and loved ones and in terms of the impact all of this will have on your plans to apply to professional schools. For those of you getting ready to apply in the coming cycle there are so many questions and concerns. We don't have definitive answers for everything. Much of our "normal" advice is not relevant right now.

First and foremost, be safe. Take care of yourself, your loved ones, your community. In the grand scheme of things, your health and well-being is the most important thing right now.

Second, rest assured that you are not alone and that thousands of other prospective applicants are experiencing similar upheavals and disruptions in their "plans." Also, professional schools will take this all into consideration as they move through the next application cycle.

Finally, I want to give some thoughts on 3 of the things that are currently probably on your minds.

**MCAT**
Many, many of you have had your test dates postponed. I know this is really hard. We have drilled into your heads that you should take the exam as early as possible in the spring semester you plan to apply. Don't stress about the date. Again, medical schools will be taking this into consideration and as soon as we have some comprehensive information, we will share it with you. I know it is hard to be geared up to take the exam and then to have it postponed. Stay strong!
Here is the link to the AMCAS Corona Virus information page:

**PASS/NO CREDIT**
For now, we are advising that students do not decide to use the pass/no credit option until they see their final grades. You have until May 22 to make the decision. Despite the difficulties some of you may have with adjusting to on line learning, and being at home, and the general anxiety of living in the time of COVID, this may be a chance to find and demonstrate grit and resiliency in the face of adversity. It may wind up that the pass/no credit option is a good one for you but most of you don't need to make that decision now. Also, we will have a lot more comprehensive information on how professional schools are looking at pass/no credit by May. However, if you know that deciding to take one of your non prerequisite classes as pass/no credit would allow you a better chance to do well in one
of your prerequisites, that is also an option. Withdrawing is also an option. One or two Ws on your transcript are not generally harmful (as long as there is no recurring pattern) and if you already feel a class is beyond salvaging because of the disruption of COVID, that may be your best choice.

Here is a link to the Rutgers web page where you can find specific details of the pass/no credit policy
https://coronavirus.rutgers.edu/communications/important-information-on-spring-2020-grade-options/

Here is a link to a google doc that has some (incomplete) information about some schools' policies on pass/no credit
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1kfxiWvAHef3lUyOyRhgzqTcetqS0fan4CYn94_r6LT0/edit#gid=0

WHAT CAN I DO WITH MY TIME BESIDES CLASSES?
Many of you find that the normal activities you do outside of the classroom are off-limits. Involvement in student organizations, volunteering, shadowing, work, sports and so forth are not possible in the ways you are used to. This is a time to be creative and think outside the box. Look into what your local communities are doing and see if you can help. Does your town have a coordinated COVID response? Maybe you could volunteer to make daily check-in calls to people who live alone and/or are homebound. Maybe you could volunteer to do virtual tutoring for kids in your community or globally. Maybe you could coordinate donations to buy meals from local restaurants and have them delivered to first responders and hospital workers. Maybe you could make PPE for health care workers.

Here are some websites to check out if you are interested in virtual volunteering.
https://www.paper-airplanes.org
https://www.dosomething.org/us/articles/-displaced-or-disrupted-students-coronavirus-guide
https://www.liveyourdream.org
https://www.onlinevolunteering.org/en
https://www.catchafire.org/
https://www.si.edu/volunteer/DigitalVolunteers
https://decoders.amnesty.org/
https://translatorswithoutborders.org/volunteer/
https://www.crisistextline.org/become-a-volunteer/
https://www.zooniverse.org
https://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Gutenberg:Volunteering_for_Project_Gutenberg

Of course, we are also here to answer your specific questions so don’t hesitate to reach out! Stay safe!

Elizabeth H. Vogel, Ph.D.
Administrative Director, Health Professions Office