

## Strategies to help avoid going unmatched

Wednesday, October 2, 2013

The number of residency positions has remain relatively stagnant, while class sizes have increased and new U.S. medical schools have opened. Add in increasing numbers of international medical graduates and osteopathic students and [the Match has become more competitive](#).

In this environment, you must strategize to successfully match. And creating your successful strategy starts with reviewing your residency application materials and the list of programs you've applied to with your advisor or student affairs dean. They will help you assess the competitiveness of your materials for your chosen specialty and programs.


Discussing your risk factors for going unmatched is a challenge — you must be prepared to have a difficult conversation and possibly hear things you might not want to. But balancing a realistic assessment of your qualifications with the pursuit of your desired specialty and programs will help you generate options to meet your goal of matching successfully. So we've created the following checklist to help.

### Before meeting with your advisor or student affairs dean

Know your academic performance including:

- USMLE® or COMLEX-USA® (for osteopathic students) exam scores
- course and clerkship grades
- clerkship evaluation comments
- class rank (if applicable)
- professionalism concerns

Review data including:

- The joint AAMC and NRMP®  [Charting Outcomes in the Match](#) report for the characteristics of matched and unmatched applicants in your specialty of interest.
- School-based match data for the ranges of USMLE board scores, academic record, program types and locations, and number of students entering your specialty of interest.
- The results of the [2012 NRMP® Program Director Survey](#) to understand how program directors value elements of the application and process.
- Your results for (or take if you haven't already) the [Medical Specialties Preference Inventory \(MSPI-R\)](#) to help you determine other specialties of interest, if necessary. Consider what you like about your first choice and see if there are other specialties with similar qualities for which you'd be competitive.

Identify the “red flags” you might face in securing a residency position.

### During your meeting

Provide your advisor:

- The number and types of programs you've applied to.
- The number of interviews you've gotten so far.
- How you feel your qualifications compare to other students pursuing the specialty, and the types (academic or community) and locations of the programs you're pursuing.
- Other specialties or programs you considered when applying.
- Any geographic restrictions you face in considering residency programs.