



Students For Ethical Admissions

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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September 1, 2020 - #WaiveTheMCAT and *Students for Ethical Admissions* Garner Broad Organizational and Political Support Amidst Pandemic, Safety Concerns

Amidst a global pandemic and civil unrest, many of the same institutions discouraging the public from gathering indoors and traveling for non-essential activities are requiring pre-medical students to do those very things in order to apply for medical school admissions this year. Students for Ethical Admissions, a group of 80+ premedical students has been advocating for medical schools to #WaiveTheMCAT, or adopt MCAT-optional admissions strategies throughout the course of the pandemic. To date, 7 schools have adopted this policy in some or all cases.

As of September 1st 2020, SEA has received a plethora of support. *This includes a letter from the offices of Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Ro Khanna addressed to the AAMC concerning the effectiveness of the measures in place for the in-person administration of the MCAT.* SEA has also received public endorsements for MCAT-optional testing by the following organizations: American College of Physicians (ACP), American Medical Student Association (AMSA), American Medical Women's Association (AMWA), Asian Pacific American Medical Association, (PAMSA) National Medical Association (NMA), Association of Women Psychiatrists (AWP), National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA), Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA), Doctors For America (DFA), American College of Perioperative Medicine (ACPM), Medical Student Pride Alliance (MSPA), and the American Physician Scientists Association (APSA). We express our immense gratitude to these organizations and representatives who understand the priority of protecting premeds and public health.

When the pandemic initially began to be widespread in the United States in March, the Association of American Medical Colleges and PearsonVue, their test center contractor, canceled 3 months of Medical College Admissions Test administrations due to the safety-risks of

taking the exam in person and stay at home orders implemented in many states. As a result, thousands of students who had planned to take or re-take the exam in early spring ahead of the opening of medical school applications were forced to reschedule. The initial day set for re-scheduling was set for May 7, starting at 3am on the West Coast and announced only on Twitter rather than by emailing students whose exams had been canceled directly. The AAMC also announced that they would shorten the exam in order to accommodate multiple test sessions within each test day, starting as early at 6am and not ending until midnight. However, unlike the GRE, GMAT, and LSAT, the AAMC has refused to allow for online remote proctoring of the exam.

On May 7 the site crashed almost immediately due to the flood of demand from pre-med students, by the time many students were able to get through at some point in the afternoon or evening their first and even second choices for day, time, and location were often taken. In order to make their rescheduled exams many students are having to travel, sometimes by plane, and stay in hotels to site the exam in person. This travel increases their risks of exposure to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, regardless of adherence to other public health advice. Other students have found their test canceled yet again due to rising infection rates across the country, protests, and natural disasters, leading to multiple attempts to reschedule. Apart from personal risks, many pre-med students also live with people who are at high-risk for COVID complications including parents, roommates, or extended families that are older, have chronic health conditions, or cancer.

These issues have been especially difficult for students with disabilities and from low-socioeconomic status backgrounds, including many minority students. Students needing accommodations for the MCAT faced additional hurdles to scheduling and later re-scheduling their exams including the inability to reschedule online and facing phone systems that are not functional. For students from low-SES backgrounds, days spent waiting for a chance to reschedule and later travel to take the test have meant taking days off from work and subsequent loss of income. If they are unable to sit a rescheduled exam it might also mean having to reapply next cycle and the resultant loss of sunk costs into their year's cycle plus the financial hurdles of an unplanned gap year.

Given the existing and ongoing issues with the MCAT as well as the ongoing refusal to allow for a safer at home online option, Students for Ethical Admissions was formed as an advocacy group. Students for Ethical Admissions asks that medical schools waive the MCAT for this application cycle, making it optional for all applicants and allowing those who had planned to re-test to mask their previous scores. Moving forward, we also demand that pre-med students, especially those from underrepresented minorities, the disabled, and those from

low-socioeconomic status groups, be given a seat at the table to discuss any plans in the examination and application process moving forward. Nothing about us without us.

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This is only a brief outline of the myriad issues students have reported, more stories are available at EthicalStudents.org. We also have students prepared to share their personal stories in interviews.

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