



# Ask Admissions

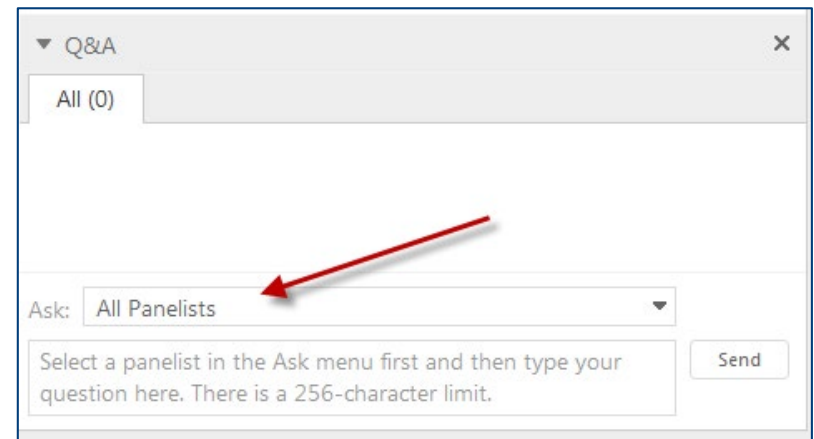
Inspiring Stories:

How Non-traditional Students Navigated  
the Path to Medical School

AAMC Ask Admissions Webinar  
September 21, 2016

# Housekeeping

- You will not hear audio until the webinar begins
  - Send any technical problems to AAMC Meetings using the **Chat Panel**
- Submit your questions via the **Q&A Panel** and send to “**All Panelists**”
- A recording of this presentation will be available on [www.aamc.org/students](http://www.aamc.org/students) in about 2 weeks



# Today's Panelists

## **Michael Duerden, MD Candidate**

University of Washington School of Medicine

## **Kelly Foster, MD Candidate**

FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine

## **Andria Williams, MBA**

Director of Admissions & Recruitment

FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine

## **Jim Castellanos, MD-PhD Candidate**

Weill Cornell/Rockefeller/Sloan Kettering Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program

## **Ruth Gotian, MS**

Administrative Director

Weill Cornell/Rockefeller/Sloan Kettering Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program

# Resources from the AAMC

AAMC for Students, Applicants, and Residents

Cart Sign In or Register

Choosing a Medical Career

Applying to Medical School

Attending Medical School

Training in a Residency or Fellowship



Choosing a Medical Career



## I'm thinking about becoming a doctor, research physician, or a biomedical scientist.

Explore medical career options, ways to get experience, inspiring stories, expert advice, and more, to help you choose your path to medicine. You might find options that you didn't know existed. [View More](#)



### Medical Careers

Medicine provides you with many career options—from clinical practice to biomedical research, from public health to medical education.



### Medical School 101

Learn the basics of the requirements for getting into medical school, what it's really like, and options for paying for your medical education.



### Careers in Medical Research

If you have an interest in scientific exploration and a desire to break new ground in medical knowledge, consider a career in medical research.

[www.aamc.org/students](http://www.aamc.org/students)



# Ask A Med Student Video Series

## Ask a Med Student Video Series

Medical students answer questions about their path to medical school, what med school courses are like, patient experiences, and more.



00:00 / 03:31

### Which Experiences Have Inspired You?

Medical students share moments and activities that inspire them, keep them motivated, and help



00:00 / 04:00

### What Helped You Become a Stronger Candidate the Second Time Around?

Medical students accepted after reapplying share



00:00 / 04:10

### How Do You Balance Medical School with Your Personal Life?

Medical students share how they manage their time in medical school and have a personal life.



# Aspiring Docs Diaries

Aspiring Docs Diaries 

[ABOUT ASPIRING DOCS](#)

[BLOGGERS](#)

[APPLICANT TIMELINE](#)

[FIND A MED SCHOOL](#)

[CONTACT](#)

A background image showing two young women smiling in a library setting. The woman on the left is looking towards the right, and the woman on the right is talking on a mobile phone. The text is overlaid on this image.

## BECOME A BLOGGER!

Want to share your story?

[Learn More](#)

[www.aspiringdocsdiares.org](http://www.aspiringdocsdiares.org)



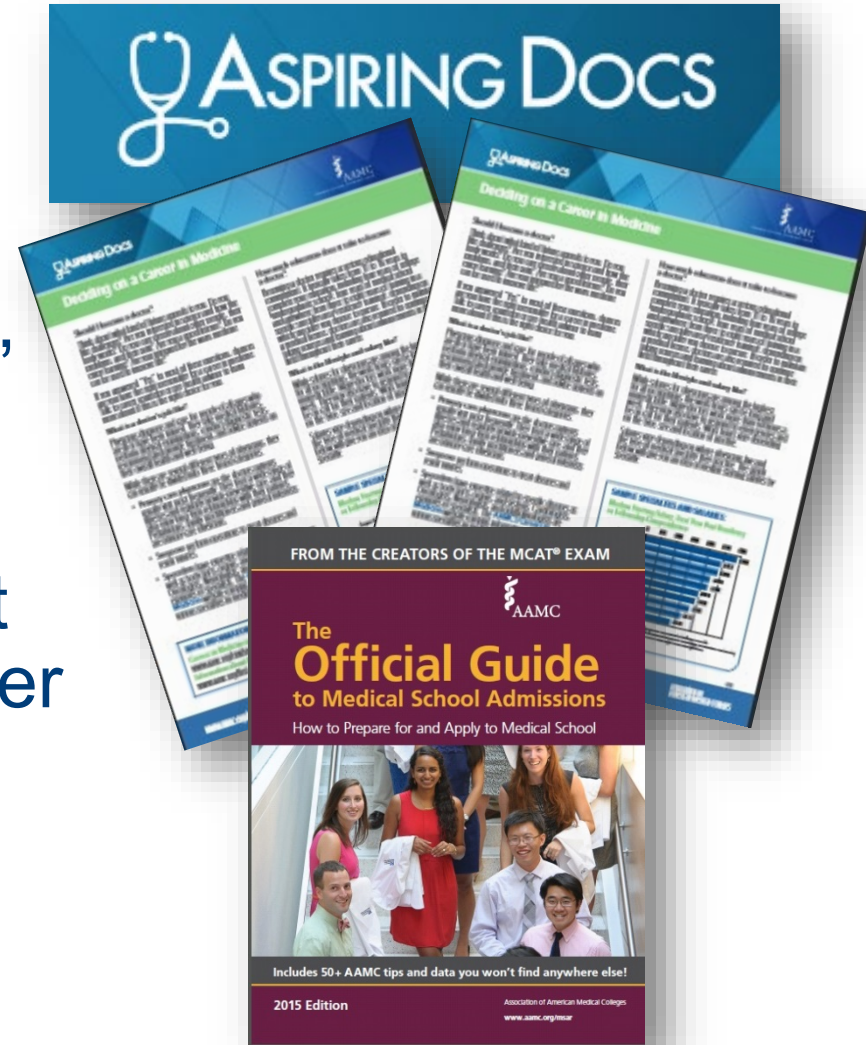
# Resources from the AAMC

## Aspiring Docs

Answers to your questions about pursuing and living a medical career, fact sheets, and more.

## MSAR

Search for programs that fit well with your medical career goals.



[www.aamc.org/students](http://www.aamc.org/students)



# Resources from the AAMC (cont.)

## Fee Assistance Program

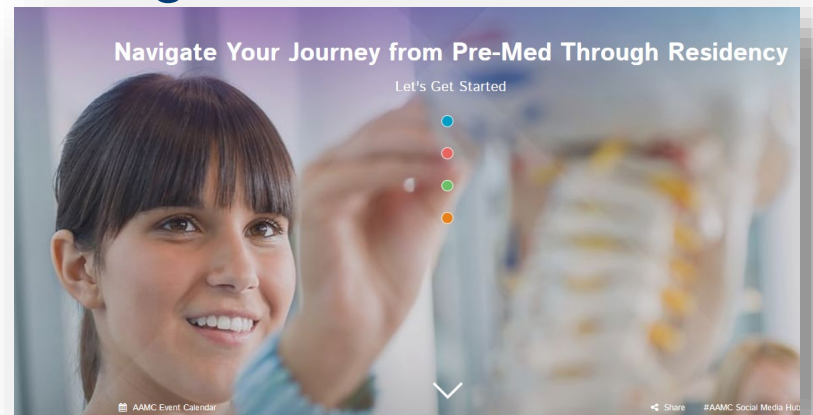
Designed to assist those who, without financial assistance, would be unable to afford to apply to medical school

[www.aamc.org/fap](http://www.aamc.org/fap)

## Med-MAR

A service for medical school applicants who self-identify as being from groups historically underrepresented in medicine or who are economically disadvantaged

[www.aamc.org/medmar](http://www.aamc.org/medmar)



[www.aamc.org/students](http://www.aamc.org/students)



**Use the Q&A panel to submit  
your questions!**





**Michael Duerden**  
**MD Candidate**

University of Washington  
School of Medicine

# Pre-Medical Experience

- Everyone has a compelling story
- Your own personal journey
- Fellowships



*"It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to."*

*— J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings*

# Application Experience

- The MCAT - The first of many standardized tests
- AMCAS, letters, and your personal statement

*“Your focus determines your reality.”*

*- Qui-Gon Jinn*

# Interview Experience

- Interview preparation - Practice, Practice, Practice
- Be comfortable talking about yourself



*"Just keep swimming"*  
- Dory, Finding Nemo



# Medical School Experience

- Things to know going forward
- Do not fear failure

*“It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live”*

*- Dumbledore*

# Last Thoughts

- Use your support system
- Do not get overwhelmed
- Be yourself

*“Hang on tight and survive. Everybody does.”*

*- Captain Kirk*

**Use the Q&A panel to submit  
your questions!**



**FIU**

**Herbert Wertheim  
College of Medicine**

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY



# Background Info

Name: Kelly Foster

From: Sunrise, FL

- Grew up in South Florida
- Parents immigrated from Jamaica
- Have a twin sister
- Interests: Theater, Dance, Gymnastics, Travel, and Photography





# Academic History

Undergraduate Education:  
University of Miami  
Major: Nursing  
Minor: Theater Arts

Graduate Education:  
Some classes at Nova Southeastern  
University

Medical School:  
Florida International University  
Herbert Wertheim College of  
Medicine  
Class of 2018



# Non-Traditional Applicant

- Worked as a Registered Nurse for 8 years before entering medical school
- Worked in the PICU, NICU, Nursery, Pediatrics
- Why did I decide to go to medical school?
- Completed pre-med classes while working
- Who provided me with guidance to go to medical school?
- Volunteered with the Paralyzed Veterans Association of Florida
- Volunteered with the American Heart Association

# The MCAT, AMCAS Application, and Interview

- MCAT
  - Test prep course and a local tutoring company
  - Best resource was the practice MCAT exams on the AAMC website
- AMCAS Application
  - Get your LORs early and apply early
- Interview
  - Research the most commonly asked questions
  - Look at your resume/CV and be prepared to answer questions based on what you have done

# Best Advice

- Research programs that can help prepare you for medical school.
- Self reflect---know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Obtain a premed advisor---Don't do it alone!
- Don't let your age or any other obstacle dictate your future goals!



**Use the Q&A panel to submit  
your questions!**







Andria L. Williams, MBA  
Director, Admissions and Recruitment



# HWCOCM At A Glance

- South Florida's first public medical school
- Fully accredited by the LCME
- Opened in Fall 2009
- Full capacity with 480 students
- Curriculum integrates basic sciences and clinical experiences
- Distributed learning model
- USMLE pass rates and mean scores exceed national averages
- Residency Match rates above the national average
- Green Family Foundation NeighborhoodHelp™
- Panther Learning Communities

# HWCOM Mission

By providing an environment enhanced by diversity, clinical innovation, and research, we prepare socially accountable, community-based physicians, scientists, and health professionals who are uniquely qualified to transform the health of patients and communities.



# HWCOC Student Body

## Gender

Female 48%  
Male 52%

**Underrepresented in Medicine\*** 45%

**Disadvantaged\*** 19%

## Residency

Florida 81%  
Out-of-State 19%

**AAMC Fee Assistance Program** 16%

**First-generation in College\*** 20%

## Languages Spoken\*

Bilingual 52%  
Multilingual 35%

**Nontraditional/Career Changers** 26%

**Reapplicants** 17%

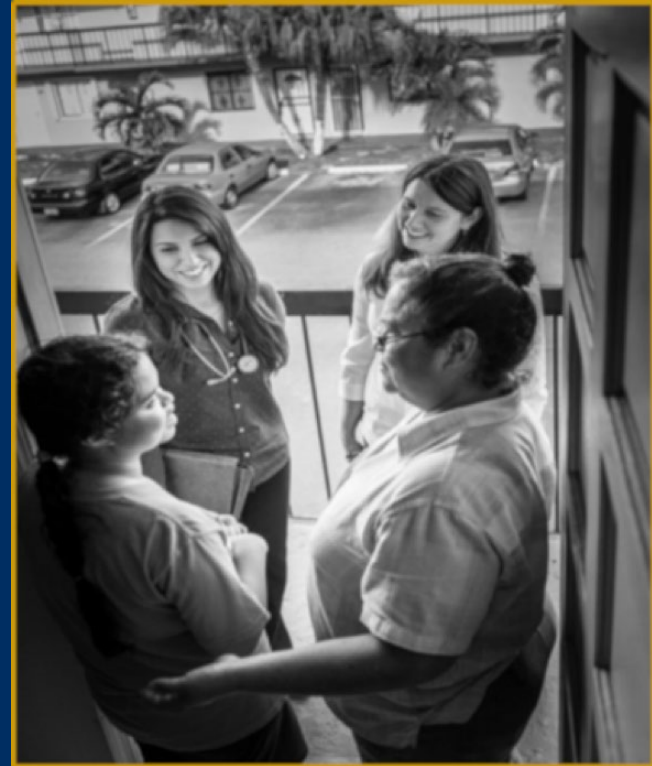
\*Denotes self-reported data



# Admissions Criteria

The Admissions Committee assess the “whole” applicant using holistic review and balances an applicant’s experiences, attributes, and metrics in a way that will help HWCAM achieve its mission.

HWCAM has provided access through the use of holistic review to students who would have been overlooked if only metrics were considered.



# Characteristics/Experiences

- Motivation toward practicing caring, compassionate medicine
- Exposure to clinical medicine, such as physician shadowing and hands-on patient care activities
- Altruism demonstrated by commitment to voluntary community service activities
- Research exposure
- Leadership skills and experience
- Teamwork/ability to work with others
- Unique and enriching qualities often demonstrated by overcoming obstacles, diversity of experiences, and distance traveled
- Attributes that include interpersonal and communication skills, integrity, maturity, conscientiousness, empathy, resilience, and emotional stability



# Top Six Important Tips

- Keep a journal of your activities.
- Take the MCAT exam when you are ready.
- Use the AMCAS Experiences to tell schools who you are.
- Submit all materials in a timely manner.
- Apply to schools you share a common mission with.
- Beware of the dream killers!



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FIU\_Med

**Use the Q&A panel to submit  
your questions!**





# **Jimmy Castellanos**

**MD-PhD Candidate**

**Weill Cornell/Rockefeller/Sloan Kettering**

**Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program**

# Background

- Parents were undocumented immigrants from El Salvador
- Chino Hills, California (Los Angeles suburb)
- Enlisted in United States Marines at 17 years old

# Pre-med and Current Experience

## *Post-high school:*

- United States Marines (6 years)
  - Iraq War Veteran (Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2004)
  - Aviation weapons system technician
  - Honorably discharged (2007)

## *Pre-med:*

- Chaffey Community College
- B.A. in Biology—Claremont McKenna College
- M.F.A. in Creative Writing—University of Arizona

## *Present:*

- MD-PhD student: graduation year 2020 (I hope...)
  - Weill Cornell/Rockefeller/Sloan-Kettering Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program
  - PhD in Immunology (microbe-immune cell interactions)



# Application Experience

- **Roadblocks:**
  - “You’re never getting in!” (pre-med advisor)
  - “You’re getting in everywhere!” (lab directors)
- **Interviews: your personal statement matters!**
  - “I read your personal statement five times this morning...”
  - “Jimmy, let’s talk about life...”
  - “Jimmy, I can’t wait to read your book...” (Ruth Gotian)
  - “Oh, your MCAT.....it’s on the lower end. Tell me why...”



# Advice

- Find your best cheerleaders
- Personal statement:  
Trust your story  
  
Be honest, be funny,  
be deep, be goofy  
Just be yourself!
- Interviews: just run with  
the conversation



**Use the Q&A panel to submit  
your questions!**



# MD-PHD PROGRAMS



Ruth Gotian, MS  
Administrative Director

Weill Cornell/Rockefeller/Sloan Kettering  
Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program

Twitter: @TriIMDPhD

Facebook: [facebook.com/TriIMSTP](https://facebook.com/TriIMSTP)

# WHAT MAKES AN APPLICANT STAND OUT?



# RUTH GOTIAN'S TIPS

- APPLY EARLY, APPLY EARLY, APPLY EARLY!
- Have *at least* one long term research experience.
- Have a letter of recommendation from every significant research experience.
- Think long and hard about why you want to be a physician-scientist. Have that passion come through in your personal statement.
- Have your recommenders write comparative statements.



**Use the Q&A panel to submit  
your questions!**





Tomorrow's Doctors, Tomorrow's Cures®

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Learn

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Serve

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Lead

Association of  
American Medical Colleges