

Anatomy of a Residency Application

Lanita S. Carter, PhD
Director, Medical Education and Student Services
Huntsville Regional Medical Campus

What information do I need for my residency application?

- Curriculum vitae (CV)
 - Summary of your education, research, volunteer and other activities
 - Standard way to present credentials in academia
- Personal Statement (PS)
 - Opportunity to tell your story
 - Highlight experiences and personal qualities relevant to the specialty
- Letters of Recommendation (LORs)
 - Support from others with whom I have worked
 - Can speak to your abilities and aptitude for the specialty

Preparing the CV

A CV is a way of telling your story in a standard format.

- Consider who will read this. What do they want to know about you?
- Use the format to highlight important parts of your career.
- BUT...it will not be uploaded in your ERAS application.
 - Used in other ways...

How will I use the CV?

Important document for:

- Information for away rotations
- To share with career advisor in planning application
- MSPE letter
- Preparing your ERAS application
- Information for letter writers

How do I get started on the CV?

- Consider who will read this. What do they want to know about you?
- Use the format to highlight important parts of your career.
- **Follow the format of:**
 - When?
 - What?
 - Where?
 - What did I do as part of this experience?

Structure of the CV

- Don't use a TEMPLATE—can cause formatting problems
- To make a CV:
 - Include EVERYTHING since beginning college (will edit later)
 - All honors, awards, research, volunteer activities, extracurricular activities, work experiences, etc.
 - Add details to entries—tell “when”, “what”, “where” and a brief narrative (if needed) about what you did
 - Don't write in sentences; use phrases
 - Be brief in descriptions

Personal identification comes first

Three styles

Laura E. Parker

432 Magnolia Avenue
Huntsville, AL 35801

(256) 456-7890
leparker@uab.edu

Jeffrey D. Smith

2345 Thomas Rd. Apt 123 • Birmingham, AL 35223 • (205) 663- 3434 • jdsmith@uab.edu

Robert J. White

1234 Williams Road
Madison, AL 35758
Ph: 256-325-6789
Email: rjwhite@uab.edu

Education

Two styles

Laura E. Parker

432 Magnolia Avenue
Huntsville, AL 35801

(256) 456-7890
leparker@uab.edu

Education:

Reverse chronological order

- 2025 M.D. (expected), UAB Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine
- 2021 B.S., *summa cum laude*, Biomedical Sciences, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

Jeffrey D. Smith

2345 Thomas Rd. Apt 123 • Birmingham, AL 35223 • (205) 663- 3434 • jdsmith@uab.edu

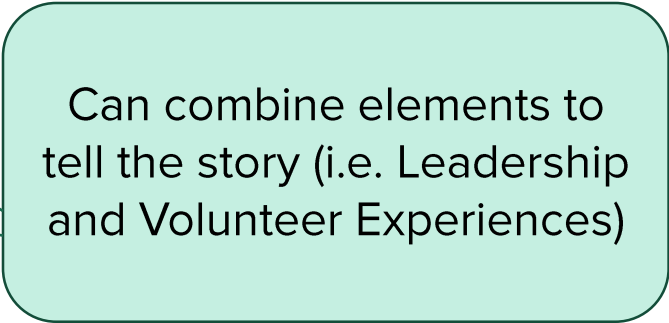
EDUCATION

No post-bac or community college courses

- 2025 UAB Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine, Birmingham, Alabama
Doctorate of Medicine, Anticipated
- 2021 University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama
Masters of Science, Biology
- 2019 University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama
Bachelors of Science, Biomedical Science

What's next?

- Order in the way that best highlights your skills
- This may be:
 - Research Experiences (followed by research output—i.e. publications, presentations, etc.)
 - Extracurricular or volunteer activities
 - Leadership experience
 - Other work experiences
 - Other life experiences
 - Honors
- What is important to your career choice?



Can combine elements to tell the story (i.e. Leadership and Volunteer Experiences)

Research might be presented this way:

Laura E. Parker

432 Magnolia Avenue
Huntsville, AL 35801

(256) 456-7890
leparker@uab.edu

Education:

- 2025 M.D. (expected) UAB Marnix E. Heerink School of Medicine, Birmingham, Alabama
2021 B.S., *summa cum laude*, Biomedical Science, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

Research and Teaching Experience:

- 2022-24 **Summer Research and Scholarly Activity**, UAB Heersink School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics and Infectious Disease, Analyzed the specific gene mutations and protein expression responsible for the restoration of the protein synthesis $\Delta\gamma_{134.5}$ HSV mutants serially passaged in human glioma cell lines.
- 2019-20 **Teaching Assistant**, College of Sciences and Mathematics, Auburn University. Coordinated lecture schedule and held office hours to answer student questions for undergraduate pre-health course.
- 2019-20 **Study Partners Tutor**, Auburn University, Worked for university tutoring service teaching students in physics, general chemistry, and organic chemistry.

Be sure to include Scholarly Activity

Include teaching experiences. Can combine with Research.

Or this way if you have publications:

Jeffrey D. Smith

2345 Thomas Rd. Apt 123 • Birmingham, AL 35223 • (205) 663- 3434 • jdsmith@uab.edu

EDUCATION

2025 M.D. expected, UAB Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine, Birmingham, Alabama
2021 M.S. Biology, University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama
2019 B.S. Biomedical Sciences, University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE


2022 **Research assistant**, UAB Heersink School of Medicine, Department of Medicine. Influence of iabetes mellitus on Crohn's disease activity, with focus on use of corticosteroid therapy.
2020-2021 **Thesis research**, University of South Alabama, Department of Biology. Cloning HIV-1 with sequence analyses to determine randomness of recombination.
2020-2021 **Research assistant**, University of South Alabama, Department of Biology. Structural investigation of huntingtin exon 1.

PRESENTATIONS

Smith, J.D., Corman, L.C. Case Report: Subacute herpes simplex virus-1 encephalitis as an initial presentation of chronic lymphocytic leukemia and multiple sclerosis. Poster presented at the 2024 Annual Spring Meeting of the ACP, Alabama (AL) Chapter. **[Winning Poster for Excellence in Clinical Category]**

Smith, J.D., Gutierrez, A. Influence of diabetes mellitus on Crohn's disease activity, with focus on use of corticosteroid therapy. Poster presented at the 2022 Medical Student Research Day, UAB Heersink School of Medicine.

List any research, professional or poster presentations at conferences or meetings



Or this way:

Publications and presentations may be combined to create a single section.

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- 2023 Locher JL, Roth DL, Ritchie CS, **Cox KD**, Sawyer PB, Bodner EV, Allman RM. Body mass index, weight loss, and mortality in community-dwelling older adults. *The Journals of Gerontology Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences*. Dec: 62:1389-92.
- 2022 “Effect of dairy calcium on long term weight maintenance following participation in a weight loss program.” Poster presentation at UAB Heersink School of Medicine Medical Student Research Day 2022, Awarded Outstanding Research Related to Obesity.

IMPORTANT!!!

Be sure to use reference citation style in listing your posters, presentations and publications!

Work Experience

WORK EXPERIENCE

- 2020-2021 **Nuclear Engineer**, Southern California Edison, San Clemente, CA. Performed technical evaluations and analyses in the area of plant transients.
- 2018-2020 **Field Engineer**, Exxon Mobile, Houston, TX. Managed team to ensure success in delivering products to customer.

Work experience that accounts for gaps between undergraduate studies and medical school.

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

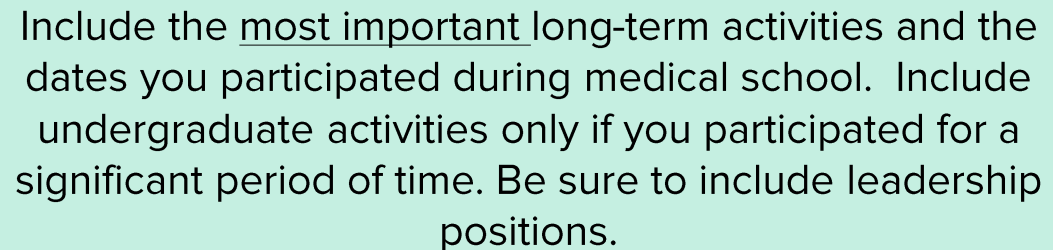
- 2019 **Huntsville Rural Pre-Medical Internship**. UABSOM Huntsville Campus, Huntsville, AL. Obtained insight into the importance of primary care, particularly in the rural setting
- 2018 **Surgical Assistant**, Decatur General Hospital, Decatur, AL. Prepared operating room for procedures, transported patients, assisted surgical team during procedures

Include all medically related work experiences.

Extracurricular Activities

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- 2022-2023 **Community Service Coordinator, Radiology Interest Group.** Helped organize presentations and workshops with radiology faculty and residents. Coordinated volunteer activities for medical students at Children's Hospital.
- 2022 **Pathway Program in Rural Medicine.** Participated in patient care in a rural family practice setting.
- 2021-2022 **Annual Dean's Weekend Host.** Helped recruit prospective medical students.
- 2021-2023 **Service Activities.** Participated in several community service activities including M-Power Free Clinic, Take a Child to the Doctor Day, clothing drives, and blood drives.
- 2018-2020 **Officer in Charge, College Special Response Team.** Provided first aid coverage for campus and community events.
- 2017-2018 **Habitat for Humanity.** Helped build affordable housing for those in need.
- 2017 **Website volunteer,** Health Sciences Centre. Assisted in developing a website for women's health issues.



Include the most important long-term activities and the dates you participated during medical school. Include undergraduate activities only if you participated for a significant period of time. Be sure to include leadership positions.

Volunteer Experiences

Can alternately be entitled “Leadership and Volunteer Experiences” or “Extracurricular and Volunteer Experiences”, combining two sections of information.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

- 2023 **Physical Exam Volunteer** for Special Olympics participants, Madison County, AL
- 2022 – 2023 **Volunteer Coordinator** for Nuts About Peds. Organized regular service projects and coordinated volunteers and head logistics.
- 2022 **Volunteer breakfast cook**, First Light women’s shelter, Birmingham, AL
- 2019 – 2020 **Volunteer**, Best Buddies- volunteer organization to befriend people with Down syndrome
- 2019 **Volunteer** at Free Health Clinic, Mercy Medical Clinic, Auburn, AL
- 2019 – 2020 **IMPACT Project Coordinator**, Attended weekly meetings, coordinated student volunteers with local Habitat for Humanity site, worked to build a house for a deserving family.
- 2018 – 2019 **Habitat for Humanity**, volunteer builder, Auburn, AL

Honors and Awards

HONORS AND AWARDS

Medical School

- 2024 American Medical Association, Huntsville Campus Scholarship
- 2023-2024 Board of Medical Scholarship Awards
- 2022 W. Hudson Turner Endowment
- 2021 Eloise and Charles P. Johnston Scholarship Endowment
- 2021 Henry Harland Hoffman Scholarship
- 2021 Russell, Benjamin & Roberta Medical Scholarship Endowment

Undergraduate Programs

- 2020 National Dean's List
- 2019 Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society
- 2019-2020 Mortar Board
- 2020 Board of Regents Scholarship recipient
- 2020 Order of Omega
- 2018 All-American Scholar

Include any awards and scholarships you received during medical school.

Include only the most important awards and scholarships from undergraduate or other programs.

Honors and Awards

HONORS & AWARDS

2020	Comer Foundation Scholarship recipient
2019	Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society
2018 – 2019	Golden Key (Junior Honor Society)
2018	Ruby Award for Circle K for Community Service hours (over 120 hours)
2018	Outstanding Secretary Award for Circle K (chosen out of the entire state)
2018	Dean's List College of Science and Math
2017 – 2018	National Dean's List
2016 – 2017	Freshman Academic Scholarship

Include any awards and scholarships you received during medical school.

Include only the most important awards and scholarships from undergraduate or other programs.

Hobbies and interests

What do these tell the reader?

- Movies, reading, and computer games
- Hiking, camping, and sailing
- Cooking and gardening
- Golf, Auburn football, and spending time with friends
- Home repair, building model boats, and painting
- Travel, Spanish, and international health
- Fishing, hunting, camping

This section is optional and should be brief.
Be prepared to discuss anything you include here.
List in bullet form.

Examples of CVs

Checklist for CVs

- **Follow the format of:**
 - When?
 - What?
 - Where?
 - What did I do as part of this experience?
- Make it easy to read!
- Be accurate about dates/entries and **spell check!**
- DON'T USE A TEMPLATE—Start from scratch!
- Use the TAB key—don't set tabs! Hard to reformat!
- Edit out irrelevant entries—if it does not support your story, leave it out!
 - HINT!!—This is where you “downsize” all those not so important experiences!

For more information:

- Residency Application Resources & Timeline (UAB SOM website)
 - [Residency Application Resources & Timeline - Heersink School of Medicine | UAB](#)
- Careers in Medicine (good info, not so good examples for length and clarity)
 - Prepare for Residency
 - “Writing a Curriculum Vitae“

**This is your story.
Be careful with its accuracy.**

Add to it as your experience widens.

Writing the Personal Statement

Your Personal Statement

- This is an opportunity to share more information.
- But this is not about being a great writer.

How do I start?

- Consider that they want to know
- Start with basic paragraphs:
 - Why are you interested in this specialty?
 - What experiences confirmed your choice?
 - What strengths or skills make this a good fit for you?
 - What are you looking for in a residency program?

Explain the “why”

- Why are you interested in this specialty?
 - Describe an experience that influenced your choice
 - Could be a patient encounter or life experience
 - May be an “aha” moment
 - Stick to the “why”
 - Don’t waste time by explaining why you want to go to medical school—you’re already there!

Are you sure?

- What experience(s) confirmed your choice?
 - Describe patient encounter or clinical experience that solidified your choice
 - Don't talk about other specialties—it confuses the reader!
 - Stick to the story without a lot of unrelated details

What about fit?

- What strengths or skills make this a **good fit** for you?
 - Describe the skills that you may have that fit this specialty (working with your hands, etc.)
 - Specialty as preparation for career goals (extensive volunteer experiences targeted at underserved populations, etc.)
 - Focus on describing skills (leadership, teamwork)
 - Don't rehash CV—highlight broader experiences

Which program?

- What are you looking for in a residency program?
 - Think about the types of program—community vs academic
 - Exposure to broad range of patients
 - Opportunity to teach—particularly if you have TA experiences
 - Research opportunities
 - Other characteristics—global health, community engagement, etc.

What else should be shared?

- Stories that that make the “point”

“I can distinctly remember my introduction to internal medicine. A family friend who was an attending at a local hospital invited me to observe rounds on his internal medicine teaching service during my ninth grade year. I recall feeling a sense of excitement as I watched how his team of residents interacted to manage critically ill patients. Everything that morning was foreign to me. I knew nothing of what it meant to be an internist. However, this introduction did have a profound impact on me and I believe it is where my interest in internal medicine began.”

What else should be shared?

- Stories that illustrate your skills
 - “problem solving”
 - “intervening”
 - “completing”
 - What convinces them of this?

“My research experience proved particularly helpful during my acting internship when my new patient, an elderly mother of four, was in cardiac arrest in the ER. While at home following a hospitalization for acute renal failure, she had become profoundly hypokalemic. Her family was frightened and angry - what had gone wrong? Thanks to the experience and knowledge I gained through my research on acute renal failure, I was able to explain what had happened in a way they understood, calming the family and diffusing their anger.”

What else should be shared?

- Explanations of risk points
 - Low academic or exam performance
 - Course or exam failures
 - Leaves of absence

“There are few people who can say that contracting *Giardia lamblia* was the best thing that ever happened to them. My struggles began with Fundamentals in the fall and did not end until being sick with *Giardia* in the spring. I was devastated with having to repeat my first year. While doing pediatric research during my time off, I realized that working with children was just what I wanted to do with my life. I started the new school year with a newly found determination to reach my goal. Fighting my way back from failure was the hardest thing I have ever done and I now know that I have the strength to succeed not only in medicine but also to tackle life’s trials and tribulations.”

Personal Statement Checklist

- Check for grammar and spelling
- Don't focus on being creative—focus on interesting or unique factors
- Link your statement to the specialty
- Don't rehash your CV
- LIMIT to 1 page in 12 font

Letters of Recommendation (LORs)

Choosing your letter writers for LORs

- Letters should be from faculty who:
 - Good personal experience with you
 - Know you well and can describe your clinical judgment, fund of knowledge, interpersonal skills and personal qualities
 - Opinion that you are a “star”
- Specialty vs. Non-Specialty faculty?
- National reputation? Trained at a program of interest to you?
- Away rotations?
- Ask career advisor about specialty expectations for LORs
- Sense of urgency about getting the job done!

When to ask for a letter?

- Typically May-August
- Depends on scheduled specialty rotation
- Will need their complete information for ERAS (academic rank, position if dean or department chair, correct name of department, contact information)
- Be sure to give them adequate time, preferably 4-6 weeks
- OK to ask clerkship directors for letters from 3rd year rotations

How to ask for a letter?

- Ask directly and in person if at all possible
- The question is, “Would you be willing to write me a **strong** letter of recommendation?”
- Always offer a graceful exit, “or should I ask someone else because of your busy work schedule?”

How to ask for a letter?

- Provide the writer with appropriate information about you
 - CV
 - PS
 - Academic summary
- If you worked with them on a rotation, remind them of several cases you saw and describe what you learned
- Describe any particular clinical skills that you feel that you learned or improved on during the rotation
- After you request a LOR, always follow up with an email or letter/note to your writer to say “Thank You” for their time and consideration

How many letters do I need?

- Depends on the specialty
 - Ask career advisor
 - Check program website for the number they expect/accept
 - Often 3, but sometimes 4
 - Some expect a chair's letter or a standardized letter
- Extra LORs can be mixed/matched with your list of programs, depending on the relevance of the letter

How are letters submitted?

- Enter your LOR Authors in your MyERAS Application
- Letter writer receive a link to ERAS LOR portal
- All LORs will be uploaded using ERAS Letter of Recommendation Portal by your authors or their designee

Reminders--

- Ask for input on your CV and personal statement from MSS (directors on your campus) and your career advisor
- Give your CV and personal statement to your letter writers when asking for LOR
- Bring your CV and personal statement to your MSPE appointment (Bonus points—Send ahead of time!)

Summary:

- CV
 - How we present our credentials in academia—common language
 - When, What, Where and What did I do?
- PS
 - Tells your story
 - Why I want to match in this specialty
- LOR
 - Support for your application in the specialty
 - Can describe your abilities and passion for the specialty

UAB THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM.

HEERSINK SCHOOL OF MEDICINE HUNTSVILLE REGIONAL MEDICAL CAMPUS

Questions/discussion