

OSA S.T.E.P.S. to Success



Office of Student Affairs
Studentaffairs@som.umaryland.edu

OSA Career Advising OSA STEPS to Success

S. Self-Assessment
T. Target Specialty
E. Experience
P. Preparation & Planning
S. Strategy Execution

OSA Student Handbook

- [Administrative Support](#)
- [Commitment to Professionalism](#)
- [Commitment to Wellbeing](#)
- [First Generation Students](#)
- [School Policies](#)

How Can OSA Help You?

Registration
Brian Wynder
Bwynder@som.umaryland.edu

OSA Career Advisors

[OSA Deans](#)
Kerri Thom, MD (LYT)
John Allen, MD (JF)
Marissa Flaherty, MD (MGP)
Elisabeth Lamos, MD (ED)

[Specialty Advisors](#)

Planning Ahead: Setting Up Your Spring for Success

As you move through the second term, it's a great time to think ahead and begin laying the groundwork for a successful transition into your summer and the MS2 year. Small, intentional steps now can make this time more manageable and meaningful. In this newsletter, we'll highlight key areas to focus on—academics, shadowing, research planning, and exploring your clinical interests—to help build momentum and align your efforts with your long-term goals.

Academics

Your academic foundation is one of the most important parts of your early medical school journey. MS1 is the time to build **strong habits**, understand **how you learn** best, and ensure you're **prepared** for the increasing complexity of MS2 and eventual board preparation. **It helps you:**

- Strengthen core concepts that will carry into MS2 and clerkships
- Build consistent study routines and time-management strategies
- Identify academic support needs early rather than reactively
- Learn how to balance coursework with shadowing, research, and personal well-being

Expect your academic approach to evolve as the curriculum progresses—regularly reassess what is working and what needs to shift.

Tools/Resources

[UMSOM Academic Development | Academic Success](#)
[Academic Coaching | UMB](#)
[Educational Support and Disability Services | ESDS](#)
[Peer Support Network | UMSOM](#)

Shadowing Specialties

Shadowing is a great way to see different practice environments, observe physician workflows, and start noticing what resonates with you. It can spark curiosity, help you ask better questions, and give context to what you're learning in the classroom. At the same time, shadowing has its limits—it's observational, often brief, and may not reflect the full scope of a specialty. Use it as one data point, not the deciding factor, as you explore where you might fit best. [CiM | How medical students choose their specialty](#)

Exploring Interests

The preclinical years are a great time to **stay curious and sample widely**. Be creative! Exploring interests isn't always about choosing a specialty now—it's about **noticing what kinds of clinical questions, patient populations, and environments energize you**. Small steps like interest group events, conversations with faculty, or joining a specialty society (particularly if they have a mentoring program!) can broaden your perspective.

Exploration also happens **beyond academics**: community service, advocacy, and student-led initiatives offer low-stakes ways to build skills, make connections, and discover what feels meaningful to you in medicine.

- Recognize patterns in what motivates and challenges you
- Understand the variety of roles physicians play across specialties
- Build early connections with peers, faculty, and professional organizations
- Make informed decisions about how to use your limited time

Tools/Resources

Student Interest Groups (SIGs)

Specialty societies & student membership options

Specialty info sessions and panels

Research

Research is a chance to deepen your understanding of medicine, contribute to new knowledge, and build relationships with mentors. Early in medical school, it's less about producing results and more about exploring questions that interest you and seeing how scholarly work fits into your growth as a future physician. **It helps you:**

- Clarify what topics or patient populations you're drawn to
- Build skills in inquiry, critical thinking, and collaboration
- Form connections with faculty who can support your career development
- Strengthen your residency application through sustained involvement

Remember that research takes time—choose projects that match your curiosity, capacity, and long-term goals rather than what seems most impressive on paper.

Tools/Resources

[Office of Student Research](#)

[Careers in Medicine | Research](#)

OSA Insider Podcasts

Apple Podcasts

E 102 Global Health
E 100 Leadership
E 72 Mission/Brand
E 89 ESDS

AAMC Resources

Four-phase career planning process

Wellness Corner

In the wise words of Dr. Parker, “Patient care begins with self-care”. As you are building your academic foundation and exploring interests – don't forget to prioritize your own wellbeing, ensuring health, sleep, nutrition, and connection to others. What is one (additional) loving thing you can do for yourself this week?

Additional Resources:

[UMSOM Wellbeing](#)

[Peer Support Network](#)

[UMB Student Health & Wellbeing](#)

[UMB Student Counseling Center](#)

