

PENN PBS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2020 NEWSLETTER

PBS PHILLY CLEAN-UP

On June 4th, students came together to clean the streets of Philly following protests. It was a great way for those unable to attend protests to show up for our city and others! Thank you to those who came out to help and showed support! We look forward to our next event!



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MCAT QUESTION OF THE DAY

- A force of 1 minion can cause 1 gram to accelerate at 1 cm/s^2 .
How many Newtons are equivalent to 1 minion?
- A. 10^{-5}
B. 10^{-1}
C. 10^1
D. 10^5

PENN PRE-HEALTH PROGRAMS ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT: VIVIANE CAHEN

See pages 2 and 3 for a full alumna interview as Viviane shares her advice and journey!



GET TO KNOW: MCAT PEERS STUDY CLUB

If studying alone for the MCAT during isolation has not been ideal, consider joining the MCAT Peers Study Club! Think of this club as your reliable study buddy with structured daily zoom meetings focusing on content review, passage questions, and occasional mock exams. Twice a week, the club even features a special appearance by our very own Dr. Witmer!

FOR FURTHER QUESTIONS/INFORMATION OR TO JOIN, CONTACT CO-FOUNDERS:

MEGAN KIM (KIMMEGAN@SAS.UPENN.EDU)

VIVIAN SHOUKRUN (VSHOUKRUN@SAS.UPENN.EDU)

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS NOT A REPLACEMENT FOR AN OFFICIAL MCAT PREP COURSE OR SELF-STUDY.

WELLNESS

From playing the guitar, walking around Philly, to connecting with friends, we were inspired by the talents, resilience, & self-care practices our PBS community shared with us on Instagram! You deserve the time and care you give to studies, roles, & others.

In case no one told you today:

1. Your best is enough.
2. You are enough.
3. Mental health care IS healthcare.
4. We want to hear what YOU do to de stress!

What is your favorite self-care activity?

Type something...

Resources:

SAMHSA's National Helpline - 1-800-662-HELP (4357) - a free, confidential, 24/7 treatment referral & information service for individuals and families facing mental health hardships and/or substance use disorders.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) - mental health education, support groups, NAMI Helpline, video resource library, online discussion groups, etc. - <https://www.nami.org/Support-Education>

Crisis Text Line - Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor

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ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT: VIVIANE CAHEN



PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND ARRIVAL AT PENN:

I studied Economics and International Development at Tulane University. My junior year I studied abroad in Ghana to focus on education and economic development. While there, I got sick with dysentery and got exposed to the local healthcare system. The stark comparison between what we had in the US and what was available in Accra was what first got me interested in public health. I think I returned to NOLA and completed a public health minor. It wasn't until I did AmeriCorps VISTA and volunteered at local hospitals that I realized I wanted to pursue an MD/MPH over just an MPH degree. This realization led me to the Penn [Pre-Health Program].

INVOLVEMENT WHILE AT PENN:

While completing the [Penn Pre-Health Core Program], I worked full time at CHOP as a Clinical Research Assistant in the Division of Oncology. This made for some stressful times but it also taught me so much about the clinical world that I hadn't been exposed to yet. Additionally, I was Vice President of two clubs, Penn Social Justice on Medicine Club and Penn Future Women in Health. These clubs were the foundation for my friend groups and also gave me motivation to continue pursuing women leadership roles beyond PFWH and for that I'm truly grateful. Lastly, I volunteered at a few organizations, most notably, Service Link at the UCC clinic, CUT Hypertension, and in San Diego I was still involved with a pediatric oncology camp called Camp Reach for the Sky. All of these things I think helped motivate me to study for the postbac classes. Each guest speaker we had and each patient I saw, was another reminder of where I'd be in three years if I successfully completed the [Penn Pre-Health Core Program].!

I highly recommend the pomodoro study method! You can get a timer special timer from Amazon, but for me it allowed me to study less in a day and more efficiently. My first year, I would study for Dr. P's chem class for 12 hour days, but sometimes I would see no improvement and I didn't give myself time to relax or workout. Once I started incorporating the pomodoro effect and doing short, but serious study sessions, I started working out more, cooking more, going outside more, and even time for some fun reading! This was a huge health and academic success booster. My favorite class was Genetics! I loved the math aspect of the class. Dr. Zimmerman is one of the kindest professors I've ever had. He was always willing to help me in office hours and explain anything I didn't understand in lecture. I also loved orgo!

THE APPLICATION PROCESS:

I had a very successful cycle with a mediocre MCAT. For the MCAT, I recommend using Uworld while you study content review, anki to keep reviewing content, Next Step third party exam, in addition to Berkeley Review for content if you struggle with chem/ physics like me and lastly all of the AAMC material (do these 2 times through)! For school list, I can't emphasize enough how important mission fit is. I first looked at scores on MSAR and I created a list of any school where my MCAT/GPA fell within the 10%. I then went down that list and removed schools that I either didn't like the location or their mission. All of my interviews and acceptances came from schools who value community engagement, working with underserved populations, and non traditional applicants - aka I was a good mission fit! For letters of rec, I highly recommend finding two people who you've worked with for longer than a year! For me it was my PI at CHOP (4 years) and the CEO of the camp I volunteer at for over 5 years. These letters also were from two activities that I marked as "most important" which I think is really important! These letters were by far my strongest and I'm sure played a vital role in my acceptances! Activities are hard because some people are always going to do cookie cutter activities and to be honest that's okay. However, I recommend



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you find three activities that truly speak to you and stick to those for over a year. Consistency and quality is more important than quantity. For example, I was really involved with Peds ONC through my research and through my camp but I also was really passionate about working with underserved populations from my time in undergrad and Americorps and that's where service link and CUT hypertension came into play. I did each of these activities for over 2+ years and most of my clinical hours came from these last two activities. I don't think you need a lot of hours in one area or another but I think finding activities you are passionate about will make writing your application that much easier!

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS:

So for me I think being yourself is truly the most important. FIT is huge, so if you are not yourself, you may seem like you fit in at a school with the students, and then truly not. I interviewed at the following programs: Temple University, Sidney Kimmel at Jefferson, Cooper Medical School, Geisinger, GW, Wake Forest, FAU, University of Miami (MD/MPH), and OHSU (MD/MPH). Ultimately, I think interviews are just as much about you "interviewing them" and checking out their program as it is them interviewing you. At this point, they believe your numbers are enough and you can succeed! Thus, it's really important to just be yourself, chat with the other applicants as well as the dean/director of admissions, and just enjoy your day! Do not lie during the interviews and just try and have a normal conversation. MMI interviews are a little different than traditional interviews but they are also so fun and allow for all aspects of your personality to shine! Looking back on my application process, my biggest piece of advice is to truly focus on writing a narrative. From the personal statement to the secondaries, showing why you would bring diversity to a school, what experiences would make you succeed at a school, and why a specific school is right for you are the most important things. My personal statement and my secondaries all had the same theme - Health care is a human right. It was why I went into medicine and I made sure to talk about it in every aspect of my application. I don't think my 508 MCAT score got me all my interviews, I think it's my writing. I am happy to help edit personal statements and secondary applications to help out other [Penn Pre-Health Program students]!

ACCEPTED:

I ultimately decided to attend Oregon & Health Sciences University MD/MPH in the Epidemiology program! While it is a 5 year program, it was the right fit for me for multiple reasons. I'm from the west coast and the PNW is beautiful, so I wanted to be in close proximity to nature to go on hikes on the weekends. The average age of my class is 26, so it's older than most medical schools (I.e they really value non-trad applicants). The MPH in epidemiology is focused on research and I want to go into academic medicine (work at a pediatric institution like CHOP)! Lastly, I'm interested in pediatrics, medicine/peds, and family medicine. OHSU is ranked #1 for family medicine so I knew that it would give me the amazing training I wanted for a career in primary care! I love research so I would love to research access to health care for children and its effect on long term outcomes. Think ACES and the work that Dr. Nadine Burke Harris does (she is my idol)! I am hoping to work with a mix of urban underserved and rural underserved children. I am also interested in oncology as it allows me to combine a specialty and primary care! If I did oncology, I would focus on late effects post-cancer treatment and health disparities within cancer treatments and outcomes.

Thank you to our wonderful Penn Pre-Health Programs alumna, Viviane Cahen, for sharing her healthcare journey with us! She was kind enough to offer her contact information for any additional questions or to delve deeper into any above responses. (She even mentioned writing being her forte! An additional pair of talented eyes to read over personal statements is such a fantastic resource!) Viviane.c.cohen@gmail.com

Are you a Penn Pre-Health Programs Alumni willing to volunteer your time to share your success and tips with current students? Do you know alumni you'd love to hear more from? Let us know! upennpbs@gmail.com



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