

# **ASSOCIATION OF PROGRAM DIRECTORS IN SURGERY**

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## **APDS Position Statement 2020-2021 Mid-Application Cycle Recommendations**

The APDS leadership has set forth two position statements about the 2020-2021 application season (<https://apds.org/about/apds-position-statements/>). These statements offered strategies to engage the current application cycle in anticipation of a variety of stressors (pandemic, move to virtual interviews, lack of visiting rotations, increased applicant anxiety etc.) and a history of increasing applicant volumes (# of individual applicants and # of applications per applicant) over the past 5 years. In this statement, we provide an update and further recommendations to program directors and applicants.

We expect that general surgery programs are offering solely virtual interviews, and we are hopeful that our recommendations for transparency in the application review process and holistic application review have eased some of the anxiety of applicants while affording a more distributive selection of applicants for interview. At this stage, there is no effective database or registry to monitor these components of the application cycle.

We have heard the concerns that some applicants are not obtaining the same number of interviews as similar quality applicants in years past, perhaps due to a subset of applicants obtaining more interviews than was possible in years past. Others have noted anxiety with the potential of an increased number of unfilled positions in the primary match leading to reliance on the secondary process (SOAP) to fill positions. With increasing utilization of holistic application reviews by programs, we hope that there will be a better distribution of interviews and ultimate successful match outcomes across the whole of applicants. If programs are truly committed to holistic review, then applicant strengths will be independently determined by programs. If we "practice what we preach," then the definition of a "top applicant" is elusive and not pertinent to our current assessment of this process.

We are witnessing the convergence of several issues this applicant cycle. There has been an increase in the number of new medical schools over the past 5 years with a growth of graduates which has outpaced an increase in residency positions. This is coupled with the coronavirus crisis, resulting in the elimination of away rotations and the adoption of virtual interviews. With this level of change, anxiety is inevitable, on the part of both applicants and programs. In an attempt to reduce some of this anxiety, we propose the following to reflect the APDS leadership recommendations during the current application cycle.

**Program Directors should:**

1. **Be aware of NRMP match date modifications. (Link below)**
2. **Be aware that the NRMP has committed to a 4<sup>th</sup> round of SOAP**
3. **Be prepared for the contingency that applicants may not have completed all of their licensing examinations by rank list due date (specifically USMLE or COMLEX Step 2)**
4. **Assess the current number and quality of interviews to date. Consider adding additional interview opportunities if there is a concern with applicant interest, the caliber of applicants or anxiety with matching successfully**
5. **Consider creating a longer rank list than in past years.**

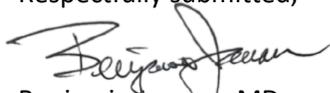
The APDS has no regulatory responsibility for general surgery residency applicants. Candidates applying to general surgery do not have input on our Board and are not represented in our bylaws. That said, within 6 months, many of them will become our residents, so we do offer the following ***recommendations to current applicants:***

1. *Assess the number of interviews you have confirmed. Consider cancelling interviews that you consider extra. Advisors typically recommend applying to 25-35 general surgery programs with a goal of between 10-15 interviews.*
2. *Meet with your advisors and consider their wisdom for how to approach the remainder of the application cycle including rank list completion*
3. *Utilize NRMP resources when considering the number of interviews/depth of rank list (link below)*

The APDS is partnering with stakeholders in GME to assess the potential for alternatives to the application and match process in the future. As long as there are more applicants than general surgery positions, there will be frustrations with this process. Defining and managing applicant and program expectations will be key to our success moving forward.

We wish you well with the conclusion of the recruiting season during these unprecedented circumstances and very much look forward to match data review at our spring meeting in Boston (April 27-29<sup>th</sup>) <https://apds.org/meetings/apds-meeting/>.

Respectfully submitted,



Benjamin Jarman, MD

APDS President on behalf of the Executive Committee

December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

AAMC Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) dates:

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-residency/article/eras-timeline-applicants/>

NRMP: Impact of length of rank order list on match results:

<https://www.nrmp.org/main-residency-match-data/>

National Residency Match Program (NRMP): Calendar dates

<http://www.nrmp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2021-Main-Residency-Match-Detailed-Calendar.pdf>

AAMC Posting of subspecialty society position statements: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-residency/article/specialty-response-covid-19/?edit>