

Breaking Into MD-PhD Programs

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COI Disclosure

Brian Sullivan receive financial compensation
from Washington University's
Medical Scientist Training Program

The Tragedy of the MD-PHD

Breaking into an MD-PHD program is considered a serious crime in most jurisdictions, and is punishable by a sentence of 8 years or longer (with time off for good data), and a fine of not less than \$500,000 (paid by taxpayers).

Why MD-PhD? (Why Not MD-PhD?)

- Learn Why and How in Addition to What
 - Limited value to a pure clinician
- Promotes Academic Career
 - Does not enhance competitiveness for residency programs
- Free MD Tuition plus Stipend
 - But at a cost of 4 years of an MD's salary
- You Get To Be a Student Until Age 30!
 - You're a student until 30 (or 31, or 32...)

Application Timeline~ AY2016

- Fall – Find a lab you want to work in for the next 20 months
- Fall - Prep for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)
- Winter/Spring- Ask for recommendation letters
- Spring-Take MCAT
- Spring- Begin writing application essays; ask 3 people to critique them
- Summer
 1. Submit materials to AMCAS by July 1
 2. Complete secondary applications by August 1
 3. Continue longitudinal research experience
 4. Shadow a doctor in a hospital or a clinic
 5. Submit materials to AMCAS by July 1

Application Timeline~ AY2017

- Interviews
- Interviews
- Interviews
- Keep up your grades, do not overload schedule; interviewing is a part-time job
- Manage candidacy
- Pick Program by May 1

What About a ~~Gap~~ Year?



- 2016 ~ 58% of applicants did a gap year
- Should be career-oriented
- Pros & Cons
- Applying from abroad

What are we looking for?

- Personal Characteristics
- Quantitative Measures
- Research Experience
- Lagniappe

Personal Characteristics

- Maturity & Integrity
- Commitment & Perseverance
- Curious & Creative
- High concern index
- Effective Team Player & Communicator

Quantitative Measures

2016 National Pool (n= 1,894)

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Range</u>
• MCAT	85%	1-99%
• GPA	3.6	2.3 - 4.0

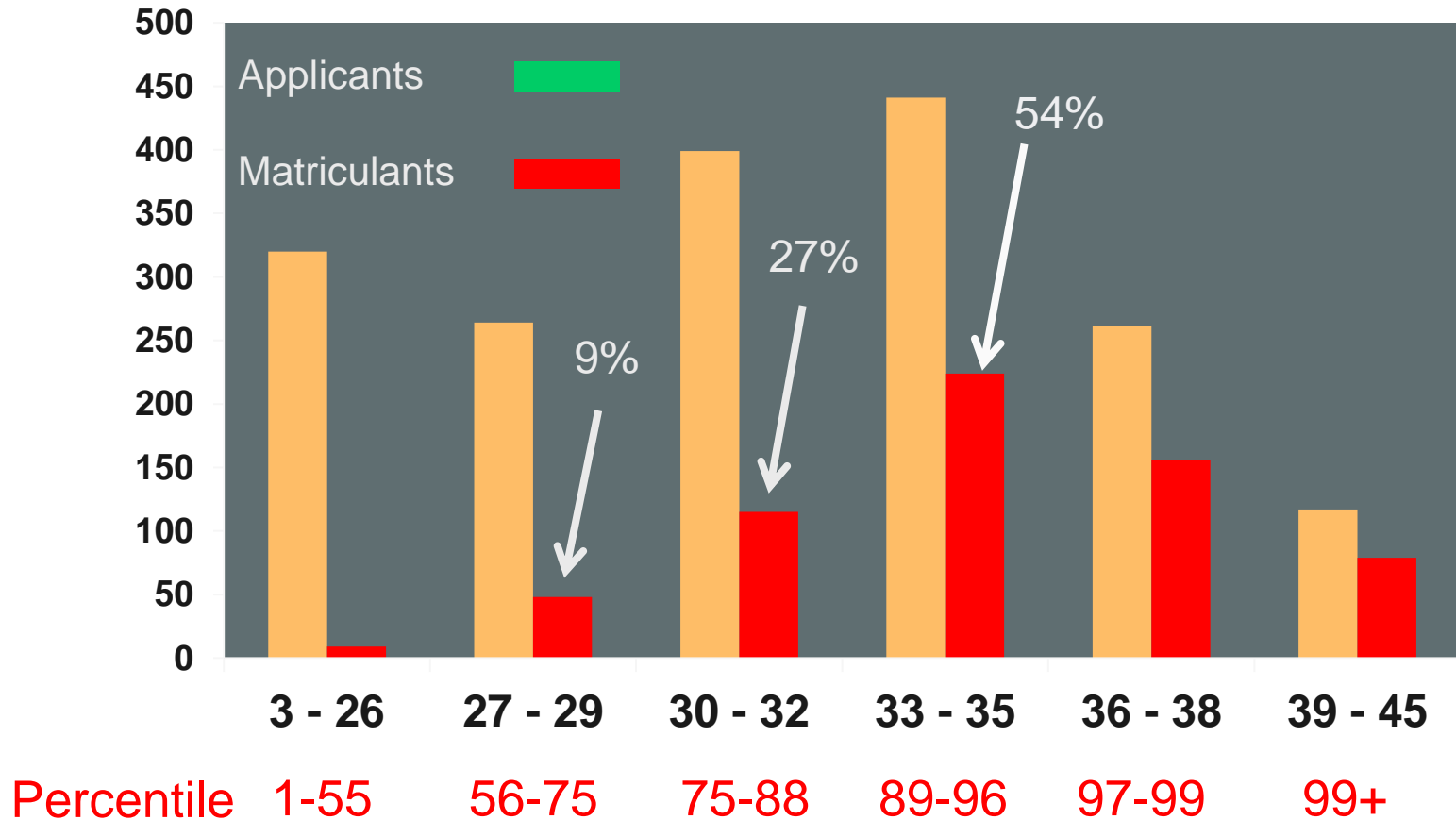
2016 Matriculants (n= 645)

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Range</u>
• MCAT	96%	32-99%
• GPA	3.8	3.0 - 4.0

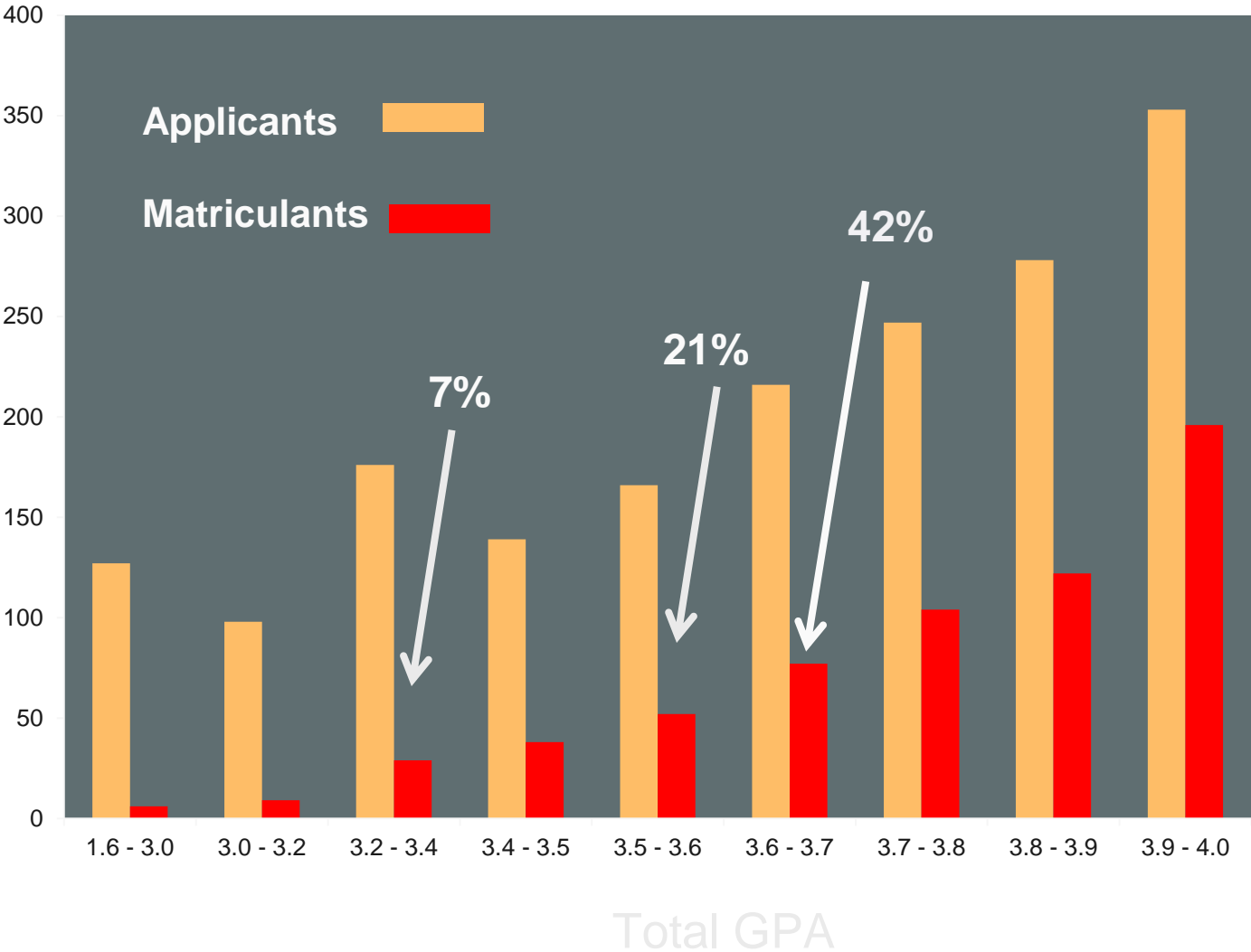
WUSOM MSTP MCAT Table

Score	Percentile	Group
517-528	96-99	Near or Above Mean
514-516	91-95	1 sd Below Mean – No Concerns
509-513	80-90	>1 sd Below Mean – Some Concerns
504-508	67-79	Marginal – Significant Concerns
<504	0-66	Not Competitive

MD-PhD Applicants 2015



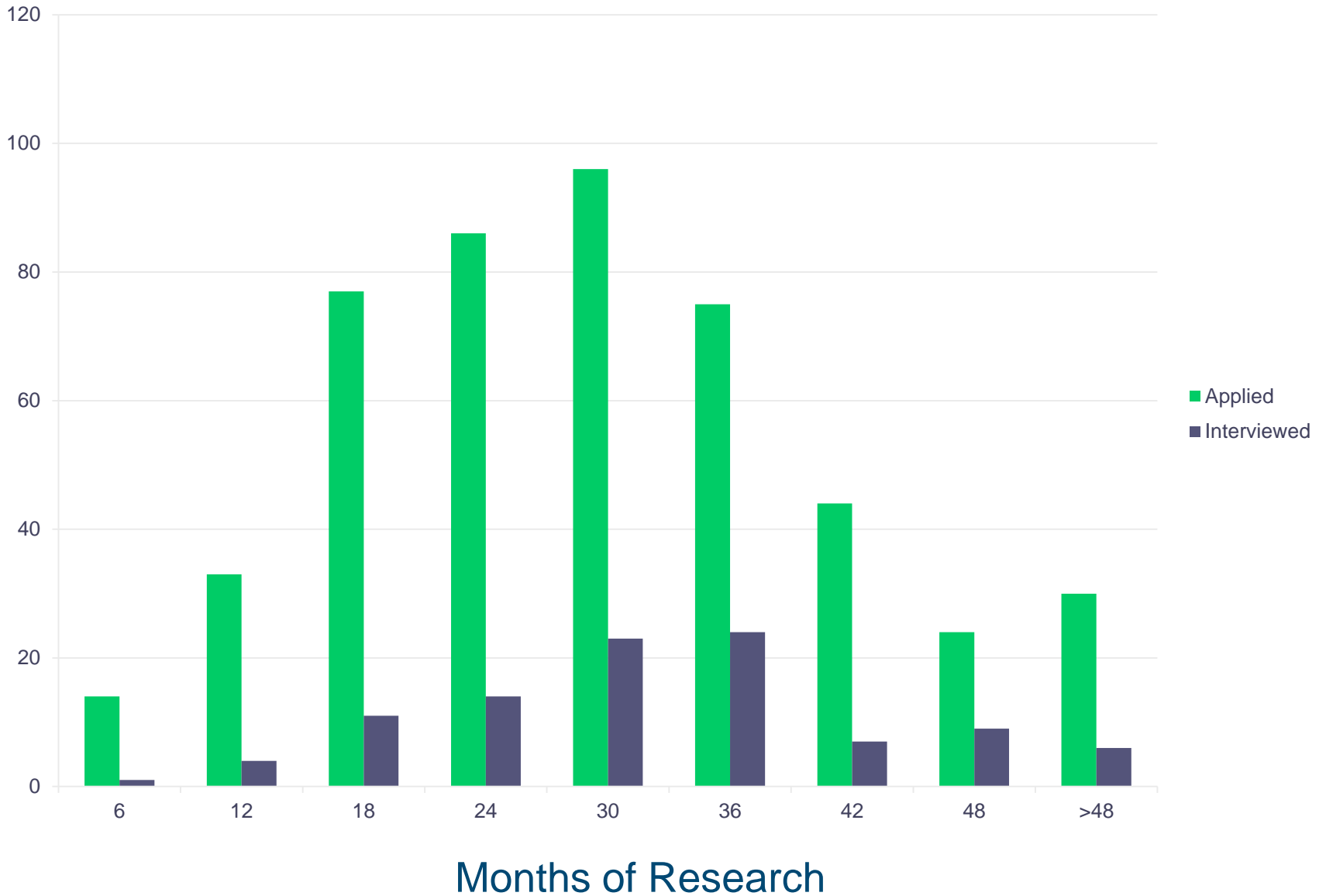
MD-PhD Applicants 2015 GPA



Research Experience

- **Sufficient research experience to understand what you are getting into**
 - **Two years of undergraduate research**
 - **Multiple summer projects**
 - **Senior thesis research**
- **Familiarity with testing a hypothesis**
- **Mechanistic rather than descriptive**

Number of Months of Research @ Time of Application 2015 WUStL Applicant Pool



Lagniappe

- Publications
- Meeting Presentations
- Leadership Experience
- Undergrad School
- ~~Gap~~ *Enhancement* Year / Postbac
- No Drama

About the Application

- Earl bird gets the worm
- Less is more, and more is too much
- Clear & unambiguous statements
- Compelling story, not a lab report
- Tell us “why”
- Tell us what you learned
- Early bird gets the worm

How Early is Early?

Secondary Submission Date

- **Early Applicant – By August 1 - 45%**
- Regular – By September 15 - 31%
- Late – By October 15 - 16%
- Living Dangerously – After October 15 - 8%
- Save Your Money – After October 31

Letters of Recommendation

Keywords we look for:

- Curious / Inquisitive
- Creative / Innovative
- Focused
- Takes Initiative / Fearless
- Passion/Perseverance
- Collaborative
- Thoughtful

Interviews

- Season runs from September to March
- Spend about 2 days on campus
 - Tour
 - Lunches and dinners with current MSTP students
 - Interview with potential PhD thesis faculty
 - Med School Admissions interview
 - MSTP Committee interview (unique Wash U experience)
 - Be curious and cordial

Preparing for the Interview

- Know yourself
- Know your stuff
- Know your application
- Know where you are interviewing

How to choose

- Research Opportunities
- Qualities of Future Classmates
- Program Culture
- Realize that you will be ~30 years of age when you complete the program
- Location
- Reputation of the Institution
- Opinions of Others

More Information?

AAMC Website:

Aamc.org/mdphd

Our Website:

mstp.wustl.edu

My Contact Info:

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- Thank you!