



Advice for the 2025–26 Ophthalmology Residency Match Season

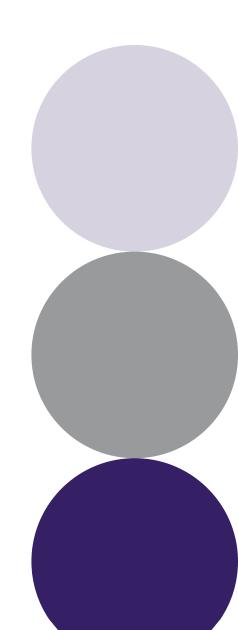
June 2, 2025





Welcome

Rukhsana G. Mirza, MD, MS Ryan-Pusateri Professor of Ophthalmology Professor of Ophthalmology & Medical Education Vice Chair of Faculty Affairs Director of Undergraduate Medical Education in Ophthalmology Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University





Purpose of this Webinar

- A diverse panel of presenters, including department chairs, medical student and resident educators in ophthalmology, as well as those who hold roles in the dean's office, will share guidance about applying for this year's ophthalmology residency match.
- Presenters will cover tips related to an approach to residency application in ophthalmology
- We will give you the latest available information regarding this year's match.
- Attendees will receive a handout with links to useful resources.
- This webinar and associated handout will be posted





Speakers and Moderators



Chris Alabiad, MD



Jennifer Lindsey, MD, MBA



Jeff Pettey, MD, MBA



Saras Ramanathan, MD



Jamie Rosenberg, MD



Prithvi Sankar, MD



Paul Sternberg, Jr., MD



Terri Young, MD, MBA



MODERATOR
Ariane Kaplan, MD



Q&A MODERATOR Moran (Roni) Levin, MD



MODERATOR Rukhsana Mirza, MD, MS



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Overview of the Topics

- SF Match Timeline and What's New? Jeff Pettey, MD, MBA
- Why Ophthalmology Now?
 Paul Sternberg, MD
- Assessing Yourself, USMLE Student Standing Dual Applications Chris Alabiad, MD
- 10,000-foot View: Research, Extracurriculars, Year Off, Couples Matching
 Prithvi Sankar, MD

- Ophthalmology Residency Process Developing and Telling Your Story/Personal Statement
 Terri Young, MD, MBA
- Where to Apply?
 Ariane Kaplan, MD
- Preference Signaling
 Jamie Rosenberg, MD
- You've Been Invited to Interview...Now What??
 Saras Ramanathan, MD
- How to Access a Residency Program
 Jennifer Lindsey, MD
- Open Q/A



Speakers have no conflicts to disclose



Housekeeping

- Use the Q&A function to ask questions and communicate with panelists.
- This webinar is being recorded.



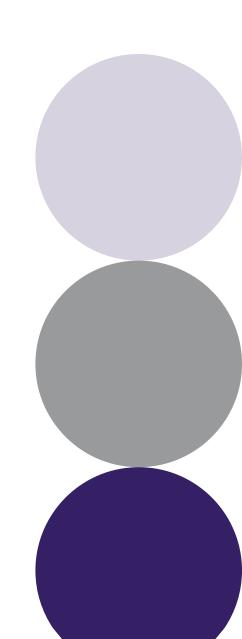






Q/A

Moran (Roni) Levin, MD Director Medical Student Education University of Maryland School of Medicine





POLL









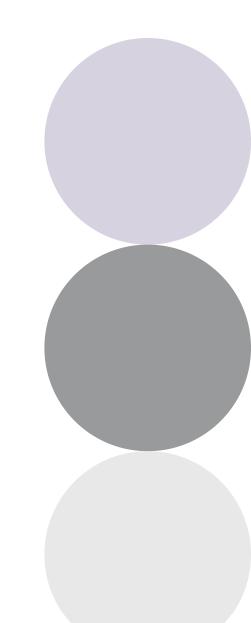
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SF Match Timeline and What's New?

Jeff Pettey, MD, MBA Clinical Vice Chair Past Program Director Moran Eye Center, University of Utah









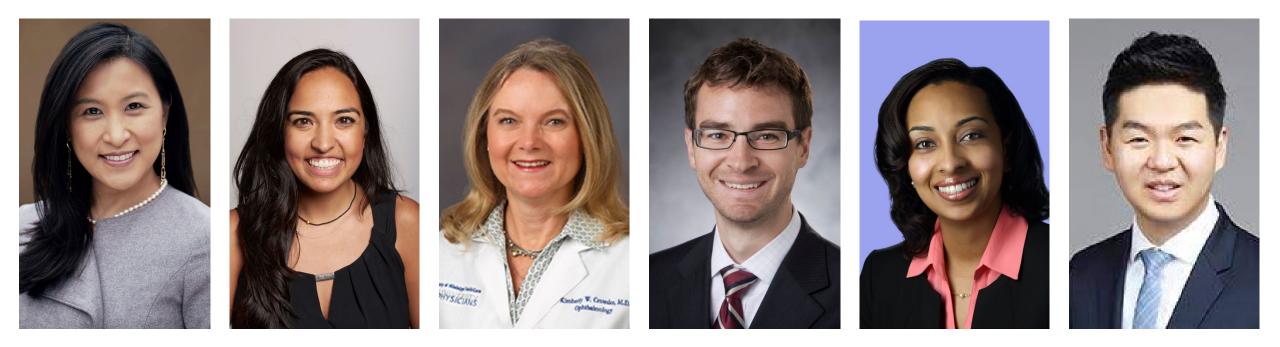






2024-2025 SFMatch Oversight Committee



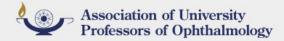


2025-2026 SFMatch Oversight Committee









Q

Home Meetings V Membership V Programs & Services V About AUPO V

Home

- Meetings
- Membership
- Programs & Services
- Surgical Curriculum for Ophthalmology Residents (SCOR)
- Women Professors of Ophthalmology
- Medical Student Resources
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 Overview
- Journal of Academic
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- Academic Leadership
 Development Program
- Other Services
- About AUPO

Medical Student Resources

The following information is shared to assist medical students applying to ophthalmology. Additional resources are available through the SFMatch and American Academy of Ophthalmology websites.



Advice for the 2024-2025 Ophthalmology Residency Match Season Webinar - June 5 at 5-6:30 pm Pacific Time - Register Now

Ophthalmology Match Information & FAQs

The leaders of the AUPO Program Directors Council (PDC) and the Directors of Medical Student Educators Council (DMSEC), together with the San Francisco Match (SF Match) and the AUPO Board of Trustees, are pleased to provide learners and potential residency applicants with information and considerations for the ophthalmology match application process.

2024-25 Ophthalmology Residency Match FAQs

Applicant Preference Signaling FAQ 2024-2025

Ophthalmology Match Letters of Recommendation FAQ

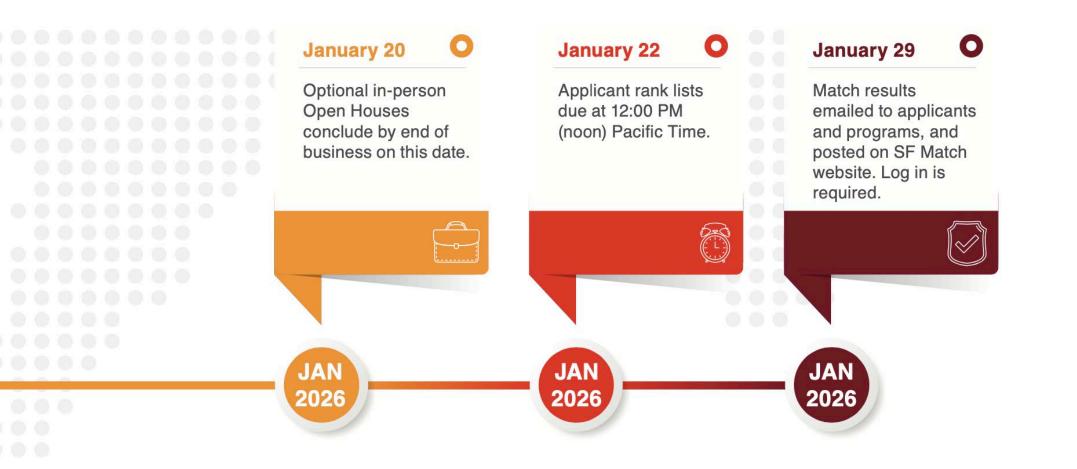
Ophthalmology Residency Match Timeline



Ophthalmology Residency Match Timeline



Ophthalmology Residency Match Timeline



- Interview Release Process

Prior Match Cycles

Wild West

2 Months

Anytime - Anyplace





2025-26 Match Coordinated Interview Invitations

Waypoint Wednesdays

Batched Release: Oct 15, 22, 29 Nov 5

Coordinated Interview Release Process

Cancelled or unfilled interview slots

October 15 – November 5 Batched invites – Waypoint Wednesdays

After November 5th – Interview invites for vacancies at anytime

SFMatch Scheduler Queue

Programs order applicants for interview invitations

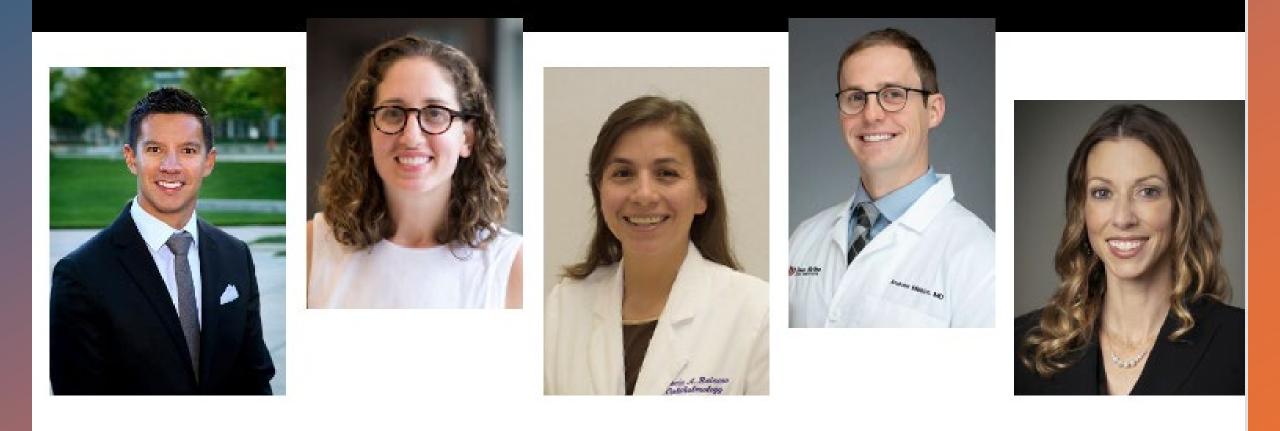
Programs may automate or manually send invitations for vacancies

No publicized waitlist

See FAQ for link for detailed instructions

Preference Signaling

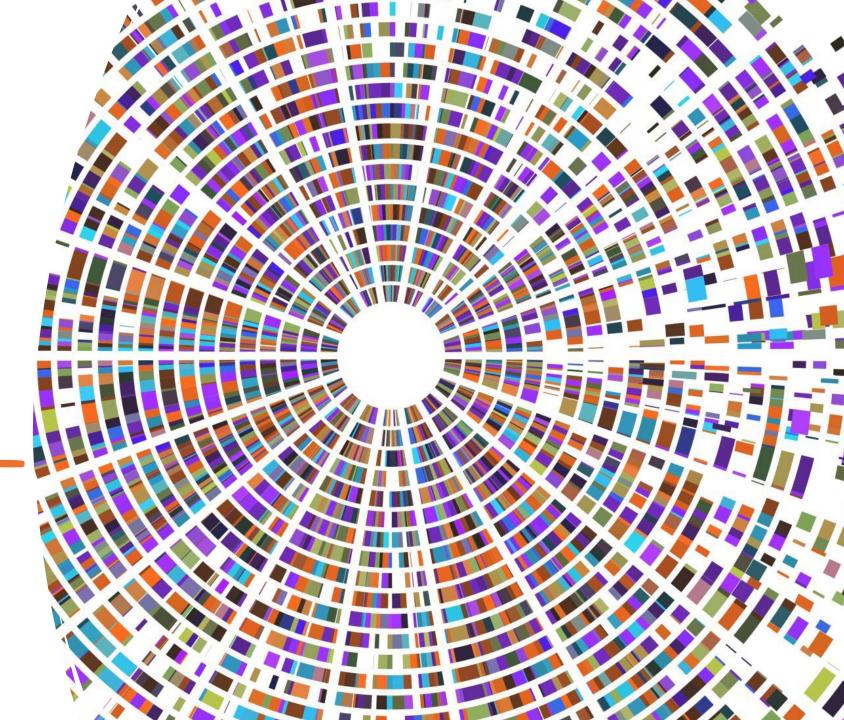
PREFERENCE SIGNALING TASKFORCE



Preference Signaling Update

Seven to Ten

See FAQ for Details



2025-26 Virtual Interviews

In-person Open House Visits





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Thank you!



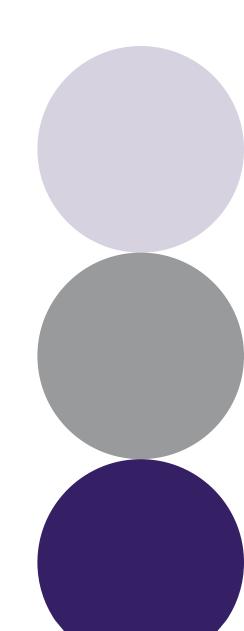
Comment here!





Why Ophthalmology Now?

Paul Sternberg, Jr., MD CEO, Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology Former Chair, Vanderbilt Eye Institute



Why ophthalmology?

- Unique blend of medical and surgical care
- Always at the cutting edge of care
- Take care of patients from infant to elderly
- Develop long term enriching patient relationship
- You can directly see the pathology
- It can be really cool!
- The hours are very reasonable
- The compensation is quite good







- Need for ophthalmologists only increasing
 - Aging of population Prevalence of age-related eye diseases
 - Cataract
 - Glaucoma
 - AMD
 - Dry Eye
 - More patients with chronic diseases with ophthalmic manifestations
 - Diabetes
 - Autoimmune conditions







- Continue to be amazing advances
 - Ophthalmology seems to be "first to market"
 - Microsurgery
 - Lasers
 - Al
 - Clinical trials
 - Gene therapy







- Incredibly collegial community
 - Attracts the "best of the best"
 - Practice has become a team sport
 - Great supportive organizations
 - AAO
 - AUPO
 - WIO
 - ARVO







- Allows for meaningful work/live balance or integration
 - Gratifying clinical practice: very grateful patients
 - Largely ambulatory practice more flexible hours
 - Limited call responsibilities







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- Incredibly collegial community
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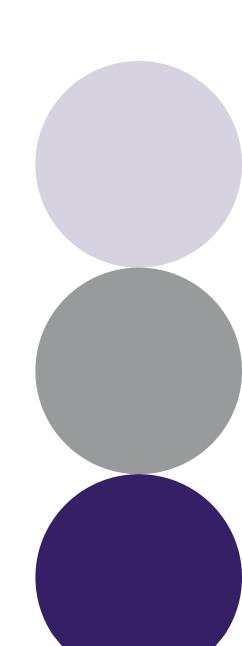






Advice from the Dean's Office

Chris Alabiad, MD Assistant Dean for Student Affairs Ophthalmology Residency Program Director Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology Bascom Palmer Eye Institute University of Miami Miller School of Medicine



Pre Clinical Students: Is Ophthalmology the Right Career for Me?

- Gauging interest
 - Local shadowing opportunities
 - Virtual opportunities: Grand Rounds, Lectures, Conferences
- Identify an Ophthalmology Mentor
- Local Ophthalmology Interest Group
- Mentorship Programs
 - o AAO VISION Program
 - o Rabb Venable Program
 - Women in Ophthalmology

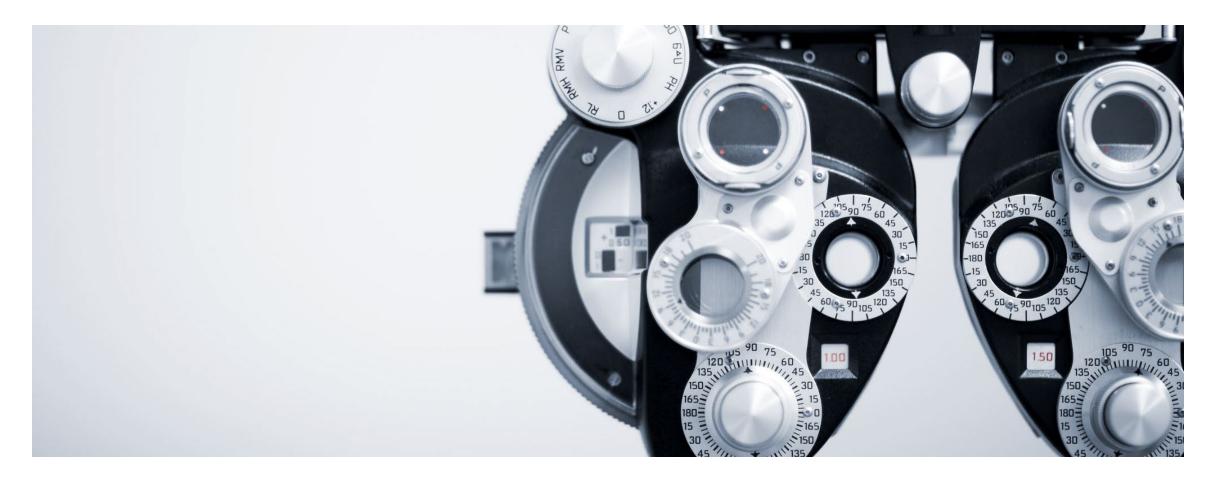


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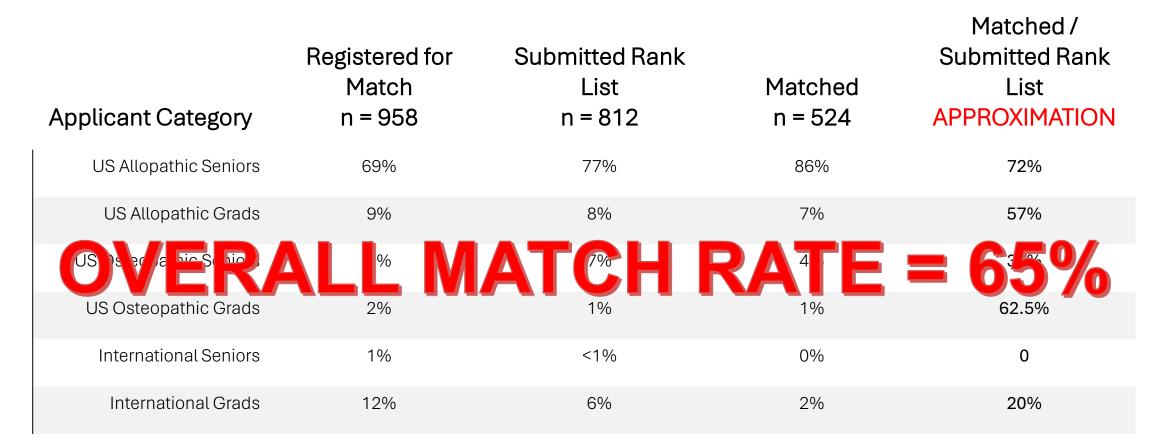
Understanding the Landscape: The Programs

Programs Data	Integrated	Joint	Total
Number of Participating Programs	56	67	123
Total Number of Positions Offered	239	286	525
Total Number of Positions Filled	239	285	524
Total Number of Unfilled Positions	0	1	1





Understanding the Landscape: 2025 SF MATCH DATA





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Time to Strategize with your Advising Dean





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Objective Assessment with your Dean

- How do I compare to the typical applicant?
- How can I market myself as a stand out?
- Is the combination of the above enough?



Academic Performance

- Grades/Class Rank (if you have them)
- USMLE Step 2 CK Score
- Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE)

2024 Match Cycle

Average Matched Step 2 CK=255

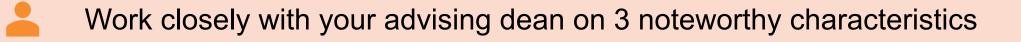
Average Unmatched Step 2 CK=242





THE MSPE/Dean's Letter!!!

Increasing emphasis on this, even if a school with P/F Grading



Review your clerkship narratives for accuracy





Research

- Book Chapters
- Articles
- Reviews

Summary Statistics for Matched Applicants of 2024 Match Cycle (n = 502)

	Mean	SD
Pre-Application Deadline		
Total Publications	4.00	6.51
Ophthalmology Publications	1.86	3.82
1st Author Publications	1.24	2.14
2nd Author Publications	0.85	1.54
3rd Author Publications	0.59	1.14

Top 25 Program Matched Applicants of 2024 Match Cycle (n = 147)

	Mean	SD
Borges et al. (Top 25) n=147		
Pre-App Total Publications (2024)	5.71	8.74
Pre-App Ophthalmology Publications (2024)	2.44	3.78
Pre-App First Author Publications (2024)	1.83	2.96
Pre-App Second Author Publications (2024)	1.19	1.64





More data on research for those with and without home programs

	With Home Program (n=396)			Without Home Program (n=83)				
	Mean	SD			Mean	SD		p-value
Pre-Application Deadline								
Total Publications	<mark>3.93</mark>	<mark>6.21</mark>			<mark>2.27</mark>	<mark>2.60</mark>		<mark>0.0001**</mark>
Ophthalmology Publications	1.64	3.01			1.17	1.96		0.077
1st Author Publications	<mark>1.22</mark>	<mark>2.11</mark>			<mark>0.73</mark>	<mark>1.12</mark>		<mark>0.003**</mark>
2nd Author Publications	0.82	1.45			0.63	1.08		0.176
3rd Author Publications	<mark>0.58</mark>	<mark>1.01</mark>			<mark>0.34</mark>	<mark>0.72</mark>		<mark>0.011*</mark>





More data on research for International Applicants

	International (n = 26)			US MD/DO (n = 476)					
	Mean	SD	Median	IQR	Mean	SD	Median	IQR	p-value
Pre-Application Deadline									
Total Publications	10.54	12.83	6.5	8.25	3.64	5.80	2	4	0.011*
Ophthalmology Publications	7.73	9.98	6	7.75	1.54	2.85	1	2	0.004**
1st Author Publications	3.15	3.63	2	3	1.13	1.98	0.5	2	0.009**
2nd Author Publications	2.12	2.98	1	3	0.78	1.40	0	1	0.032*
3rd Author Publications	1.50	2.67	0	1	0.54	0.97	0	1	0.079







How can I market myself as a standout?







What Options Can I Consider If I Don't Measure Up?

- Are you "Ophthalmology or bust"
 - Consider a research year
- Are you also happy in another clinical setting?
 - Consider double applying (increasing trend)
 - Has pros and cons
 - Will take some discretion and strategizing with your advising dean along with close mentors









Thank you!





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10,000 foot view: Research, Extracurriculars, Year Off, Couples Matching

Prithvi S Sankar, MD Assistant Dean of Student Affairs Professor of Ophthalmology



Objectives

- 1. Research
- 2. Extracurricular
- 3. Year Off
- 4. Couples Matching



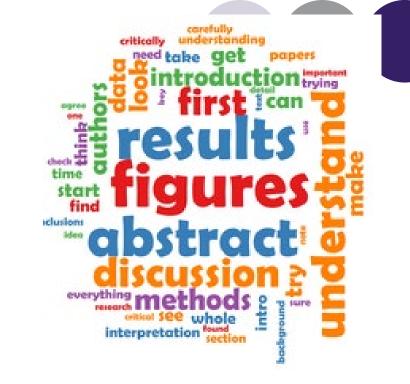


Research

- A method to show scholarly engagement
- Does it need to be in ophthalmology?
 - No
 - Does need to show productivity
 - Details of the research, your mentor, and your specific role(s)
 - Lots of projects vs 1 project which is more in depth
 - What are the skills you have learned and what has been your output







Extracurricular

- Academic focus
- Often University affiliated
- Community service



• Describes who you are and what interests you.

• Generational divide – know your audience



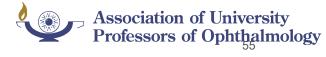


Year Off

- Deciding on a year-off
- Why and what you hope to achieve?
 - Year off may not help with certain "blemishes"
- What does my med school course work look like?
- Who is the mentor?
- When does this happen?
- What are my responsibilities?
- What is the financial burden?



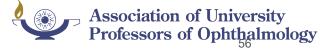




Dual Degrees

- Why a second degree?
- How will the degree accentuate my career?
 - Does not always have to be about ophthalmology
 - Career focused
- What will my course work look like?
- Financial burden
- Plan ahead









Couples Match

- No formal process with SFMatch + NRMP/ Urology/ Military Match
- Early discussion very important
- Deciding specialties
- Goal setting / Regional preferences
- Discuss with both specialty advisors







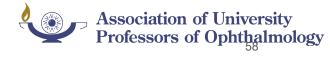
Good luck!!







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Advice for the 2025–26 Ophthalmology Residency Match Season

Presenter Group 1 Question & Answer

Webinar Handout Link in Chat



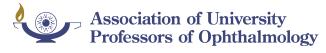




Developing and Telling Your Story/Personal Statement

- Terri L. Young, MD, MBA
- Chair, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences
- University of Wisconsin- Madison







Get comfortable talking about yourself.

- Give yourself permission to talk about yourself positively and take pride in your accomplishments
- As you are selling **yourself**, you're the **main focus** of the interview.
- Think about your past educational and career accomplishments and reflect on how they came to fruition. What did you do to get there? Those details make all the difference and paint a memorable picture of your skills and qualifications.





Know and study the main points you want to mention.

- Know and own your journey and definitely do not place anything on your application or resume that you cannot speak to.
- Memorize the main points demonstrating why you're the best candidate for the job.
- **Get comfortable reciting them** so you can effortlessly sell yourself during the interview. You can easily incorporate these details into the answers you provide.







Keep the needs of the program in mind.

- The best way to sell yourself in an interview is to focus on the program's needs. Lean into what they're looking for and tell them exactly why you're what they need!
- Study the job description and research each program to learn more about its goals and culture. Once you understand what the search committee is looking for, you can explain how you fit.
- Connect the dots between their needs and your qualifications.







Ask good questions.

- At some point, the interviewer will turn things around and allow you to ask questions. Don't be one of those candidates that says they have all the information they need and ends the conversation.
- Think of some insightful questions that project and cement your interest. Think outside the box and ask about details that most people wouldn't consider bringing up. Not only do unique questions instantly make you stand out, but it shows that you did your research.
- Whatever the case, **create a list of unique questions** the interviewer wouldn't regularly hear. This is an effective and underrated way to sell yourself in a job interview.







A little enthusiasm goes a long way.

- Your potential colleagues want to work with people who are **naturally motivated and passionate** about the job.
- It doesn't matter if you have terrific qualifications. If you're not genuinely interested in this program, most will pass you over in favor of someone who is interested.
- During your research, **find details about the program that excite you**. Bring them up during your interview!
- Talk about what you love about this opportunity and reassure the interviewer that you are 100 percent interested and ready to dive in.







Personal Statement

- Autobiographical Statement:
 - A chance to share your journey to ophthalmology and what distinguishes you as an applicant
 - \circ 500 words

- Short Answer Questions:
 - Applicants will choose two short answer questions (250 words each)





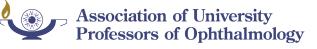
Personal Statement: Short answer questions

Last Year's Questions (Choose 2 - - 250 words each):

- What does resilience mean to you? Describe a situation in your personal or professional life where you have demonstrated resilience.
- If you were to start an ophthalmology residency program, what would be the three core values you would base it on?
- Describe a way in which you will add diversity to your residency class. This may relate to your background, upbringing, life experiences, professional/personal interest, or educational path.
- Describe an important mentor and relate how that person has been helpful to you.





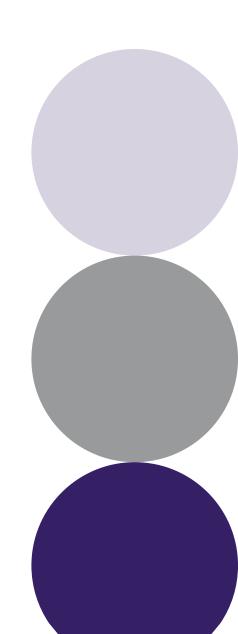






Where to apply?

Ariane Kaplan, M.D. University of Michigan Medical Student Educator Co-Clerkship Director Residency Program Director



Opportunities abound...



In 2024, there were 122 ACGME residency programs in the US



These programs offers approximately 520 positions

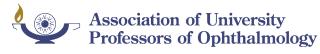


Each program has a different personality and that's okay!





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How do you decide where to apply?

- Do your research!
 - o Websites
 - \circ Social media pages
 - o Rankings
- Talk to mentors, residents when you rotate, friends, alumni
- Reflect on what's important to you









Intrinsic characteristics to a program

- Scope of clinical rotations and subspecialty exposure – how do you learn best?
- Research opportunities
- Community outreach opportunities
- Alumni where do they go?
- Morale of the program
 - o Residents
 - o Alumni
 - o Graduates









What will make you personally happy?

- Location: region of country or specific city; urban/suburban/rural
- Family or personal support
- What does work-life balance look like for you?
- What are your career goals? What do you like to do for fun?
- Judgement free zone









How many programs should I apply to?

- Preference signals new to us and we are awaiting data from SF Match
- Prior to preference signals, data showed that approximately 45-60 programs was the "sweet spot" for number of applications¹
- But SF Match data shows different trend²...

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Avg # apps per matched individual	77	80	81	88	85
Avg # apps per unmatched individual	77	78	82	87	85

¹Siatkowski RM, Mian SI, Culican SM, Green LK, Sun G, Waxman EL, Wayman LL, Stoner J, Chen X, Feldon S; Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology. Probability of Success in the Ophthalmology Residency Match: Three-Year Outcomes Analysis of San Francisco Matching Program Data. J Acad Ophthalmol (2017). 2018 Jan;10(1):e150-e157. doi: 10.1055/s-0038-1673675. PMID: 30662977; PMCID: PMC6335041. ² SF Match 2020-2024 Match Data







Couples Matching

- Early communication to home advisors (MSE, PD, Dean of Students) and programs.
- Be strategic. Use preference signals and overlap geographic areas.
- Talk to your partner, identify priorities and non-negotiables. Do they align?







Take home points

- Be thoughtful and strategic!
- Do your research and talk to others
- Consider what your career goals are
- Reflect on what brings you happiness
- It's okay to prioritize your happiness!



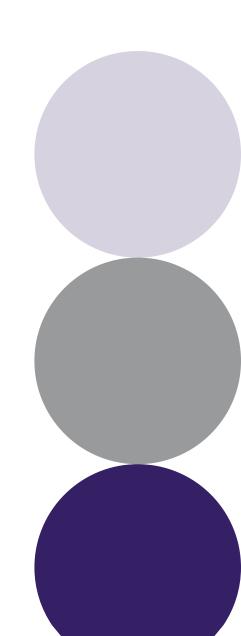




Preference Signaling

Medical Student Advising Webinar 2025

Jamie Rosenberg, MD Member, AUPO Program Directors Council Residency Director, Einstein/ Montefiore, Bronx, NY



No financial disclosures



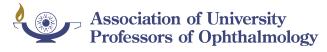




What is preference signaling?

- Applicants can send signals to express particular interest in a set number of programs
- Piloted by ENT in 2021
- Has expanded to many other specialties
- Applicants in fields that have used it have found it a positive addition to the match process
- Last year was our first year of preference signaling



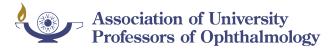




How does it work?

- Ophthalmology applicants will have 10 signals to use
- All signals carry equal weight
- When you send in your application to a particular program, you will also have the option to signal that program
 - You cannot retract a signal once it has been sent
 - You cannot add a signal if you have already submitted an application to that program
- We recommend using all 10, but that is not required







What about programs where I rotated?

- You should signal your home program and anywhere you did away rotations if you are particularly interested in matching there
- Programs are being instructed to tell students this as well
- This is an effort to be fair to those who do not have home programs







What about on the program side?

- Programs will decide how they use signals some possibilities:
 - To determine interview invitations
 - To develop their rank list
 - Not at all
- Programs may not know how they plan to use signals this year
 - Programs don't know each year how many signals they will receive
- Programs are not permitted to share information about who signaled them with other programs





How should I choose where to send signals?

- This will vary for each candidate. Some possible factors:
 - o Geography
 - Partner requirements
 - Particular information about programs
 - + Please see SF match site and individual program websites
 - Strength of your clerkship grades / scores / etc
- Please use your signals strategically
- Speak to your advisors about programs that they see as a good fit for you







Data from last year

1. 99% of applicants used signals, almost all using all 7 signals

1. Of those who used all 7 signals, 90% were invited to interview by at least one signaled program

1. 65% of matched applicants matched at a signaled program







Thank you





Advice for the 2025–26 Ophthalmology Residency Match Season

Presenter Group 2 Question & Answer

Webinar Handout Link in Chat









You've been invited to interview...What Now??

Saras Ramanathan, MD Residency Program Director, UCSF AUPO Program Directors Council

Interview Scheduling

- Yay! Relish your success!
- Review Interview calendar on SFMatch
 - Plan ahead what your preferred interview dates would be
 - Preview which target schools have overlapping interview dates—Google Calendar!
 - Answer your interview request as soon as possible to get your preferred spot
 - Don't stress if you didn't get your first choice---it will all work out!
 - Contact programs directly --- we often know if other candidates are flexible on their dates and we will try to work with you.







Interviews

- Virtual Interviews only
- Interview Cap = 15
- Schedule interviews through the SFM Central Scheduler
 - No overlapping interviews
 - Invitations to interview: Keep your schedule free on interview release date(s)!
 - Interviews: November/December









Interview Success

- **Be Yourself-**--we want to know who you are!
- Practice ON ZOOM with faculty/mentors---especially those you know less well
 - $\circ~$ Be prepared to discuss every topic on your CV
 - o Be prepared with at least one or two questions for each interviewer
 - Try to make the questions unique to each interviewer in the program if possible
 - If this is the program you really want, don't be shy---let us know!
- Review your research about the program and why you chose to apply there
- Verify that Your goals and Program goals align





Post Interview Process

- Open House Sign Up
- Program Rank Lists Due
- Open Houses: these happen AFTER programs have submitted their match lists!
- Applicant Rank List Due
- Match day (and Post-match vacancies)
- NRMP/ERAS applications for internship or SOAP





Live Open Houses

- **Optional** for Programs and Applicants
- Tours, socialize, assess culture, meet in person with faculty, residents, see the city
- NO interviews, discussion of rank lists, or coercive activity permitted
 - Coercive activity should be reported to AUPO
- Easily scheduled like interviews through SF Match platform
- When?
 - o After programs submit their rank lists
 - o **Before** applicants submit their rank lists







Generating Your Rank List

- Alignment of your learning goals and program teaching goals
 - o Clinical/Surgical volumes and complexity
 - o Supervision
 - o Clinical sites
 - o Research/Global/Advocacy/Public Health exposure
- Mentorship/Teaching---look for long-term/career mentors
- Residency Culture (will you be happy there?)
- Geography
- Family/Partner



Match Day and After

- Congratulations on a successful Match!
- Internship
 - Integrated vs. Joint Internship
 - Integrated internships do not need NRMP
 - Joint internships guarantee a spot, but you still have to register for NRMP
 - Can join after Match Day with \$50 late fee
- What if you don't Match
 - Dual application
 - SOAP (Supplemental Offer After Match) through NRMP/ERAS
 - o Reapply







Good Luck!

- Feel free to reach out:
 - o Saras.Ramanathan@ucsf.edu









How to Assess a Residency Program

Jennifer L Lindsey, MD, MBA

Diane Kaneb Chair in Ophthalmology Director, Harvard Ophthalmology Residency Program Vice Chair for Education, Harvard Ophthalmology Associate Chief of Ophthalmic Education, Mass Eye and Ear

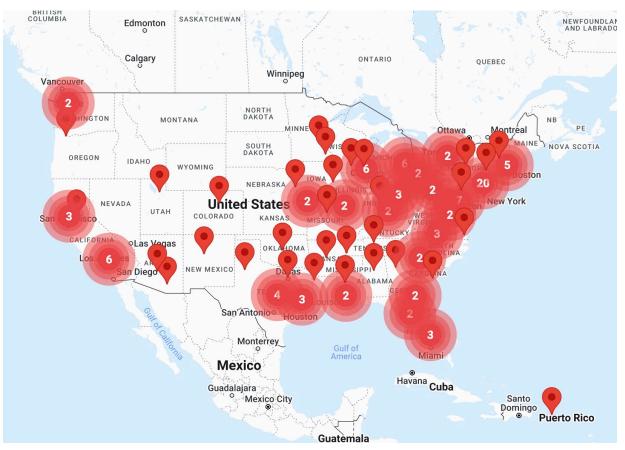
President, Program Directors Council, AUPO

Slide deck based on a prior presentation by Dr. Laura Green



Important Factors

- Program Size
- Geography
- VA
- ED
- Call structure
- Family/Partner
- Rankings/Perceived strength



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What is most important to you?

- Clinical and surgical volume
- Research opportunities
- Mentorship
- Leadership
- Advocacy/community service
- Quality improvement
- Autonomy









Culture and Learning Environment

- Collaborative or hierarchical
- Resident clinic v. attending clinic
- Small or large group
- Lectures, flipped classroom, case based, simulation
- Transparency









Internship

- Joint or Integrated
 - Joint: IM or Surgery, May need NRMP
 - o Integrated: All 4 years in Ophthalmology, no separate application
- Where?
- What is the experience in ophthalmology and when?







What makes a program "good"?

- Accreditation
- Happy trainees and faculty
- Good working environment/culture
- Resident input in their education
- Surgical and clinical volume
- Leadership
- Mentorship

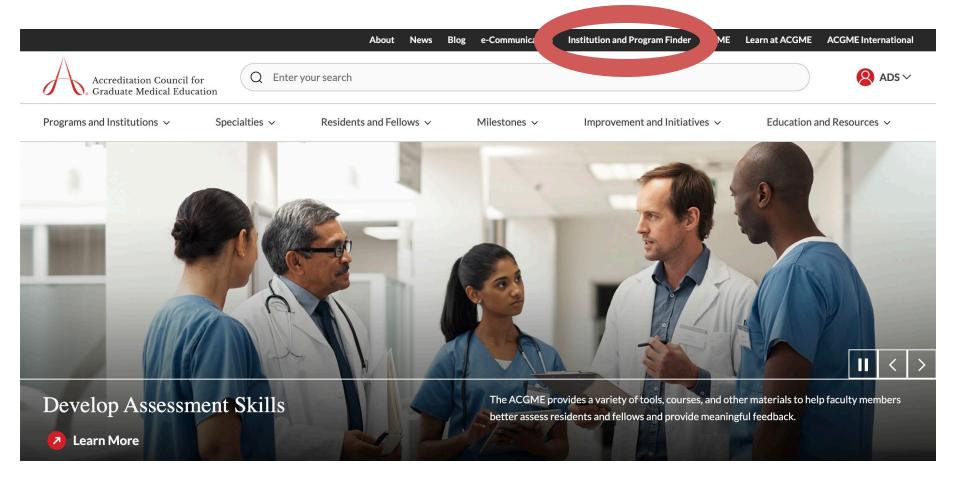








ACGME Institution and Program Finder





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Other Resources

- Your home program PD, APD, MSE, Dean, GME office, **Ophthalmology faculty**
- **FRIEDA**
- Doximity \bullet
- Individual department websites ullet
- SF Match

SPECIALTIES	💒 ABOUT US		🛗 MATCH CALENDAR	🕏 FOR M	
F Match / Specialties / Re	sidency - Ophthalmo	logy / Resources for Me	dical Students		
		logy / Resources for me			
Ophthalmol	logy				
Overview	RESOUR	CES FOR MEDICAL	. STUDENTS		
Central Application Service (CAS)	Following a	re resources to assist	medical students applying to o	phthalmology.	
Resources for Medical Students	• 2024	• 2024-2025 Ophthalmology Residency Match Timeline			
Timetable	• 2024	• 2024-2025 Ophthalmology Residency Match FAQs			
Announcements	• Prefe	Preference Signaling - 2025 Ophthalmology Residency Match			
Helpful Links	• Prog	Program Profile Info			
Information for Medical Schools	• 2024	• 2024-2025 - SF Match Demo Webinar - Submit a complete Ophthalmol			
	• Statis	• Statistics			
		Journal Article: Probability of Success			
Information for Program	ns • Journ	al Article: Probability	of Success		
Information for Program Match Rules	• Journ	al Article: Probability			







Rank List Tips

- Follow the Match rules in SF Match
- Applicant preferences are considered first
- Use all the information available to make an informed choice
- Visit programs in person during open houses
- Think about 1) what you value and 2) where you can realistically match
- Be aware of the timeline!





Advice for the 2025–26 Ophthalmology Residency Match Season

Presenter Group 3 Question & Answer

Webinar Handout Link in Chat





Advice for the 2025–26 Ophthalmology Residency Match Season

Q & A







Thank you for attending!

Webinar Handout & Recording Will Be Posted







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