

Tips for VSLO from CO2019

Dermatology

Here are my thoughts on derm aways:

Some programs use VSLO and some don't. All of the programs have info for away rotators on their websites. I know for sure Mayo uses their own system and U of Wisconsin has you send your info to the program coordinator directly. U of Wisconsin is the first one I applied to because you can basically send your info to the program coordinator at any time. I believe I sent my stuff to her end of February/beginning of March. Most of my other applications went out in March/April I believe. Most of the programs required a personal statement for their application, and I know Mayo required a letter of recommendation. In addition, some require certain immunizations/immunization forms/specific background checks/etc., so I would have them be sure to watch out for any of those requirements on the programs' websites.

It is probably easiest to pick 6-8 programs you want to apply to for derm away rotations (if you want 2-3 away rotations) and then just focus on their websites for the specifics of applying.

I did not have the issue of having to turn down an away rotation after being offered one, but I don't think it would hurt you because they know schedules are busy/changing etc. Also, I know some programs worked with students to change dates of the rotation to make it work to still complete an away rotation at their institution.

Student #2

For dermatology, I would recommend two to three away rotations. I would apply for 2-3 per time slot available in the students' schedule. I would focus on programs where dermatologists in our area went to residency like University of Wisconsin, University of Missouri, Mayo, Geisinger, etc. as well as any programs where the student may have ties. Also, I think it helps to vary the geographic region where you do away rotations because LORs from PDs may have more pull at programs within their region. I did have to turn down a program due to scheduling conflicts but I called the program and they were able to offer me a slot for a later rotation so I would encourage students not to be afraid to reach out. Again, I would be sure to withdraw from other programs once you have secured a rotation for a particular time slot.

Emergency Medicine:

The website <https://webapps.emra.org/utis/spa/match#/search/map> is incredibly helpful for choosing where to apply for both VSLO as well as for the match. Go to the website and in the top left corner click the down arrow where it says residency, then choose clerkship. This will provide an interactive map of all of the institutions that provide the opportunity to do away rotations in the U.S.

Students from USD will need to do **two** away rotations **at institutions with EM residency programs** so that they can secure two Standardized Letters of Evaluations (SLOEs), which are required to apply to EM residency. Exactly how many programs you should apply to depends in part on your step 1 score, what region you're applying to, and if you have any specific ties to that area or specific interest in that program. I would recommend applying to 6-8 programs and apply to 3 rotation times for each of those

programs so that you have the best chance of finding a time that works for both you and the program. And apply early!

I didn't have any problems when turning down rotations if there was a conflict with my schedule. Just send a polite email explaining the situation. And I received interview offers from programs that I turned down away at, so they don't hold a grudge.

If anyone interested in EM has specific questions they are more than welcome to contact me.

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General Surgery

My away rotation acquisition was a little atypical. I did not apply through VSLO at all. The locations I wanted to do away rotations were not listed on VSLO and had their own applications which I had to fill out individually. I applied to 2 and received 2. This is most likely because I had great relationships with physicians who had attended those residencies. They both called the residencies and put in a good word for me before I submitted the applications.

In general, as a starting point, I would research a handful of programs you feel you are most interested in attending for residency and apply to those. Reach out to mentors to see where they went to residency and research those.

Earlier in the year is likely more open.

2-3 away rotations are probably good for general surgery. Maybe 1-2 with a very strong application/scores, 3-4 if not.

Internal Medicine:

I applied to 3 different rotations at Mayo for the month of July (not through VSLO) and then applied to 4 different programs through VSLO for an away in August. I got my first choice at Mayo, but I did not get an away for August because I was told all the rotations were full and unable to accommodate more students. However, I didn't submit until May so that was mostly on me. My advice would just be a warning that if you submit later, the programs might be filled regardless of whether they are still listed and accepting applications on VSLO. Everything I applied to was IM or an IM subspecialty. It isn't necessary to do an away, but if you have a particular program you like or just want to see how things are done elsewhere it can be valuable.

Student #2

For internal medicine, it is not very important to do away rotations. That's pretty well known across the country, so I would say the competition for these spots is lower. I applied to 4 and got 3, and I think that's because we didn't have a working agreement with Duke for aways yet. So, 3-4 should be plenty as long as apps are in on time. I did 1-2 rotations per place, but got my first choice at all of them and ended up only doing 1. A 3:1 ratio is probably plenty.

I ended up having to turn down Utah and Stanford for away rotations, and got an interview at Utah and not at Stanford. I honestly don't think my away, or lack thereof, hurt interview chances at those 2

schools. It definitely helped at UNC. You can always send people my way with specific questions, but I think a lot of them know that too!

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OB/GYN

Most ob/gyn aways aren't available until July and some even in August. Do not do one during application and interview seasons. Always are unique for ob/gyn because of the options for sub-specialty rotations. Ideally, you would do L&D somewhere, but I struggled finding availability because they filled up with home students. It's really common to do an away in one of the sub-specialties. It would be nice if you could do a couple weeks on that sub-specialty service at your home institution before you go, but it's not a big deal if you can't. Most med students won't have that option, and many are limited to only two ob/gyn rotations so there's a ton of interns who don't do sub-specialty rotations until residency, so no reason to feel like you'll be unprepared. Try to do something though where you'll be inpatient and have access to residents or at least do L&D shifts on weekends. Always are all about getting to know people and being likable, much less about your medical knowledge or skills. Don't be intimidated, you're more than capable and prepared to be competitive.

I struggled applying and securing my desired aways. In retrospect, I recommend reaching out to whoever coordinates medical student rotations before rotations are available. Express your interest and get specific details about when apps will be available and details about application requirements. Speak with your advisers to find if the med school as anyone with connections to that program. They might help you get your foot in the door. Ideally, be prepared to submit the first day they're open. I would also only apply for your first choice rotation at each institution. If you hear back that the rotation is full, ask about any other available rotations. I didn't get my first choice but after working with the coordinator she gave me alternative rotations and dates. After confirming with her directly, I then went back and officially applied for the rotation in VSAS. This will be significantly cheaper than applying for multiple rotations at one institution.

At the ACOG national meeting, we heard from a panel of residency chairs and program directors who told us not to do aways if we are competitive applicants, because it's tough to compete with home students. I would say do it if you really want to target a specific program or region outside the Midwest. It's also different for USD students because we don't have a home institution to fall back on. Overall, I highly recommend doing at least one away. It's a great learning experience and I got multiple interviews I wouldn't have gotten without my LOR from my away department chair.

Hope this can be of use, and feel free to put any of the ob/gyn applicants with questions in contact with me.

Nicole Buchele

Orthopedics

I think the first thing students should do is figure out who is all going into that specific specialty. The reason I say this is because you don't want to apply to the same program during the same month as another student. I'm pretty sure in my class we had two students going into Dermatology that did an away at the same time and same place. I've told the 3-4 students going into Orthopedics to talk to each other on where they want to go. I think being strategic is always a smart thing to do.

As for orthopedics, it is hard to know how many institutions to apply to. I had no problem getting two of my away rotations in July and September. I did have a hard time finding a place to go in August. I think for our school, we are lucky because we can apply early for programs. For number purposes, I applied to 7 programs and went on 3 rotations. I don't think it is too detrimental to turn down a rotation when offered; however, I think it depends how competitive of an applicant you are and the program you turned down.

As always if you need more information you can always give them my contact information and phone number 605-280-6044. Josh Rogers

Radiology

For radiology I applied for two away rotations at two different institutions for different months and went to both. I found that they were pretty fast in letting me know if I was accepted to the rotation or not.

Urology

Speaking for urology:

Urology away rotations are super important for getting letters of recommendation and therefore pretty competitive. USD has the advantage of being able to do away rotations very early during third year. Most other schools can't start doing aways until June or so. So you may have better luck applying to the super competitive programs during April or May. I applied to 6 and was given 3 offers after withdrawing 2. Since anyone from USD should do 3 aways, I would recommend applying to around 10 programs. Apply to as many time frames as applicable and withdraw as soon as you accept another offer. Be aware that a lot of away rotations are secured outside of VSLO. If you can find someone in high places to make a call for you, that is honestly the best way to get a good rotation.