

TIPS for VSAS (VSLO)

ENT –

Iowa doesn't participate in VSAS. They have their own application that is totally separate (<https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/visiting-student-information-and-application>).

Applied to Iowa and UNMC and got both rotations (August and September). I worked with the residents and attendings and got a letter of rec from one of the faculty at Iowa.

ER –

VSAS can be a very frustrating process. I know they merged with a different website, so I am not sure if there are any changes. Below are tips I would give to CO 2019:

-Start early! There are a lot of components that the school has to upload for you. Send those requests early. Some schools also require a TB mask test which our school doesn't, so do this early and take a photo copy of the results to upload.

-VSAS does not always state all the requirements for the school. It is best to search through each school's website (links are located at the bottom right)

-Take pictures of your ACLS, BLS, TB and flu records to have on hand.

-I personally made a document with each school I was interested in and their specific requirements.

-Submit the first day possible (this unfortunately is different for each school)

-Submit for two possible months (example: both June and July for one school. This gives you a better chance of getting at least one month)

-I applied to 11 programs but 2 months for each program. They give you a certain amount of "allowances" which I think is 14, so you are allowed to apply to 14 schools initially.

Hopefully that is a little helpful! You can also send my contact info if there are more specific questions that I might be able to help with. (Renita.Goetz@gmail.com)

Neurosurgery –

I used the VSAS system, I suppose as much as the next person. I was aiming to do three externships in the months of June, July, and August, which I was successful in doing. I do know

that my experience was a bit different than many in that I only applied to three places and I was able to get a rotation at the time that I wanted for each of the three.

I have only a few things to say about the process: Two of the three programs responded very near to their deadline with an affirmative response, and in one case I did have to follow up with an email to find out the status of my application and I don't think that was a bad idea. I would also recommend, for students going into a field with a lot of hands on training such as a surgical specialty, that June is a great month to rotate, and here's why: The first year residents are about to become 2nd years, and as such, they have accumulated the skills that a 4th year med student is trying to acquire and the OR training situation at that time will allow for first or second year residents to focus training you the skills that in July will be focused upon the newly starting first year. I learned a lot during the first three weeks of my June rotation because of that. Having said that, not all programs offer a June rotation, but if you can do it, it is a sweet advantage to being in our Pillar structure and really increased my learning at the first site and prepped me well for my second two rotations.

I did not necessarily appreciate a consistent etiquette for rotating medical students beyond the normal rules of respect and attentiveness, but perhaps consistent nuances were lost on me while at the various programs. I know that some people had to apply to multiple programs to fill their desired slots and as such I think some of the experiences are really applicant specific.

Surgery/OB –

VSAS was a frustrating system, and I remember being quite confused while applying for away rotations. So thank you for doing your best to help the students figure it all out. The tricky thing is that each specialty is a little different. I applied for rotations in OB and gen surg. For OB, I used VSAS to apply to two programs. I was accepted to both and had to turn one down. For gen surg, I applied to two programs, but surgery programs don't typically use VSAS so it was done either on their website or through email with residency coordinators. I was accepted to only one of those programs. All in all, I was glad I applied to two programs per rotation. I know, however, that my friends doing derm and ophtho ended up having to apply to far more than 2 per rotation. So I think there is no clear way in knowing how many applications are enough until you start hearing back from programs about whether or not you are offered a rotation.

I know that wasn't a tremendously insightful, but I hope it can be some sort of a guide to the younger students. If people have specific questions about OB or surgery, I'd be happy to talk with them. (lras415@gmail.com)