

So You Want To Go Into Urology

Table Of Contents

I.	First Year	1
II.	Second Year	1
III.	Third Year	3
	a. Away Rotations – 5	
	b. Step 2 – 5	
	c. Time off - 6	
	d. Back up plan? – 6	
IV.	Fourth Year	6
	a. How to excel – 6	
	b. Letters of Rec – 7	
	c. Interviews – 7	
	d. Rank list - 8	

I. First Year

First year is a very early – and good time – to start! If you know about Urology and are already interested in the field, you already have a head start. It is imperative that you perform well in your classes to the best of your ability! As the field becomes progressively more competitive, mean and median scores will continue to increase, so to be competitive you should expect to do more than just “satisfactory pass” all of your classes. With the extra time you think you don’t have, you can also begin to pursue some shadowing or even research if you feel ambitious! Shadowing is always a good idea to make contacts and get a real glimpse into what is involved on a day to day basis – make sure you try to get time observing in an OR or even time spent shadowing in clinic. Both will be valuable to you regardless of if you end up applying to Urology or not. Research can also be had through shadowing – by showing initiative and interest in Urology, those that you shadow may be able to point you towards resources to get involved with research. If that doesn’t work, do not hesitate to e-mail residents or staff members at Drexel or even other hospitals! You can introduce yourself, talk about your interest in the field, and offer any kind of help with any kind of research. Many times you may not hear back for days, or at all, but you can always find someone else. Others have also noted becoming involved in a Mini-Med class towards the end of the year where you can also be involved with learning about and teaching Urological principles to undergraduate or high school level students. Keep an eye out for more information regarding this.

As far as the summer between 1st and 2nd year, you can choose to spend your time as you please! Of course, if you choose to be involved with research, volunteer work, or other extracurricular activities, it can only help you. With that being said, it is also going to be your last summer off for the rest of med school! You can also feel free to travel, do nothing, etc.

Keep in mind that if you begin research prior to the summer, you may be expected to continue to do some work on that research through the summer, unless you have already discussed being away or not being able to continue for the summer. Personally, I took 2 months to go to India and volunteer in a hospital. At the time, I had no interest whatsoever in Urology and spent my time volunteering in a general medical clinic.

II. Second Year

Second year should be filled once again with above average performance! Your goals first and second years are to do as well as you can, and learn as much as possible. Research and extracurriculars should be included at your own comfort level – don't jeopardize your grades for an extra research project! Time management is paramount, and with proper time management, you can – without a doubt – do well in classes and work on research. Your second goal of the year is to do extremely well on Step 1. The mean score for my year was roughly 242. However, students were accepted into residency positions with scores ranging from 211 – 270, and students were also denied with scores as high as 260-270 as well! Figure out what you need to do to score well and do it! I gave myself four weeks to study and scored in the mid 230's.

You may also be wondering about your third year rotations. You will hear pros and cons for any combination of rotations – what really matters is getting great results, great comments on your evaluations, and scoring well. You should not stress out if every grade 1st and 2nd year isn't an Honors or High Sat! It won't be the end of your career in Urology – I am speaking from firsthand experience. You will just need to make up for it in some other way. I would advise to take surgery in the middle of the year, or maybe after that if you so choose. This will allow you to get accustomed to being in hospitals, presenting, and finding information. You may also choose to do your Internal Medicine rotation last so to help prepare you for Step 2.

III. Third Year

This is where you have to kick butt! You should get good comments on all of your evaluations, you should make good relationships with your colleagues – residents, attending, AND students. The key to Urology for me was personality. My scores were good, but not great; however, work ethic, humility, and a respectful attitude can carry you further than you imagine.

You will find out what resources to use for each rotation as you talk to classes above you and your peers that have gone through rotations before you. Regardless of what schedule you get in the lottery, you should make the most of it!

Because our school doesn't have a Urology pathway, you will have to do the General Surgery pathway. This is actually good news! – I'll explain further down. You will definitely

want to do a Urology elective during your surgery rotation. It is available at most, if not all, sites, and will give you your primary connection into the field! If you have not shadowed, and have not done research, this will be your first real exposure to the field and your experience here is crucial! You may decide after those two weeks (or more) that it isn't what you thought, and you need to do more shadowing, or you may decide that you are in love and have no other interest! Both are equally important realizations, because the road into Urology is unique, and can make it difficult to switch once you get too involved. You should work extremely hard and impress these attending – it will likely be easy to do so as Urologists are generally very personable and easy to get along with. Therefore, a few extra minutes of studying ahead of time can go a long way in making yourself memorable. When you need recommendations, these attending may also be your go-to individuals if you have a good relationship with them. A good general surgery letter may also come in handy when applying for away rotations.

As you get towards the second half of third year, you should start thinking about away rotations. As a member of the general surgery pathway, students interested in Urology are allowed to do three away rotations! One of those away rotations will count as your General Surgery Sub-internship, so you will not have to do one at Drexel.

It is important to be in touch with the people who graduated ahead of you that matched into Urology, or to be in touch with students in the year ahead of you who have just recently started the process, as they can help guide you through pit falls and any other problems they may have had to prevent you from making the same ones.

A. How do I pick away rotations?

There are lots of factors to consider in picking away rotations: How good is the program? What geographic area is important to me? Which programs are within my reach and which are not? How many students does each residency program take per year?

The best way to do this is to use the AUA website (<http://www.auanet.org/content/residency/residency-program.cfm>) and each individual program's website. From there you will be able to see which programs are in each state, how many positions each takes, and a rough estimate of how many people they interview for those positions, although I am not sure that third number is correct for every program. When you go to each program's website, take note of where their residents come from to get an idea of the type of candidate they are looking for. This doesn't mean you don't have a shot just because there are no Drexel grads! This is just to guide you.

You should decide your preferences for each away rotation early, and begin to gather the materials you will need: many require specific vaccinations, titers, or even drug tests be

submitted with the application. Many of these programs are first come, first serve – so you want to be the first one to apply! Even then, you may not get accepted to every program you want, so have back up options. You shouldn't apply to all of them at once; if you get accepted to more than one for the same block, you will have to cancel one, and they will likely remember that when you apply for an interview. It has been reported that students do not get interviews at programs where they cancel an away rotation. Look at ERAS requirements for what documents need to be submitted and start gathering all of it as soon as the information becomes available – stay organized as you will have lots of documents to keep track of and send to schools.

B. When do I take step 2?

Step 2 is a controversial topic for students applying to Urology. Many will say it is not necessary to take step 2 early for Urology, as programs do not care too much about the score, and if you take it late enough, the score won't be part of the application. This, however, is not confirmed. Our school has a rule that Step 2 must be completed by the end of October of fourth year. Thus, if you do three away rotations – when you will not have time to study for step 2 – that will leave you a few weeks to study for step 2 alongside another rotation. That may or may not be enough time, and you will not want to take off any time to study – you don't have time to give to anything other than interview blocks or away rotations! You can take it that late if you feel comfortable doing so, or you can take it early before beginning away rotations – you will have roughly 2 weeks to study between the end of third year rotations and beginning of away rotations. I almost solely used UWorld questions, but there are tons of resources from which you can decide what works best for you.

C. When should I schedule time off?

Interview season is usually middle to late October, into November and December. The last interview of the year is usually the 2nd weekend in December – right before most schools let out for the holidays. Generally, most interviews for the bigger programs tend to be on Fridays/Saturdays. You have two blocks to take off for vacation time/interviews, you can choose to take off those two blocks, and in some cases depending on your interviews, you may be able to take enough days off from your rotation to not have to use a vacation block. You should plan to have to take off at least one block during interview season.

D. Should I have a back up plan?

This depends on your level of dedication to Urology. If you do not want to go into any other field, you should still have a back up plan of what you would do in the event you do not match – do you want to take a year off for research? Or would you want to match into a preliminary general surgery year, and reapply next year? Another option is

to apply to another field at the same time – such as medicine, anesthesia, etc. This is a little trickier and requires even more work on your part – you will have to plan your schedule accordingly and make sure you hit requirements for both pathways during the year, along with getting letters of recommendation from enough faculty members of each field. You should research the other pathways and your own interests before going down this pathway. The school also has resources you can utilize to discuss your competitiveness, options, etc. Take everything you hear with a grain of salt, however.

IV. Fourth year

A. How to excel during away rotations:

1. Be early
2. Stay late
3. Be interested
4. Don't talk too much, don't talk too little
5. READ READ READ – the best way to impress people other than doing the above four is to know answers to questions when pimpled. The book to buy and use is the Pocket Guide to Urology, available from:
www.Pocketguidetourology.com
6. Be humble! Never act like you know more than the residents or attending, and do as you are told. If you have good scores, don't brag about it.
7. Help with everything – help the nurses, help the turn over crew, help the staff, help the secretaries, and be nice. There is no work that is beneath you!
8. Ask questions. No one expects you to know everything and be perfect. Do not be afraid to ask questions – it shows you're interested and paying attention. However, don't ask questions just to ask questions.
9. Try to scrub with attendings as much as possible and make sure you have read up on the case and the patient before doing so. He/She will not expect you to know the answers to EVERY question, but the more you can answer, the better.

B. Letters of recommendation

You will need 3-4 letters of recommendation for applying to Urology residencies. You should receive at least one, if not more, from each away rotation. Most students choose to ask program directors for letters of recommendation, and may or may not ask another attending as well. You may feel that you have not spoken to the PD (Program director), or he/she doesn't know you and can't say anything about you. In that case, they will usually speak to attendings, residents, and other staff to find out about you. This is why it is crucial to be nice and humble with everyone! They are also expecting you to ask them, so do not hesitate (unless you have had a bad experience for some reason). They will usually expect you to give them a copy of your CV and your personal statement, so you should work on your personal statement ahead of time or soon thereafter. You should not delay getting any materials they ask for to them.

C. Interviews:

Always have a good suit ready to go. Beforehand, look up as much information as you can about the program and its faculty. You will be asked in EVERY interview if you have any questions for them; researching the program can help you come up with good questions that show your interest and your ability to educate yourself. You may also look into research that the faculty members have done and ask questions about their research – that may score you points also. You should prepare for certain questions such as:

1. Why do you want to go into Urology?
2. What are your strengths?
3. What are your weaknesses?
4. What do you do for fun?
5. What you think you want to do after residency? (Fellowship, academics, private practice. It seems to be standard to say you would like to go into academics following a fellowship, but I ended up being truthful and saying it was too early and I did not have enough exposure to each of the fields to decide. You should say what you're comfortable with.)
6. Have a joke or two ready – I was only asked to tell a joke once, but having a few ready did help break the ice or make small talk.

You will get tired of interviewing after 7-8. Although it is fun to travel and meet people, it gets old – so try to keep yourself well rested, and keep your eyes on the goal! You're almost there! Try to stay organized during interviews and keep a list – either physical or mental, about pros and cons of each place you interview at! It will be hard to keep a clear idea of what programs are of choice after your top three. Some people made a point list of what was important to them. For example: Location, faculty, residents, environment, age of facilities, etc. Each was scored from 1-10 so that an objective point value could be assigned to each institution. You can do whatever you are comfortable with, but make sure you to have a way of remembering what you thought of each place.

You should send thank-you notes to each of the programs at which you interviewed. For my top three programs, I wrote handwritten letters and mailed them to EACH attending faculty member I interviewed with. To the rest of the programs, I emailed all of the faculty members I interviewed with unless they specifically stated that we did not need to write anything. Many programs meet to rank students shortly after their last interview date, so you should send these thank you notes quickly after each interview! You do not want to miss an opportunity to show why you would make a great resident. You may also make a quick note of what you spoke about during your interview so to refer to that in your thank you note to make it more personal.

D. Rank List

Don't over think the rank list. Most people know the top three picks before they even go on the interviews and sometimes it doesn't change. Nevertheless, they may change and whatever method you used to keep track of your thoughts during interviews will come in handy here. Undoubtedly, you will have spent countless hours thinking of your preferences by the time the rank list opens – be sure not to forget and to submit on time! If you do not rank a place, you have zero chance of matching there, so you should rank every place you interview at unless you have an aversion to a particular program and would rather not go into Urology than have to be there.

After you submit, RELAX! There is no more you can do – so start tying up loose ends with school work, get through your rotations, etc. MAKE SURE YOU DO NOT SCREW UP! It doesn't take much work at this point to do well in your rotations, so do exactly that. Do not forget that you're a professional now, and you should maintain professionalism in all you do.

Match is usually towards the last week of January – you will find out most likely via an email in the morning. At this point, if you have matched, you deserve to celebrate all your hard work and accomplishments, but it would behoove you to email your program director, chairmen, and anyone else there to introduce yourself and/or thank them for accepting you. If you have not matched, you will need to get in touch with the school to see what your next step should be.

After reading this guide, and talking to other students ahead of you, along with the resources at school, you can contact me via email at vyaspaulas@gmail.com. I may not respond immediately, but will try to get back to you when I can.