A: Most programs survey the application material looking for academic excellence. This will be documented in your transcript, USMLE scores and awards. A few programs will invite for interview (and rank) on this alone. Stellar academics is a very good thing to have, but *solid* is a must. Most programs will survey the whole application. Although candidates must excel in physiology and pharmacology, they must also be great communicators, compassionate physicians and life-long learners. We like to see that the candidate has sought out leadership roles and continued with volunteer activities during medical school. Research activity is good to have as an indicator of intellectual curiosity. The pursuit of outside activities – such as sports or music – shows the applicant has balance. This is good, especially as this is a critical care specialty. Those candidates who have done serious research into the career of anesthesiology are impressive.

How to be a competitive applicant? Arrange an elective and shine! Ask your anesthesiology faculty mentors about the “job” of anesthesiology. Join the ASA and read the literature. Participate in your institution’s Interest Group, and start one if they do not have one. Participate in anesthesiology research. Have a reference letter from a mentor who has seen you at the bedside with patients and family and who has seen your technical abilities. A letter from the Chair of Anesthesiology never hurts although best if you have worked with them on the rotation!

One of the most important things to remember: **GET YOUR APPLICATION IN EARLY!** In our program, interview spots are given out starting in September, and we have very little room to interview for applications received after the end of October.