

ABSTRACT

It is widely recognized that rural students are underrepresented in medical schools in Canada and many other countries. Some have argued that this underrepresentation stems from admissions selection biases. This study explores the relationship between the location of high school of graduation and applicant demographics, performance on several admissions measures, and incorporates a comparison of rural and non-rural applicant autobiographical submissions. For this study I allocated 1963 UBC medical school applicants from the 2014-15 application cycle into three categories (rural, regional and urban). Three primary analyses were conducted: a comparison of demographic characteristics (age, gender, highest level of education earned at time of application, Aboriginal identity, and BC residency) across the applicant subgroups, a univariate and multivariate statistical analysis reviewing the relationship between location of high school of graduation and measures of performance in the admissions process, and a quantitative content analysis that compared rural, regional, and urban applicant non-academic and employment history experiences. Results suggest that subtle differences existed across the applicant subgroups. Primarily, rural applicants were more likely to be female, to identify as an Aboriginal person, to perform more poorly on the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), to work, and to mention employment in trades and forestry related professions than their non-rural peers. These differences, however, were unrelated to the rate at which applicants from the different subgroups advanced through the various stages of the admissions process. Because medical schools struggle to balance the goals and values of their programs with the metrics used to evaluate these traits and characteristics, results reinforce the

importance of admissions policies designed to evaluate candidates in a background-appropriate manner so that a diversity of applicants, including those from rural areas, can adequately demonstrate their readiness for a career in medicine.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Academic Studies: Bachelor of Commerce, UBC, 2009

Current Position: MD Admissions Manager, UBC

GRADUATE STUDIES

Field of Study: MA- Educational Studies- Higher Education

AWARDS

Faculty of Education Graduate Award
Special UBC Graduate Scholarship- EDUC Strategic Award

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

Supervisor: Dr. Lesley Andres, Professor, Department of Educational Studies, UBC

Committee: Dr. Kevin Eva, Professor and Director of Educational Research and Scholarship, Department of Medicine, UBC
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Ext. Examiner: Dr. Marion Pearson, Professor of Teaching, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, UBC

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

PROGRAMME

The Final Oral Examination
For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
HIGHER EDUCATION

Catherine Macala

MA, UBC, 2018

June 18, 1:00 PM
Ponderosa Commons Oak House: Room 1001

BRIDGING THE RURAL DIVIDE:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF A MEDICAL SCHOOL'S
RURAL APPLICANTS

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Supervisory Committee:

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