

**UC Davis School of Medicine
Career Advising Program**

Medical Student Insight Guide: Radiology

Radiology is a vital field at the intersection of technology and patient care, where physicians use medical imaging to diagnose and guide treatment across all specialties. Radiologists are key consultants on the care team, using their imaging expertise combined with synthesis of clinical information to provide timely and accurate insights. Whether working behind the scenes or performing image-guided procedures, radiologists play a central role in patient outcomes. This guide was created by MS4s to help you explore radiology early, build meaningful experiences, and navigate your path with confidence.

PRECLERKSHIP - *identifying your passions and getting involved*

First Year

What to do as a MS1 interested in rads

- Focus on adjusting to med school—grades and well-being come first! Do things you enjoy! Most radiology programs are looking for interesting people who they can stand to sit in a room with for 8+ hrs. So, although a lot of things in medical school may not *directly* relate to radiology, they do help develop you as a person and therefore, make you a better, well-rounded applicant that rads programs are looking for.
- Start exploring radiology if you're curious:
 - **Shadowing**: click the hyperlink and navigate to the “Departmental Contacts for Shadowing” document to help get set up with shadowing. Consider shadowing 1 or 2x this year. It's not absolutely necessary but it's helpful so you can get a sense of what radiologists do and if you can see yourself doing it!
 - **Research**: MSRP during summer. Even if you don't like research, it is a great way to meet mentors. However, if you don't start research as a MS1, don't sweat it—in time an opportunity will present itself.
 - **Advising**: Reach out to the Radiology advisor (Dr. Dillon Chen as of 5/2025)
 - Find a mentor (or 2!): Reach out to MS3s and 4s who are applying into radiology. You can also gain mentors through shadowing and/or research – just ask a radiologist that you get along with if they'll be your mentor and/or sponsor!
 - **SIGs**: DR/IR SIG (Diagnostic Radiology/Interventional Radiology Student Interest Group). Get involved in other, non-radiology SIGs too that interest you.
 - Attend the annual Pacific Coast Radiology Exposition (PCRE) held at UC Davis for a general introduction to the field (usually held in August). Consider getting involved in planning the event for the next year!

- **Annual conferences/Memberships (free for students)! ([SIR](#), [RSNA](#), [CIRSE](#), [GEST](#))**
 - I recommend becoming a member in at least one of these groups as soon as possible so you can get updates about medical student-specific opportunities.
- **Social Media** (X, Facebook, YouTube, etc)
 - There are many people who post content relevant to medical students applying to radiology.
 - One standout is Dr. Ben White, PD at Baylor Dallas
 - <https://www.benwhite.com>
 - <https://x.com/benwhitemd>
- Other extracurriculars
 - **Class leadership:** get involved with DR/IR SIG as a 1st year so that in subsequent years you can look to hold a leadership position. Otherwise, involvement in general class leadership (e.g. class president, MIRTH coordinator, etc.) is only necessary as you see fit.
 - **Student-run clinics:** I highly recommend it as it develops your clinical skills and ability to interact with patients – both great skills for a future radiologist to possess.
 - **Areas of Scholarly concentration:** None are directly applicable to radiology. Get involved with what you like!
- Resources: [UCD's career advising website](#)

Second Year

What to do as a MS2 interested in rads

- **SRCs/volunteering:** continue volunteering in organizations that speak to you (don't have to be radiology-specific).
- **Research**
 - If not already plugged in to a project, consider asking the radiology career advisor for help connecting with radiology faculty who are doing research. I started my radiology research career at the tail end of MS2 and still got plenty of publications/accepted abstracts in time for residency apps. So, if you find yourself in the same boat – do not worry!
 - Involvement in non-radiology research projects is great too, but try to get involved in at least 1 radiology-related research project. Non-radiology projects are still valuable as many residency interviewers may pick up on these as interesting talking points for discussion.

- **SIGs:** continue participation in DR/IR SIG with potential to hold a leadership position as a MS2. Continue participating in other, non-radiology SIGs that you like.
- **Mentorship & Advising:** Make sure to meet with radiology career advisor 1-2x/yr to touch base and discuss any updates in the residency application process/field of radiology in general
- **Shadowing:** click the hyperlink and navigate to the “Departmental Contacts for Shadowing” document to help get set up with shadowing. Same as before, consider shadowing 1 or 2x this year. It’s not absolutely necessary but it’s helpful to do so you can get a sense of what radiologists do and if you can (still) see yourself doing it!
- **Annual conferences!** (SIR, RSNA, CIRSE, GEST)

CLERKSHIPS - *reflecting on what feels right*

Third year

What to do as a MS3 interested in rads.

- **Focus on doing well in your clerkships and learning as much as possible.**
Understanding different pathologies in different specialties is important because as a radiologist you’ll need general knowledge about these pathologies in order to help make a diagnosis and/or guide treatment! At least one of your letters of recommendation (LOR) must come from faculty who can comment on your clinical skills (I recommend IM or surgery (esp. for IR)) which is another reason you should be engaged and do your best in non-rads clerkships. Check residency programs’ websites for more info on which non-rads specialties they prefer a letter from.
- **Take the radiology elective!** Even if you shadowed radiology 1st and 2nd year, taking the elective during MS3 gives you extended time in the department and allows you to rotate through the different subspecialties. How do you know you want to be a radiologist if you’ve never worked with them? Participating in the elective can also help you identify potential radiology LOR writers.
 - It is challenging getting a letter from the RDI 430 elective in the third year since you may not see the same attending multiple days during the 4-week block. The exception is spending extra time in IR, where you may work closely with the same IR attending for many days. This close relationship can then potentially result in a LOR.
 - As a MS3, you now know a lot more medicine. Highly recommend asking for the opportunity to “pre-dictate” scans to practice your interpretation skills! This will be daunting, but it makes the rotation experience a lot more valuable and you get to visualize yourself as a radiologist.
- **Prepare for away rotations when VSLO opens in late January/early February.**
Especially if you’re looking to go to residency outside of California, away rotations are a great way to get to know a program and the area in which they’re located. It also gives you a chance to meet one-on-one with program directors (PDs) and get your name out

there. Worried about cost? Lots of programs have travel stipends to help offset the cost of away rotations, so make sure you're checking program-specific websites or looking in [VSLO](#) to see what's available to you! (UCD will send you information about accessing VSLO between November-February of MS3).

- Even if you want to stay in California for residency, there are some great away rotations that exist, such as [SCORE](#) (Stanford) and [Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital](#) that you should consider attending (free money and you get UCDSOM credit for the course – what's not to love?!)
- *You'll hear that away rotations in diagnostic radiology are optional, but I highly recommend doing at least one.* Rads rotations aren't about showing how much you know but rather, that you're a normal person that can hold a conversation and are nice to be around.
- If you're interested in IR, plan to do *at least 2* away rotations in IR. The recommendation is to do the IR rotation at your home institution first so you can learn from your mistakes and get the hang of things before doing an away rotation, where the stakes are higher.
- **Research:** Continue working on those research projects, submit your abstract(s) to as many conferences/journals as possible and submit your manuscript(s) for publication.
 - Hack: Each abstract and manuscript submission counts as a research activity on ERAS. So work on getting things submitted before the ERAS deadline in September of MS4.

POST-CLERKSHIP - it all gets real

Fourth Year

- Congrats! You made it to your fourth year, a time of relaxation and occasional bouts of stress and doom. Don't worry, you'll get through it!
- Ideal MS4 timeline: End clerkships > ask 3-4 people for LORs > draft your CV + personal statement and send to general career advisor (Nichola as of 5/2025 is good for CV feedback) and radiology career advisor (Dr. Dillon Chen as of 5/2025 is good for personal statement feedback) for feedback > study for and take STEP 2 > start 4th year requirements +/- away rotations > meet with specialty advisor to discuss application > complete ERAS application > submit ERAS > participate in mock interviews > interviews > second look day(s) > ranking > match!
 - **LORs**
 - Should have 3 (or 4) total from 1 radiologist, 1 physician who can comment on your clinical skills (preferably IM or surgery) and 1 person (preferably physician) who you've done research/volunteer work with.
 - Ask for a letter early!
 - How to ask for a letter

- Ask if they can write a *strong* letter of recommendation in support of your application to radiology residency.
- Offer them your CV and personal statement (even if it's just a draft) so they have something to work off of.
- Give a clear deadline (e.g. 2 weeks before ERAS opens).
- **CV and personal statement**
 - [Resources](#) on writing a personal statement, CV template, MSPE letter sample, examples of noteworthy characteristics and interviewing techniques)
 - Work on your CV throughout med school so you log your accomplishments to prevent scrambling at the last minute trying to remember everything you did
 - Adapt your CV entries into your ERAS activities
 - You have an unlimited number of personal statements that you can create and you can attach a unique one to each program. YMMV: Consider using the last paragraph of your personal statement to customize it to specific programs and/or regions (just a few sentences)
- **STEP 2**
 - Some programs preliminarily filter out applicants by score so take studying seriously and do as well as you can! For reference: in 2024 the average score of matched diagnostic radiology applicants was 241 ([page 49](#)) and 247 for matched IR applicants ([page 109](#)).
- **Away rotations**
 - See above bullet titled “**Prepare for away rotations when VSLO opens in late January/early February.**”
 - Focus on being yourself and making a good impression! Show up on time and ready to learn.
 - How much you know is equally important as showing your interest in the specialty and that you're down-to-earth/a good person
- **Advice for people late to radiology**
 - If you're late to the rads train, there is still hope in matching
 - Try to do a rotation in radiology prior to ERAS submission so you can talk about that experience during interviews
 - Be honest about it! Explain how you came to apply to radiology and then hammer home the point that it's the specialty for you
- **Attend open houses**
 - Many programs will host open house/informational sessions in August/September before applications are due. You can usually find information about them on the program's social media platforms (X/Instagram). Use this time to learn more about the programs you're

interested in as these details may be helpful in crafting personal statements
+ talking points during interviews

- [The RadRoom](#) usually hosts an open house series with multiple programs in one session

- **Completing ERAS**

- Where do I apply?
 - Take stock of things that matter most to you (location, emphasis (or lack thereof) on research, academic vs community, size of program, diversity of program, salary, etc.) and use that to dictate where you apply.
- Geographic preferencing
 - Used to indicate your connection to a region
 - Always use the explanation box to explain your connection to that specific region
- Signal
 - Signal programs you're interested in! Don't assume just because you're from a region or completed an away rotation at a program that you're guaranteed an interview (unless explicitly told otherwise by an institution's program director)
 - Ensure that your program-specific signals match your geographic preferences (e.g. if you're signaling a program in Texas make sure you also put a geographic preference for the region in which Texas is located).
 - Use all your signals
 - You will have a separate set of signals to use for each type of intern year program

- **Intern year programs**

- Radiology programs are often "advanced" programs, meaning intern years are not included and you are responsible for matching into one separately. There are a handful of "categorical" programs (intern year included) so do your research into each program! (notable ones on the West Coast being KPLA, Mayo AZ, etc)
- *IM prelim, surgery prelim, transitional year (TY)? What do I choose?*
 - The type of intern year you choose depends on your goals. You will hear Rads residents tell you to aim for TY > IM prelim > surgery prelim as TY programs are generally more chill than the other options. IR applicants may want to consider a surgery prelim to work on their procedural skills.

- You apply to these programs on ERAS as well. You will use the same ERAS application to apply to these programs but can attach a different personal statement and LORs from your radiology app
- You do not need your letter writers write a different LOR for these programs, but a intern year specific personal statement is recommended (ok to mention your intended advanced specialty)
- **Interviews**
 - Sign up for interviews as soon as you get the invite as spots tend to fill up quickly
 - Interview invites start coming in a couple days after ERAS submission until late Nov. Intern year invites tend to be released before Rads. Rads invites are sent around Oct-Nov with West Coast programs tending to send them out later
 - Consider sending Letters of Interest to programs
 - Prior to interview day
 - Participate in at least 1 mock interview
 - Practice answering basic questions like why radiology? Why [insert program name]? What's your biggest strength/what can you add to a program? What are you looking for in a program? If applying out-of-state: why do you want to move? Tell me about a time when...
 - Test your internet connection
 - Make sure your physical background is appropriate (clean, quiet, not too distracting, good lighting) and audio is clear
 - Research the program (review their website and read the info provided on Thalamus (the interview platform many residency programs use))
 - During the interview
 - You'll interview with the program director +/- the assistant program director, chief residents/residents and radiology faculty
 - Have 1-2 questions to ask your interviewer
 - Be honest!
 - Be yourself!
 - Smile! 😊
- **Second Look Days**
 - Truly optional and are usually held after a program's rank list is already submitted.
 - If you do attend, check the dress code (usually business casual).
 - Take this time to imagine yourself at the program. Do you like the hospital? Do you like the people? Can you see yourself here for 4-6 years?

Do you like the city/surrounding location? Are there viable housing options?

- I found second look days, even the virtual ones, helpful. Attend as many as you can!
- Sending thank you emails isn't necessary. Only email programs if you have a question not answered by information that's already accessible.
- If you feel strongly enough, you can send an email to your #1 program iterating your desire to be there.
- **Ranking**
 - Rank based on your genuine interest in and perceived fit at a program
 - Do *not* rank programs based on where you think they'll rank you
 - **Do not rank programs you cannot see yourself at**
 - Review this [video](#) for how to rank your intern year programs (supplemental rank order list)
- **Match**
 - Congrats on matching! All your hard work has paid off!!!
 - I've heard people say that even if you're not 100% happy with where you matched, trust that you ended up where you needed to be. You *will* be successful and will find ways to be happy.
 - If you didn't match, regroup with OME and the radiology specialty advisor to find SOAP options. Now is the time to leverage those connections, no matter how loose they may be!
 - If you do not match or SOAP into a position, this is not the end. You are still smart, accomplished, capable and worthy! Touch base with OME on next steps.

Questions?

- Reach out to specialty advisor or the authors of the guide (emails listed below)
- Reddit and Youtube are also good resources for *general* information (don't get too caught up in specifics)

[Radiology Specialty Advisor](#)

[Medical Student Research at UCDSOM](#)

Radiology Organizations, Opportunities and Annual Conferences

- **Radiological Society of North America (RSNA)**
 - Annual conference
 - When: the end of November/early December
 - Where: Chicago, IL

- Opportunities
 - [Medical Student Research Grant](#)
- **Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR)**
 - Annual conference
 - When: late March/early April
 - Where: location changes each year
 - Opportunities
 - [Summer Medical Internship Program](#)
 - [Medical Student Scholar Program](#)
 - [Grants for Education of Medical Students \(GEMS\)](#)
 - [Medical Student Research Award](#)
 - [Student Research Grant](#)
- **Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiological Society of Europe (CIRSE)**
 - Annual conference
 - When: usually second weekend in September
 - Where: location changes each year but will be somewhere in Europe
- **Pacific Coast Radiology Exposition (PCRE)** (started at UCD!)
 - Annual conference
 - When: Fall, usually late August
 - Where: virtual + in-person
 - Run entirely by UCD students - highly recommend getting involved at least one year for the leadership experience and opportunity to network with faculty, PDs, and residents across programs on the West Coast!
- **Additional National, Non-Radiology, Conferences**

Attending these is a lowkey hack. These conferences invite GME/residency-specific programs to table during their event so *don't sleep on these conferences!!!* It's a great way to meet GME at programs you're interested in and sometimes even radiology department leadership/residents. These conferences offer a more intimate environment and help you stand out because not everyone is interested rads. These conferences are also a great way to learn about visiting student opportunities/programs/scholarships!

 - [Student National Medical Association \(SNMA\)](#)
 - Annual conference (Annual Medical Education Conference (AMEC))
 - When: usually Easter weekend
 - Where: location changes each year
 - [Latino Medical Student Association \(LMSA\)](#)
- Other Opportunities
 - Visiting student scholarships
 - [Stanford Clinical Opportunity for Residency Experience \(SCORE\) Program](#)
 - [Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital](#)

- [Weill Cornell Diversity Acting Internship Program](#)
- A lot of other schools have stipends available! Check the school/program's website or VSLO (when you have access to it) to see if they offer scholarships to visiting students

People to Know

- Dr. Dillon Chen (specialty advisor, MS3 elective IOR, MSK)
- Dr. Ghaneh Fananapazir (DR PD, abdominal, CSIR)
- Dr. David Chen (DR APD, MSK)
- Dr. Amol Shah (IR PD, Radiology SIG faculty advisor, IR)
- Dr. Cyrus Bateni (MS4 elective IOR, MSK)
- CARL research group (chest/CVI): Dr. Ahmadreza Ghasemiesfe, Dr. Shotaro Naganawa, Dr. Misagh Piran

Resources

- [Specialty information](#)
- [Radiology extracurriculars](#) (shadowing, SIGs and Research)
- DR/IR SIG instagram: [@ucdradiologysig](#)

General Career Advising at UCDSOM

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