

Class of 2025 AOA Selection Process Overview (Updated 11-29-23)

Atul Maheshwari, MD
Councilor, AOA Texas Beta Chapter

What is the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society?

About



Alpha Omega Alpha, founded in 1902, is the national medical honor society. Its mission is:

Alpha Omega Alpha – dedicated to the belief that in the profession of medicine we will improve care for all by:

- recognizing high educational achievement;
- honoring gifted teaching;
- encouraging the development of leaders in academia and the community;
- supporting the ideals of humanism; and
- promoting service to others.

Election to Alpha Omega Alpha is an honor signifying a lasting commitment to professionalism, leadership, scholarship, research, and community service. A lifelong honor, membership in the society confers recognition for a physician's dedication to the profession and art of healing.

<https://www.alphaomegalpha.org/about/>

Rules for AOA Selection

“Each school may elect **up to 20% of the graduating class** of students, up to 25 residents/fellows, up to 10 faculty, and three to five alumni, who, based on merit, demonstrate the characteristics of excellent physicians in alignment with AΩA’s mission and values.”

Historical Concerns about the Selection Process

- Perception of Fairness of Core Clinical Grades
- **National conversation about racial disparities using Core Clinical Grades as the sole nominating criteria (*JAMA Int Med*, 2017)**
- Late induction of AOA Senior Class limits the ability to strategize for residency applications and to participate in AOA activities
- Input solicited from students, AOA Executive Committee, SA Deans, Curriculum Deans, and LCAs
- Guiding principles: **fairness** and **transparency**

Big changes for Class of 2024

- 10% of class nominated by Core Clinical GPA
- 25% of class nominated by submitted “Honors Items”
- AOA nominees identified by Spring of MS3
- Creation of 7 AOA Student Committees

AOA Selection Process Committee Review

- Composed of 7 AOA students and 1 MD/PhD student (who did not participate in the selection process this year)
- Reviewed facets of AOA selection process including:
 - Literature on fairness, transparency and equity in AOA
 - Peer institution processes
- Only 2 schools announce selection after Match (Hopkins, U Penn)
- Only 1 school did not have any academic criteria: UNC Chapel Hill
- Multiple top-tier institutions have suspended chapters (e.g. UCSF, Harvard, Stanford, Yale)



Selection Committee Recommendations for the AOA Selection Process

1. **Continue** the dual academic/honor item mechanism for nomination.
2. **Phase 1:** Eliminate the “Full Honors Items” list – instead, provide high-scoring Honors Items examples. Students must support all items with evidence of **impact** (limit of 50 words per item).
3. **Phase 2:** For final selection, weigh each of 5 components equally:
 - Core Clinical GPA
 - Research
 - Teaching/Mentorship
 - Leadership
 - Service/Advocacy
4. **For the Class of 2026** (with a P/F core clinical curriculum), use the average of the top 3 Shelf Exam percentile scores instead of Core Clinical GPA.
5. **Traditional MD/PhD students** (ie. resuming clinical rotations in January of MS3 year) can use up to 6 months of contiguous time during their PhD training toward Honors Items

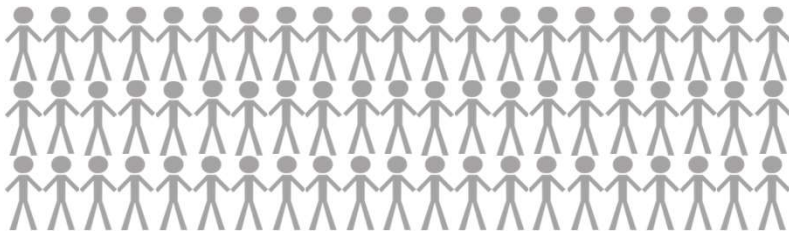
AOA Selection Process Overview for Graduating **Class of 2025**:



Phase 1:
Jan 2024

-  = top ~10% nominated by **core clinical GPA** (cutoff to be determined by Student Affairs Deans)
-  = additional ~25% nominated based on **3 Honors Items***, evaluated by the AOA Selection Committee

All AOA nominees (up to 35% of class):

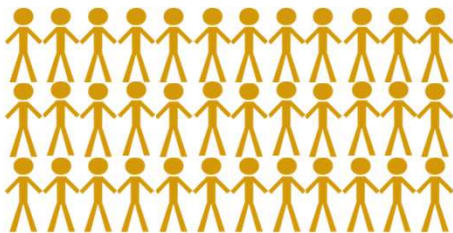


Phase 2: Feb-March 2024

AOA nominees are invited to submit a full portfolio, evaluated by the Selection Committee based on 5 factors, each weighted equally:

- (1) Leadership
- (2) Research/Scholarship
- (3) Service/Advocacy
- (4) Teaching/Mentorship
- (5) Core clinical GPA

**AOA inductees
(up to 20% of class):**



April 2024

*Honors Items process detailed in following slides

EXAMPLE STUDENT FOR CLASS OF 2025



= submits **3 Honors Items**: 1 each from Research, Leadership and Service

*NOTE: There is no pre-defined benefit to submitting an Honor Item in one category over another.

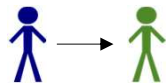
Ranked and sorted into quintiles by
at least 2 members of the Selection Committee

	Research/ Scholarship	Teaching/ Mentorship	Leadership	Service/ Advocacy
1 = bottom quintile	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1
2 = 2 nd quintile	2 2	2 2	2 2	2 2
3 = 3 rd quintile	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3
4 = 4 th quintile	4 4	4 4	4 4	4 4
5 = top quintile	5 5	5 5	5 5	5 5
Composite scores	4.0		2.5	4.5



= **4.0 + 2.5 + 4.5 = 11.0/15**

Cutoff calculated to determine additional ~25% of Nominees = **10.91/15**



Nominated to submit full portfolio

Reviewing Members of the AOA Selection Committee (updated 10/27/23)

- Dr. Mahboob Alam
- Dr. Philip Alapat
- Dr. Claire Bocchini
- Dr. Biykem Bozkurt
- Dr. Danny Chelius
- Dr. Eva Clark
- Dr. Geeta Singhal Das
- Dr. Joan Friedland
- Dr. Lindsey Gay
- Dr. William Gibbons
- Dr. John Goss
- Dr. Alexander Hanania
- Dr. Timothy Hotze
- Dr. Grace Kim
- Dr. Malvika Juneja
- Dr. Kimberly Lopez
- Dr. Michelle Lopez
- Dr. Lee Lu
- Dr. Joan Mastrobattista
- Dr. Martha Mims
- Dr. Tamara Ortiz-Perez
- Dr. Tyson Pillow
- Dr. Rayne Rouse
- Dr. Elizabeth Rossman Beel
- Dr. Sarah Sartain
- Dr. Richa Shukla
- Dr. Danielle Takacs
- Dr. Tiphonie Vogel
- Dr. Carina Wasko
- Dr. Christina Weng
- Dr. Jennifer Whitaker

Guidance on Honors Items Criteria

Describe each Honors Item using up to **50** words (**up from 30 words from last year**), aiming for the top 20% of your class in 1 of 4 categories:

- **Leadership**: time dedicated, level of position, **impact**, accomplishments
- **Service/Advocacy**: time dedicated, degree of **impact**
- **Research/Scholarship**: for peer-reviewed publications: **impact** factor, author position out of total authors; for grants/scholarships: selectivity (if available), total amount awarded; emphasis on quality over quantity of research
- **Teaching/Mentorship**: time dedicated, degree of **impact**

Overall, AOA values (<https://www.alphaomegaalpha.org/about/>):

- Quality over quantity
- Broad representation

Service-Advocacy (High-scoring examples from Class of 2024)

- Founded/Preside Block-the-Blaze (est.2020) volunteer organization for melanoma education in disadvantaged/public schools, >150 presentations/>600hrs, >50 schools, >2000 students, 5 fellowships/grants. Drafting melanoma-education legislation with TX-SBOE. Implementing free dermatology clinic with BCM Dermatology/HOMES
- Service Learning Program - Saturday Morning Science (3yrs); Kidney Koaches Coordinator (1yr) and Volunteer (3yrs); Hard Hats for Little Heads (3yrs); Texas Pediatric Society - BCM Medical Student Representative (0.5yr)
- Albert Schweitzer Fellow (200 hours); Developed and led re-entry program at Harris County Jail teaching 100+ inmates how to secure social/welfare resources, providing vital skills to bridge return into society.
- Project Lifeline Board: Campaigned at White House against misapplication of Title42. Coordinated humanitarian parole for 150 Haitian and Mexican families and authored award-winning national report on health disparities at border.

Other/Historical Service-Advocacy High-Scoring Examples

- AOA Service Leadership Project Award
- HOMES clinic manager
- Kathy Crawford Service Award

Leadership (High-scoring examples from Class of 2024)

- Mayor's Higher Education Student Leadership Alliance: 100 hrs, developed needs assessment to guide city-wide higher ed initiatives Trainees for Child Injury Prevention: 50 hrs, cohort member now alumni mentor
- Student-board, UAEM (non-profit, drug affordability), 1/2018-present. Led #FreeTheVaccine campaign for vaccine equity, 150+ participants. Project-lead, 3yrs, published tool to evaluate open-access research practices; results influenced FDA policy; covered by STAT.
- Founder/president of HEAL Initiative focused on incarceration and health. Created new partnership for students to teach classes at county jail, developed pre-clinical elective, and earned awards in service and scholarship.
- Albert Schweitzer Fellowship Senior Fellow: lead Moms to Moms, a postpartum education program at LBJ/BTGH; 869 patients served, 100 student volunteers recruited, created website with 400 visits, 200 service hours.

Other/Historical Leadership High-Scoring Examples

- Admissions Committee Member
- BCM Honor Council Officer
- Class Officer
- Curriculum Committee representative
- Curriculum Renewal Workgroup (CREW) Member
- Foundations and Preclinical Courses Subcommittee Representative
- Institutional Policy Committee Student Representative
- MD/PhD Executive Council
- MD/PhD Student Operating Committee Member
- MD/PhD Committee Chair
- Officer in a Nationally Recognized Student Organization
- PRN Coordinator
- Squad Leadership

Research-Scholarship (High-Scoring Examples from Class of 2024)

- Six peer-reviewed publications - Three scientific conference presentations - One grand rounds presentation - Topics include COVID-19, physician mental health, nutrition, ophthalmology, and dermatology - Impact factors vary; the highest factor being 7.403
- Received \$4000 American Urological Association Research Fellowship, second of five authors in two peer review journals (IF 1.83, 1.64). First author presenter at 3 national conferences
- Lung Transplant Research: Presenter at the American Association of Thoracic Surgery Annual Meeting. Recipient of Society of Thoracic Surgeons research scholarship awarded to only 30 medical students nationwide. 20 posters/publications.
- 6 peer-reviewed papers, 2nd of 3 authors [IF: 7.1], 3rd of 8 authors [IF: 2.81], 2x 2nd of 6 authors [IF:1.92], 3rd of 8 authors [IF:2.398], 4th of 7 [IF:1.92]

Other/Historical Research-Scholarship High-Scoring Examples

- AOA Kuckein Student Research Fellowship
- AOA Glaser Student Essay Award
- AOA Pharos Poetry Award
- BCM Taub and Alexander Research Symposium Award Winner
- BCM Annual Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Conference Award Winner
- BCM Showcase of Educational Scholarship Award Winner
- Receipt of a nationally competitive training award (F30, F31, AHA, etc)
- MD/PhD Publication Award (best publication of the year)
- MD/PhD Presentation Award (best national presentation of the year)

Teaching-Mentorship (High-Scoring Examples)

- As SSTRIDE lead tutor/coordinator (pipeline program focused on underrepresented, first-generation college STEM students) spearheaded collegiate tutoring program, created lesson plans, trained tutors, and I've tutored 15 hours/week (1950 hours total)
- -PRN Leader - '21-'23, mentored 8 MS1s through medical school transition - Anatomy Buddies - '21, hosted monthly tutoring sessions -BLS Instructor - '21, taught monthly BLS skills sessions for HCWs
- Grew a social media following of 60,000 where I share my experience and advice as a 1st generation MD student and have been a guest speaker at 5 universities.
- Rice then UH AMWA mentoring undergraduates (3yrs); mentoring five LSU undergraduates (3yrs); Saturday Morning Science mentorship program (2yrs); AOA Preclinical Academic Support Team (1.5yrs); Anatomy Buddies (0.5yr)

Other/Historical Teaching-Mentorship High-Scoring Examples

- AOA Preclinical Academic Support Team
- Pinky Pinner
- MD/PhD Mentorship Award

AOA Selection Process Timeline

- **November 2023** – Zoom meeting with AOA Councilor to review AOA selection process
- **~Wed, 1/17/24** – Top ~10% based on clinical GPA are notified of nomination to submit full portfolios; all other students are invited to submit “3 Honors Items” for consideration for nomination – due 1/31/24 (2 weeks to submit)
- **~Wed, 1/31/24** – AOA Selection Committee reviews Honors Items for determination of student nominations (up to an additional ~25% of the class), 3 weeks to review
- **~Wed, 2/21/24** – Portfolio requests sent out to all AOA nominees (up to 35% of the class); students have over 1 month to prepare portfolios
- **~Wed, 3/20/24** – Portfolios due for all MS3s/Class of 2025 (gives Selection Committee ~1 month to review portfolios)
- **~Monday, 4/22/24** – Class of 2024 inductees notified (gives MS4 AOA students 2 months to orient the new class to AOA activities before the MS4s leave for residency)

Frequently Asked Questions (Page 1 of 2)

- 1. Why is the “top ~10%” an approximation for clinical GPA?** Multiple students can have the same GPA, so the final cutoff point may be a little higher or lower than 10%.
- 2. Where did the Honors Items list come from?** This list was initially compiled by AOA students over the last several years to help the AOA Selection Committee understand what positions/awards were most competitive or prestigious (ie, limited to ~10% or less of the class). This list was further curated by the Student Affairs Deans and the AOA Selection Committee to ensure that they reflect a broad demonstration of excellence across the College. It will be reviewed and modified on an annual basis with both student and faculty input. This year we added “high-scoring examples” to give students an idea of sample items that were ranked in the top quintile by the Selection Committee from last year’s nomination process. Note: there is no honor item that will guarantee AOA nomination.
- 3. Is anyone checking to make sure students are submitting correctly?** We are placing a lot of trust in students, but the submissions will be scanned for accuracy by the Student Affairs Deans.
- 4. Who can I go to for help with determining my Honors Items?** Other students, Learning Community Advisors, Student Affairs Deans, Specialty Specific Mentors (all of these individuals are not allowed to be reviewing members of the Selection Committee).
- 5. Who will make up the Selection Committee?** The goal is to have the committee comprised of BCM faculty who are knowledgeable about student activities/honors and representative of the larger BCM community. At least 50% of the committee are required to be current AOA members. The final membership is determined by the AOA Councilor in concert with the Student Affairs Deans.
- 6. I was treasurer for an organization one year, president the following year, and founder of another organization – can I enter those as 3 separate “Honors Items”?** Yes. Alternatively, you can choose to lump them into one entry which may have more of an impact (e.g. Leadership: “xxx organization”, Treasurer: 21-22, President: 22-23; “yyy organization”, Founder, both raised HIV awareness in children).

Frequently Asked Questions (Page 2 of 2)

- 7. As a medical student, I have published 3 articles in 3 different journals – can I enter those as 3 separate entries?** Yes. Alternatively, you can include one entry for research and sum up your contributions in 50 words or less (e.g. Research/Scholarship: 3 peer-reviewed publications, one as first of 3 authors [Impact Factor (IF): 2.1], one as second of 20 authors [IF: 12.3], and one as fourth of 5 authors [IF: 48.2]).
- 8. I was in the class where clinical GPA was affected by COVID, but I am graduating with the class of 2025 – how will the selection process work for me?** You will have the ability to submit 3 Honors Items and be considered through that mechanism.
- 9. If I Honor all my clinical rotations, does that guarantee my induction into AOA?** While nomination is almost certainly guaranteed, induction will depend on evaluation of your full portfolio by the Selection Committee.
- 10. I worked on my first author paper in the *New England Journal of Medicine* while I was in college (or part of a dual degree program), but it was published during my time as a medical student – does that count as an Honor Item?** No. Honors Items all must have taken place completely during your time in medical school (see exception for MD/PhD students below). That allows all students to come into the process on equal footing. If nominated, you can add that honor to your portfolio in Phase 2 of the selection process, but you must then document what percentage of your time you spent on it as a medical student (which is the part that will be considered).
- 11. As a traditional MD/PhD student, I have ~6 months less time in medical school than my traditional MD classmates. Can I use activities during my PhD training toward an Honor Item?** Traditional MD/PhD students who resume core rotations in January of the “MS3 year” can use activities that occur within 6 months of contiguous time during their PhD training toward an Honor Item to compensate for the relatively limited MD training time. Those who re-enter MD training in July of the “MS3 year” would not qualify for this exception. In addition, all MD/PhD students can enter exceptional PhD-related items that are listed in the “Other/Historical High-Scoring Items” list.

Your Feedback

- What policies will be in place to confirm the honors items being submitted by students to ensure the integrity of the new system?

We are placing a lot of trust in students, but the submissions will be scanned for accuracy by the Student Affairs Deans.

- Does core clinical GPA include selectives?

No: core clinical GPA is based on EM, Sub-I, and other core clerkships

- 1) How is it fair that individuals from the class above us are now competing with us for AOA positions? They were in competition with their original class for positions/leadership/etc. so they should justifiably be compared with them and not us. 2) What does it mean to be "nominated?" 3) What percent of people will actually receive AOA?

1) I agree, but we have different reviewers this year and the process has changed, so it is difficult to compare against the matriculating class.

2) Nominated means that you are eligible to participate in the second phase of the selection process

3) We are allowed to induct 20% of the graduating class into AOA

- What does the full portfolio consist of?

A blank portfolio form is now available on the BCM AOA website

- I am just a little concerned that with huge shifts away from clinical grades in AOA selection and Gold Humanism already incorporating service, and now clinical grades almost obsolete with the top 3 shelf's being used as a proxy, some students who focused on core grades, specifically clinical performance and evals over shelf's without knowing that's what we should have focused on at the time (especially applicable to the 20+ taking a gap year this year)

I agree this was unfair. However, we felt it was more unfair to continue with the previous process given the strong potential for bias.

- I am concerned about feeling like I can't submit everything I would want the committee to see. Is there an unlimited number of entries in each category? And is the word count for each entry or the entire category?

The word count is for each Honors Item submission

Other Questions?