

## 2023-2024 SNS Recruitment Updates – Part 1

The specialty of Neurological Surgery continues to adapt to the changing landscape of residency recruitment. Through surveys of key stakeholders, evaluations, and national discussion, the Society of Neurological Surgeons (SNS), comprised of the academic leaders and residency program directors in our field, has developed the following best practices intended to help guide program leadership and applicants during the 2023-2024 recruitment cycle.

1. Medical Student rotations with graded autonomy, or Acting Internships (AI), are integral to the recruitment process in the specialty of neurological surgery for:

- Student experience in the depth and breadth of neurological surgery prior to committing to a specialty.
- Education in preparation for internship.
- Evaluation to assist programs and students during the Match process.

In order to optimize neurosurgical exposure, education, and evaluation for applicants to neurological surgery, no more than three 3-4 week Acting internship (AI) experiences are recommended. The SNS recommends in the MS4 year:

- One (1) 3–4 week Home program AI experience
- One or Two (1 or 2) 3–4 week External (away) program AI experiences

The SNS encourages students to gain a diverse medical education through rotations in a broad spectrum of subspecialty medical and surgical rotations in addition to neurosurgery, in preparation for residency. Students without a home program should perform 1 rotation of neurological surgery at the ACGME accredited program with which they are most closely associated (adopted home program), and up to 2 rotations at external sites. Rotations should be based upon the SNS Goals and Objectives for Acting Internships <https://www.societyns.org/medical-students/external-medical-student-rotations>

**More than three total AI rotations in neurosurgery are not advised as students are expected to focus on building a diverse clinical skill set prior to residency training.**

## 2. Letters of Evaluation

The SNS has been involved in optimizing the evaluation of medical student applicants. It is important to understand that both applicants and programs value high quality letters of evaluation and recommendation (LOE/LOR). Over the past 3 years, neurological surgery has piloted and collected data on letter templates. We continue to optimize the SNS template and educate programs and supervising faculty about its use, in order to develop a fair and balanced evaluation which is meaningful for programs evaluating applicants. In alignment with the published data and the SNS recommendation to undertake 1 Home and 1-2 External AI rotations, the SNS recommends that each applicant obtain the following

recommendations:

- One (1) Home program: SNS Standardized Home Letter of Evaluation (LOE)
- One to two (1) External programs: SNS Standardized Away Letters of Recommendation (LOR)

- One (1) Individual free-form Letter of Recommendation (LOR)

At each program, letters may be written by an individual or by an evaluation committee, which will commonly involve the department chair, PD, and core education faculty who have worked with each applicant. LOE/LORs should provide a fair and balanced evaluation of each applicant. Importantly, the comparator group should include all students who have rotated with the department in the past 3 years.

The free-form letter (LOR) may come from any individual mentor at the home or external rotation programs who knows the applicant well, from a clinical, research, or non-neurosurgical perspective.

In alignment with AAMC recommendations, the SNS recommends that all faculty who review applications, write LOE/LORs, and participate in interviews should undergo implicit bias and diversity and inclusion training every 12 months.

### 3. Preference Signaling

In 2022-23, Neurological Surgery was one of 15 specialties participating in the 2022-2023 Supplemental Application Pilot. The vast majority of neurosurgery applicants and programs participated in the pilot, and many aspects of the supplemental application are expected to be incorporated into the core ERAS application in 2023-24. Preference signaling was an important aspect of this pilot program. The field of Neurological Surgery has committed to utilizing preference signaling again in the upcoming match cycle, with a final decision about the number of signals to offer each applicant coming in Spring 2023 after current match data is analyzed.

4. Neurosurgery will continue the Standardized Interview Release Dates. This was well received by applicants and programs over the last 2 years and resulted in more applicants being able to stay in educational activities during the interview season. It allows each program flexibility to send their invitations within an optimal timeframe. Additional education and outreach to noncompliant programs is underway to ensure maximal adoption of this guideline.

- Interview invitations should be sent out any Friday in October after 4pm EST, to collectively accommodate Program Administrators' work schedules in each US time zone.
- Programs must hold the interview through the weekend until 12AM EST (midnight) Sunday in order to allow applicants time to consider their interview options and schedule. **Failure to hold interview slots for at least 48 hours is an NRMP Match Violation.**
- Second waves of interviews should be sent out on a subsequent Friday after 4pm EST if the interview schedule is not filled. If there is a last-minute cancellation prior to an interview date, an interview could be sent to a wait-listed candidate at any time.

Information regarding the exact number of preference signals available per applicant, virtual vs. in person interview processes, and campus visits will be forthcoming in the SNS Guidelines Part 2. These will be released in Late May/Early June after analysis of the 2023 match results and AAMC Guidelines has been conducted.