



DIGA Application Webinar #1 Away Rotation Notes

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Why did you choose to do an away rotation? What factors should students take into consideration before choosing to do an away?

- Away rotations are a great way to get a sense of other programs and to see where you can fit in outside of your home program. They're also a fun way to explore a new city and to make connections in dermatology. Many students do away rotations because they hope to leave a positive impression and get an interview.
- Some factors to consider when choosing where to do aways:
 - a. Have a pointed reason for why you want to go to a particular program, for example:
 - i. Shared passion for the interests of faculty at the institution
 - ii. Gaining exposure to a new geographic region (students are classically told that if you have done a lot of your training in one region of the country you are less likely to get interviews in other regions since they don't expect that you will move there)
 - b. Ask your mentors if they know people at the institutions you want to rotate at and see if they can connect you with faculty/residents who can guide you during your rotation.
 - c. Consider your schedule and ask yourself if you have the energy to do an away - they take dedication, time, money, and essentially are like a month-long interview - it can be draining!
 - d. Ask your upperclassmen where they went for away rotations and where they got interviews - there are some programs that tend to interview their away rotators and some programs which historically do not.

Why did you choose the programs that you completed your aways at? How many did you apply to and when did you submit your application?

- A combination of location and fit; one panelist spoke about how she wanted to do residency at a program which placed emphasis on skin of color and sought out rotations at programs with a similar mission.
 - a. This panelist participated in the [AAD diversity mentorship program](#), which provided funding to complete an away rotation.
- One panelist who applied in 2019 mentioned that she had heard that you should not turn down an away rotation if you get accepted; she created her own "rolling process" to apply based on deadlines for programs that she was interested in (i.e. submit apps based on deadlines - from early programs to late ones).
 - a. Please note though that this year current recommendations from the APD state that students with a home program should only do 1 in-person away rotation. Additionally, this advice might be a little more difficult to follow this year since many rotation applications on VSAS opened April 15th.
- One panelist who applied in 2020 said that she weighed the pros and cons of doing virtual aways before deciding which ones to pursue. She looked at how programs

described their away rotation, what the schedule was like, and the associated curriculum to decide whether or not it would be a robust experience vs being a fly on the wall.

- a. This panelists' main goal with virtual aways was to network and determine fit. She only applied to 2 virtual aways.
 - i. One away that she did was for dermpath, which she notes transferred perfectly to the virtual environment - slides were projected over a virtual microscope and it was just the same as if she was in-person looking at slides.

In-Person Away Rotations:

How should students prepare for in-person aways?

- Create a solid plan for where you will live and how you will commute - having all of this organized beforehand will take away a lot of stress so that you can just focus on performing well. If you can, consider getting there 1-2 days early so that you can practice your commute - it's always important to show up on time!
- Familiarize yourself with the department's mission statement or goals and know the faculty and their research interests so that you can tailor your schedule to work with people whom you want to connect with.
 - a. Many programs will ask you what your interests are when they create your rotation schedule - try and build your schedule so that you will spend at least a few days/clinics working with faculty who you want to make a strong impression on.
- Do not rehearse answers, but have things that you can talk about re: your passions, story, etc.
- Do NOT stress about not having enough derm knowledge. Expectations are minimal so do not think that you have to go and buy Bologna. If you want a nice, easy book to skim then consider [Lookingbill & Marks](#).
- Download [VisualDx](#)! This is a very handy resource during clinic.

How can students make a good impression/what advice do you have for success (letters etc.) on in-person rotations?

- Again, you do NOT need a ton of derm knowledge - programs are looking for the same things that made you successful on 3rd year rotations:
 - a. Do NOT be a know-it-all or make anyone look bad - be a team player. Fit in and work with everyone else.
 - b. Be helpful - assist with biopsies and anticipate what might be needed.
 - c. Take ownership of your patients.
- Some programs schedule a meeting for you with the PD, if your away does not already do that then advocate yourself and ask if you can have that meeting set up.
- If one of your goals is to get a letter from the away, then be upfront at the beginning with whomever you would like your letter writer to be that that is one of your goals.

What was your general budget?

- In-person aways can be EXPENSIVE! Consider that you will have to pay for rent + food + transportation/renting a car + flights. The panelists who answered this question spent roughly \$3000 - \$4000 for one away. Keep in mind that you won't get much money extra to cover this in loans.
- If you can, cut costs by staying with family/friends who live near programs that you want to rotate at. One panelist did a rotation at another program that was in the same city as her home program - this saved a lot of money since she did not have to move.
- Seek scholarships and additional funding. For those who are underrepresented in medicine (URiM) there are several opportunities. The AAD Diversity mentorship program gave one panelist \$1500, and they also provide a separate scholarship for in-person aways. Many individual programs have now also put together additional funding for UiM students.

What did you find to be challenging that you didn't expect?

- It can feel isolating to be in a new place; it can take 1-2 weeks to integrate yourself into the city/department.
- You will need a personal statement to apply for aways.
- In-person away rotations can be exhausting because you are constantly "on" - make sure that you take care of yourself and do things that can help you relax (ex. Gym).
- Find ways to go above and beyond - present at grand rounds or write up a case report. There's a fine line though between setting yourself apart and being super pushy.
- Continue to do the things that you enjoy and take advantage of the new place that you are in!
- Be kind to yourself! In-person aways are like a month-long interview. You will make mistakes and that's ok.

How did you stay in touch or did you touch with the program after finishing the rotation?

- Panelists said that they sent a brief thank you email or handwritten card to the rotation coordinator and/ program director. They did not have continued follow-up with the program unless they got involved in a research project with them.
- One panelist spoke about how she later attended a conference in the same city as where she did an away rotation - that was a great opportunity to reconnect with faculty from the program who had attended the conference as well.

Virtual Away Rotations:

How should students prepare for virtual rotations?

- Prepare for your meeting with the PD - have a good understanding of the goals of the program, why you are interested in the program, etc. Think about how you align with the mission statement of the program.
 - a. Consider having your resume prepared.
- Show the program why they should pick you!

- If your rotation includes resident didactics that are heavy on textbook reading, you don't need to read the book but consider reviewing the topic generally on your own.
- One panelist said that if there was a particular point she was interested in during lectures she took the initiative to ask questions in the chat or send a follow-up email to faculty.

What was a typical day like/time commitment? Do you still feel like you had good exposure to the program?

- One panelist said that virtual aways were usually a four-hour time commitment per day (8AM - noon; 10AM - 2PM). Make sure that you keep timezones in mind! You might need to wake up really early if you're on the west coast and have to attend morning lectures in the east.
- Some programs have clinical sessions but others might just involve didactics, kodachrome, and other lectures.
- Several programs allow you to set up meetings with faculty members of choice, residents, or with the PD/APD.
- With virtual rotations it can be easy to be forgotten if you do not take initiative - make an effort to stand out!
- You are interviewing the program as well - consider which programs are putting effort into making their virtual aways a positive experience for students and which ones are not.

How to make a good impression/advice for success (letters, etc.) on virtual rotations?

- There is a fine line between talking too much on zoom and never speaking; consider also that for many there's a lower threshold for someone to be considered 'annoying' on Zoom.
- If there's ever a case report or additional opportunities that are shared as being "optional" take advantage of them!
- Many of the same principles of success for in-person aways apply to virtual aways - participate, show your interest and enthusiasm, don't be a know-it-all, be a team player.
- One panelist said that his away rotation gave them a chance to present on any topic of their interest at the end - he used this to convey his passion for a particular topic and when he later interviewed at the program one of his interviewers mentioned that they remembered the presentation that he had given.

Would you prefer virtual rotations vs in person rotations more?

- In-person and virtual aways have their own pros and cons. While it's easier to get to know a program in-person, virtual aways can save you a lot of money and time, and still give you good exposure to a program if you are engaged and take initiative.

How did you stay in touch or did you touch after finishing the rotation?

- Panelists sent thank you emails to their program coordinator, program director, and faculty that they spent time with.

What did you find to be challenging about virtual aways that you hadn't expected?

- Keep organized! There are multiple sessions throughout the day so you might be getting several different calendar invites - stay on top of all of them!
- Zoom fatigue.
- Awkward pauses on zoom can seem more awkward than they do in person - have questions ready to go for people when you are meeting them.
- While people generally think that it is hard to get a feel for a program over zoom, you can still see how people with interact with each other and whether or not you would be a good fit.
- There's a difference between just being engaged on a zoom call and standing out - put in the effort!

Any final additional advice that you would like to give on away rotations?

- Be true to yourself and embrace your identity - when you are authentically you, then you can match at a place where you are loved and can be yourself!