Grace Halloran - Application packet (AMCAS 2026 and Drexel University College of Medicine secondary)

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Applying to: Drexel University College of Medicine MD program, 2026-27

This is a fictional applicant written for this sample. The person, her employers and her organisations are invented.

Academics

- **University of Pittsburgh** - BS Biological Sciences, April 2022. GPA 3.52 (science 3.41). Dean's List three semesters.
- Lowest grade: C in Organic Chemistry I (fall 2019). B+ in Organic Chemistry II the following spring.
- **DeSales University** (non-degree, evenings, 2024-25): Biochemistry (A), Human Physiology (A-), Biostatistics (A).
- **MCAT**: May 2023, 503 (125/126/126/126). April 2025, 511 (127/127/129/128).
- Languages: English (native). Spanish (intermediate; I can take a history slowly and still ask for the interpreter line).
- Reapplicant: applied in the 2024 cycle to 18 schools, with 2 interviews and no acceptances.

Work and activities

1. **Patient care technician, Riverbend Dialysis Center**, Allentown, PA (Jun 2023 - present, about 5,600 hours). *Most meaningful.* I cannulate fistulas, monitor blood pressure and fluid removal during four-hour runs, and do pre- and post-treatment weights for 38 patients across three shifts. I'm on the 5 a.m. shift Monday, Wednesday and Friday. In 2025 I started a missed-treatment call list after noticing that the same six patients skipped sessions in winter. Most of the misses traced back to rides, not choices.
2. **Emergency department medical scribe, ScribeLine Partners**, at Lehigh Valley Crossroads Hospital (Aug 2022 - May 2023, about 1,400 hours). *Most meaningful.* I documented histories and exams for emergency physicians on 10-hour shifts. In early 2023 the hospital piloted ambient AI documentation, and our team went from 14 scribes to 6 in four months. As the senior scribe on nights, I rewrote our shift handoff sheet and covered gaps while morale fell apart. I was one of the six who were kept, but I left in May for patient-facing work.
3. **Intake volunteer, Seventh Street Free Clinic**, Allentown (Sep 2023 - present, about 260 hours). *Most meaningful.* Two Tuesday evenings a month I take vitals and intake histories, mostly for uninsured adults, many of them Spanish-speaking. I also schedule follow-up rides with a church van program.
4. **Undergraduate researcher**, zebrafish fin regeneration lab, University of Pittsburgh (Jan 2020 - Apr 2022, about 500 hours). I did imaging and fin measurements. My project on a

growth-factor knockdown didn't replicate, and I presented the null result at a lab meeting rather than at a conference.
5. **Physician shadowing** (2022-2025, 80 hours): nephrology (40), family medicine (24), emergency medicine (16).
6. **Swim instructor and lifeguard, Northgate Aquatic Club**, Pittsburgh suburbs (summers 2016-2021, about 1,900 hours). I taught children ages 4-10 and adult beginners. I made two in-water rescues.
7. **Hobbies**: distance running (Philadelphia Half Marathon 2025, 2:14:30, slowly), and making pierogi every December with my grandmother, who does not trust my dough.

Honors

- Dean's List, University of Pittsburgh (3 semesters)
- Riverbend Dialysis Center Employee of the Quarter, Q2 2025

AMCAS personal statement

Mr. Ortiz told me on my second week at Riverbend that he could tell a new tech by how long she looked at his arm. He was right. I stared at his fistula for almost a minute before my first stick, and I missed. He didn't complain. He just said, "Again, but don't think so loud."

I have now cannulated arms like his a few thousand times. Dialysis is repetitive in a way that turns out to be revealing: you see the same 38 people three times a week, so you notice when someone's weight jumps four kilos, or when a quiet man starts talking about his son again, or when a woman who was never late starts missing Fridays. When six of our patients missed treatments in the winter of 2025, the nurses assumed it was noncompliance. I called each of them. Five didn't have reliable rides once the snow started. I built a call list and connected them with the county's paratransit service, and missed treatments on my shift dropped from 11 that January to 3 the next. That is a small fix. It is still the part of my job I'm proudest of.

I did not come to medicine in a straight line. I got a C in organic chemistry because I was too proud to go to office hours until November. I spent two years on a lab project that didn't replicate. My first application, in 2024, had a 503 MCAT and a personal statement about wanting to help people, and it got the result it deserved. Rejection was humbling. It also made me honest about what I didn't yet know. I took biochemistry and physiology at night after 5 a.m. shifts, studied with a schedule I actually kept, and asked for help much earlier.

My scribe year shaped me too. I watched emergency physicians make fast decisions with incomplete information, and then I watched software replace most of my team. The software was often good. It also wrote that a patient "denied chest pain" when she had said "not really, just pressure." I learned that documentation is a clinical act, and that someone has to be listening for the word that matters.

I want to be a physician who stays with patients over time, probably in nephrology or primary care, where the problems are chronic and the relationships matter. I want to be the person who asks why someone missed Friday before writing "noncompliant."

Drexel secondary essays

Why are you interested in Drexel University College of Medicine?

I live an hour from Philadelphia, and most of my dialysis patients started out somewhere along that corridor. Some of them were transferred to Philadelphia hospitals for transplant workups and came back confused about what came next. I want to train in a city where kidney disease, diabetes and transportation barriers are everyday clinical problems and not abstractions. Drexel's emphasis on early clinical exposure and its connection to the Dornsife School of Public Health matter to me. I came to medicine through operational problems like rides, schedules and handoffs, and I want the tools to study them properly. I'm also drawn to Drexel's history of educating physicians who weren't on the expected track. That describes me.

If you have previously applied, what have you done to strengthen your application?

I raised my MCAT from 503 to 511 and earned A-range grades in three upper-level post-bacc courses while working full time. I took on more responsibility at Riverbend, including the missed-treatment project and training two new technicians. I added consistent volunteering at the Seventh Street Free Clinic, where my Spanish went from classroom-level to functional for intake. Most of all, I learned to write about what I actually did.

Describe a challenge or setback and how you responded.

The 2023 scribe layoffs were the hardest team experience I've had. People were scared, shifts went uncovered, and two scribes stopped speaking to each other over who had been told first. I wasn't a manager. I set up a shared night-shift sheet so no physician got an undocumented patient, and I asked both scribes to coffee separately, then together. That didn't fix the layoffs. It did get us through four months without a missed chart. I learned that I'm good at holding things together, and that I wait too long to tell supervisors when something is broken.

How will you spend the year before matriculation?

I'll keep working 36-40 hours a week at Riverbend, keep volunteering at the free clinic twice a month, and train for the 2027 Broad Street Run.