

Dermatologist of Tomorrow Scholarship presented by Clinique and Skin of Color Society Foundation: Application Toolkit



Mentoring Webinar Summary — Key Tips from Dr. Victoria Barbosa and SOCS Leadership For M4s Applying to Dermatology Residency

8/6/2025

Overview

This summary was drawn from the inaugural mentoring session for the Dermatologist of Tomorrow Scholars, a prestigious cohort selected by the Skin of Color Society (SOCS) in partnership with Clinique. Dr. Victoria Barbosa led the session, offering guidance on navigating the dermatology residency application process with confidence, clarity, and intention.

Letter of Recommendation Strategy

Ideal number: 3 strong letters (preferably from clinical dermatologists), plus 1 additional research letter (if applicable).

Tips:

- Ask for a “strong” letter, not just any letter. If the faculty member hesitates—move on.
 - Home program letters carry more weight than away rotation letters.
 - Best letters come from those who’ve worked with you consistently and know your character and clinical skills.
 - When asking for a letter, include your CV and personal statement draft to help them write specifically.
 - Try to ask around week 2 of a rotation so the faculty can pay closer attention and include anecdotes in their letters.
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Personal Statement Best Practices

Goal: Use your one page of “real estate” to highlight your value and vision.

Avoid:

- Long patient stories or personal eczema narratives — they take up precious space.
- Generic lines like “I want a collegial program” — everyone does.

Instead:

- Describe how your path led to dermatology, touching briefly on key influences.
 - Highlight your best accomplishments and how they reflect your growth.
 - End with what you bring to a residency program, not what you're hoping to get from it.
 - Be strategic, authentic, and let your passion show through action, not adjectives.
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Away Rotations: Make Them Count

- Treat these like month-long interviews.
 - Be proactive: Ask for feedback, show initiative, and volunteer for patient workups.
 - Ask for letters early if you feel a connection — don't wait until the last day.
 - Meet with the Program Director or Chair during the rotation if possible. Have a few thoughtful questions prepared (not ones that are answered on the website).
 - If you're doing an away rotation in January during interviews, just let the team know — they understand.
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Application Insights & Common Questions

- Use career advisors and trusted mentors to review your personal statement.
 - Yes, you can highlight experiences before med school, but connect them clearly to your journey.
 - If you've had academic bumps, briefly acknowledge them and emphasize resilience and growth.
 - Applying to a transitional year? You can often use the same LORs as dermatologists but verify with each program.
 - If you lack a home dermatology program, get the best letters you can from aways, internal medicine, or research mentors. Programs know you had to hustle harder.
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Dr. Barbosa's Wisdom Nuggets

- "Trust and believe that you are the best and the brightest."
- "Highlight why a program should want YOU."
- "The personal statement is a humble brag — and that's okay."
- "Be yourself, be proud, and be strategic."