Dear Dr. Gabbe:

We are writing in response to the recently-released recommendations for the next version of the MCAT. We are happy to see that Behavioral and Social Sciences Principles are going to be included in the test. However, we are dismayed to see that anthropology and human biology are not included as relevant disciplines. Indeed, including questions relating directly to human evolution would seem more than appropriate for the new version of MCAT. The evolutionary perspective as it applies to humans is an increasingly important one for modern medical practitioners and researchers to have. The natural history of several human diseases and their evolved resistance to many (most?) current antibiotics is one example of this perspective. The nature of future developments in individualized medicine that is rooted in the uniqueness of each person’s genetic makeup is another.

Biological anthropologists have been in the forefront of research in these areas and many others. Be it in their study of human physiological, anatomical and genetic variation and adaptation or the comparative study of non-human primate behavior and biology, biological anthropologists are the best possible professionals to be teaching pre-med students about human evolution and biology. What could be more relevant for the next generation of doctors than a realization and understanding of the evolutionary history of the biological origins and nature of their patients?

Since the focus of medicine is on humans and the preparation for physicians is rooted in the study of human biology, then it seems clear that the study of human evolutionary biology should be an integral part of every student’s pre-medicine preparation. Moreover, the study of human evolution should not be only a partial or tangential inclusion in the occasional biology course that references it. There should be direct study of it in those biological anthropology courses that focus on the subject. Human evolutionary biology is the focal core of what biological anthropologists study and it is the core of the courses that they teach. They are the best possible courses for pre-med students to take to learn the latest research in many aspects of human evolutionary biology.

We strongly recommend that biological anthropology be included in the revised MCAT examination for 2015. Sincerely,

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