Options for International Students

The first thing you should do if you are an international student interested in attending a U.S. medical school is determine which schools admit international students. This information will be available in the Medical School Admissions Requirements handbook. Once you have determined which schools admit international students, you can investigate funding at those schools. Because sources of financial aid for medical students in the United States are limited, they are often restricted to U.S. citizens or students possessing a Permanent Resident Visa. International students are not eligible for any form of federal student financial aid. International students wishing to attend a U.S. medical school can consider the following suggestions for securing financial assistance:

Aid from Your Home Country
Organizations in your own country are one source of financial aid to study in the United States. Your own government may have financial aid available. Usually this support requires that you return home after your education is complete. Contact the cultural section of your embassy or your ministry of education for more information, since there are many awards that require you to be nominated by your government. There may be private organizations in your home country that provide support for study in the United States. Businesses, foundations, and religious groups might have funds available. The nearest educational advising center may have information about local sources of support.

Aid from International Organizations
Of the few private scholarships for international students, most require that you apply from your home country. If you are already in the United States you might not be eligible. You should search for financial aid before you arrive in the United States. Some international organizations offer funding for graduate students to study in the United States. These include the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS), AMIDEAST, the International Maritime Organization, the International Telecommunications Union, the League of Red Cross Societies, the Soros Foundation, the World Health Organization, and the World Council of Churches. These awards are extremely competitive.

Aid from U.S. Medical Schools
International students who hope to enroll in a U.S. medical school should contact the schools that admit international students. Ask both the admissions office and the financial aid office about support for international students. Only a very few medical schools make institutional funds available to international students. Federal financial aid is not available to international students.

Aid from Private Sources in the United States
There is very little financial aid for international students available from private sources, such as foundations and individual sponsors. Although you might be able to find a benefactor who will offer to sponsor your medical education, the chances of this are very slight. Sponsorship of this sort is much more common abroad than it is in the United States. You are more likely to find a sponsor in your home country than in the United States. Some U.S. banks are willing to make educational loans to international medical students. Some of these loans are restricted to students from a particular country (e.g. Canada). Others will require a creditworthy co-signer who is a U.S. citizen. The best source of information on such loans is the financial aid office at medical schools that admit international students. International students hoping to enroll in a U.S. medical school should be aware that some medical schools that admit international students require them to document their planned source of support during their entire period of enrollment before they are able to matriculate. It may be necessary to place the funds for your support during your four years of enrollment in an escrow account.