



ALEX CLARK

CLASS OF 2020

STUDENT PROFILE

Hometown: Holly Springs, NC

Undergraduate Major: Exercise Physiology

Career Aspiration: Physical Therapist

Professional School: ECU Physical Therapy

What's been your favorite part of the journey to apply to professional schools?

The greatest part has been reflecting on all of my experiences I've had as an undergraduate student that have helped get me to where I am today.

What were some of the challenges you came across when preparing to apply to schools (what was tougher than you expected)?

Each school that I applied to had different ways of doing things whether it be for the actual application, communication, interviews, or admissions deadlines. Keeping organized and aware of these differences to maximize success was challenging.

How did you prepare yourself for the process of applying to schools?

The first thing I did was research programs to decide where to apply. When doing this, I also made note of specific or different requirements or application materials each school needed. Next, I reached out to people for letters of reference. Lastly, the biggest preparatory step was I made a list of all meaningful experiences (extracurriculars, research, shadowing, etc.) and worked on many personal statements.

Looking back, what advice would you give to students who are interested in professional schools? What do you wish you had known earlier?

I waited until my sophomore year to get involved in campus organizations, and I wish that I did that earlier. Just being involved isn't enough, but find specific, meaningful experiences you can reference that will make those student organizations mean something on a resumé. I feel that I could've had more of these had I gotten involved earlier.

What services or organizations would you recommend pre-professional students utilize?

For any pre-med, pre-dental, or pre-health professionals, Alpha Epsilon Delta (AED) is the pre-health professional honor society on campus and was fantastic. It is a great way to network, get volunteer opportunities, and get mentoring from older members with similar interests. Involvement in AED also helps foster inter-professional relationships, which are important for the modern healthcare team. I also think that for any of the previously mentioned students, research is very important. Research is the basis for any clinical work done, so by being involved in research, you show you are passionate about the subject, understand and appreciate the significant role that research has on healthcare, care about advancing your field, and are teachable and can learn skills and techniques that you used in the lab.

What organizations were you involved in as an undergraduate student?

I was involved in Alpha Epsilon Delta, The Pirate Academic Success Center, Phi Kappa Phi, and Sigma Alpha Pi.

What type of shadowing did you do?

I shadowed Physical Therapy in a Skilled Nursing Facility setting, an outpatient setting, and an acute care hospital setting.

What type of volunteering did you do?

Based on responsibilities and need, I volunteered at each place I shadowed Physical Therapy. I also was a volunteer chemistry tutor at the Pirate Academic Success Center, and volunteered through Alpha Epsilon Delta by helping pick up trash around the community, getting food for food drives, and raising money for their philanthropy, the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Did you do research? If so, what was the topic?

I first did research with the Physiology Department of the Brody School of Medicine where the project topic was "Influence of Intrinsic Aerobic Running Capacity on Cardiac Adaptive Responses to Stress." Most recently, I did research with the Department of Physical Therapy at ECU and explored two topics: "Real-time Knee Joint Loading While Walking" and "Knee Joint Loading in People with a Unilateral Transtibial Amputation Across Walking Speeds."

What was your most rewarding experience at ECU?

I feel that my most rewarding experience at ECU would be my research with the Department of Physical Therapy, as meaningful results were found. I'd like to think that they could eventually contribute to a better understanding of human movement, helping people move better, and preventing secondary disability among people with unilateral transtibial amputations. The feeling that something you did could go on to make someone's life better is a rewarding one.

Any other advice, recommendations, suggestions, or comments?

If you do what you love or do something in order to do what you love, it will be much easier to get yourself to do it. I can truly say that I can't wait to be a physical therapist, so the journey to get to physical therapy school was enjoyable through the difficult classes, countless hours spent studying, and busy schedules.