



# ALISHA THOMAS

CLASS OF 2021

## STUDENT PROFILE

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**Hometown:** Charlotte, NC

**Undergraduate Major:** Public Health

**Career Aspirations:** Physician Assistant

**Professional School:** Drexel University's Physician Assistant Program

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

As an applicant who was working full-time and taking additional classes, time management was vital. I would try to dedicate time to work on my application at least once every day. Whether it was 10 minutes or 2 hours as long as I made time to work on it, I was fulfilled. I also made sure to take breaks and not rush my application submission. I wanted to make sure I was fully confident in my application.

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

I would advise to avoid comparison to other applicants' stats. Comparison is the thief of joy. We are in this together with the same goal of becoming a PA and advancing healthcare as we know it.

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

If your schedule permits, I recommend getting involved on-campus in any way you can. You never know who you will meet or connect with. The pre-PA club and Gamma Psi Sigma are both great organizations. I also advise reaching out to Vidant Medical Center for potential volunteering opportunities. For advising services, I highly recommend using the PPAC. I personally was able to receive advice which assisted with starting my PA journey.

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

I initially did not want to take a gap year post-graduation but ended up having to in order to obtain more patient care hours. My gap-year ended up being one of the best things that I could have done for myself and my career. I was able to work alongside a physical, occupational, and speech therapist and most recently I have experience in nephrology as a patient care technician. This helped me realize that everything will always work out for the best!

### **What organizations were you involved in as an undergraduate student?**

-Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. (Eta Mu-Spring 2019) -Gamma Psi Sigma -Student Government Association -Volunteer at Vidant

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

I really enjoyed being supported by my mentors, current PA students, family and friends during my application cycle. I am very grateful to have their support and guidance.

### **What type of shadowing did you do?**

I was fortunate to shadow a Physician in cardiology and a Physician Assistant in physical medicine and rehabilitation amongst other specialties such as sports medicine and dermatology. I advise diversifying your shadowing experiences by observing different specialities and healthcare careers (PA, NP and MD). This shows your understanding of the differences between each provider and how they all collaborate.

### **What type of volunteering did you do?**

At Vidant Medical Center, I was a patient transport volunteer where I assisted with patient discharge to help the patient and/or their family member when they were departing from the hospital. I really enjoyed this opportunity because it allowed me to connect and talk with our community.

### **Did you do research? If so what was the topic?**

I was a research assistant/intern for the Health Behavior and Tobacco Research Lab under the supervision of Dr. Eric Soule from August 2020 to May 2021. We focused on various projects. One being the effects of ecigarettes and second hand exposure within closed or poorly ventilated environments. Another project focused on the perceived barriers that African-American scientists experience to serving on the National Institutes of Health Scientific Review Groups. This research was published through the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

### **What was your most rewarding experience at ECU?**

I am very glad I was able to be a part of such amazing organizations who have helped build my skills in leadership and organization. My overall experience at ECU was very fulfilling, allowing me to make lifelong connections and continue going after my aspirations.

### **Any other advice, recommendations, suggestions, or comments?**

I would advise learning more about the American Academy of Physician Associates (AAPA). This is a great resource to stay up to date with everything relating to the PA career alongside the ability to network with other pre-PA students, current PA students, and PA-C.