



# ASPYN LEE

CLASS OF 2018

## STUDENT PROFILE

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**Hometown:** Clayton, NC

**Undergraduate Major:** BS Public Health; MS Physiology, Non-Thesis

**Career Aspiration:** General Dentist

**Professional School:** ECU School of Dental Medicine

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

My favorite part of the journey to applying to dental school was the relationships I built along the way. I met so many amazing people in my pre-requisite courses, through campus clubs, while volunteering and while shadowing who all helped me tremendously throughout the application process!

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

For me, the most challenging part of preparing to apply to dental school was taking the DAT. I was very intimidated by the length of the exam and how much material the exam covered. Considering I had never taken an exam of this magnitude before, I was also unsure how to efficiently study for it. I ended up taking the exam for the first time and scored pretty average. While I felt kind of defeated at first, I decided to change up the way I studied and retake the exam the following summer. Using this first "failure" as a learning tool was huge for me and allowed me to drastically improve my score and gain acceptance into dental school. Never give up!

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

In order to prepare myself for the application process I did a lot of planning. I have always been a planner by nature, so creating a timeline for myself was extremely beneficial throughout this process. Did I always successfully stick to the timeline I created myself? Absolutely not. The first time I took the DAT I pushed my test date back twice because I just didn't feel ready. I ultimately learned that creating a plan/timeline for yourself is beneficial, but it's also important to remember that sometimes life gets in the way and you just need more time. Be kind to yourself throughout this process.

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

I was involved in the pre-dental honor society. Looking back, I wish I had been more involved in other dental related clubs throughout my time at ECU.

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

I highly recommend getting as involved as possible with any dental related organizations on campus. While they offer many dental related opportunities, they also allow you to build relationships with other pre-dental students. Having relationships with other pre-dental students can be extremely beneficial while completing your prerequisite courses and throughout the application cycle. I also highly recommended utilizing the tutoring center on campus. I struggled with chemistry and I went to the tutoring center at least once a week while taking general chemistry and organic chemistry. Having that extra time each week to focus on one of my weaknesses was extremely beneficial.

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

Failure is inevitable. This is by far the biggest piece of advice I have for any student interest in pre-professional school. One bad exam grade will not seal your fate and prevent you from getting into dental school. Embrace your failures and learn from them.

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

As someone who is passionate about general dentistry, I was drawn to shadowing general dentists. I shadowed three different general dentists over the years and only one dentist who specialized in pediatrics. Shadowing a pediatric dentist was a really cool but I definitely still preferred general dentistry after that experience. Get as many shadowing hours as you can and don't be afraid to reach out to dentists and ask if you can shadow them! They have all been in your shoes before and most of them are willing to help.

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

I think that volunteering is one of the most important and also rewarding parts of the application process. The dental related volunteering I did really opened my eyes to some of the disparities within my own state and even within my own community. Volunteering my time and doing what I could to alleviate some of those disparities was extremely rewarding and is something I am passionate about now. I volunteered at numerous North Carolina Missions of Mercy clinics, a mobile dentistry bus, at an organization called DKMS and even at my local animal shelter. My biggest piece of advice is to volunteer at as many North Carolina Missions of Mercy clinics as you can. These clinics are extremely eye opening and help so many people. Also, don't be afraid to volunteer at non-dental related places too.

### **Where are you going to school?**

East Carolina University School of Dental Medicine

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

I unfortunately did not participate in any research. I was so focused on my academics, shadowing and volunteering that I never really looked into it. If I could go back, I would definitely try and get some research experience though.

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

I had so many rewarding experiences at ECU, but one that really sticks out to me is when I participated in a poverty simulation my senior year. As a Public Health Major, I spent a lot of time learning about healthcare disparities. The simulation was designed to allow us to get to experience some of the healthcare disparities that come hand in hand with poverty in order to give us a better understanding of what it's like and how we can help alleviate some of these disparities as future healthcare professionals. It was truly an eye-opening experience for all of us involved.

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

Be kind to yourself throughout this process. Considering getting into dental school is so competitive, it's easy to compare yourself to other pre-dental students. Please remember that you are not defined by your GPA or DAT score and that you have so much more to offer than just what is on paper. I didn't have the highest DAT score or the highest GPA, but I stayed true to myself and my own personal mission and I was eventually accepted into dental school. Stay true to you and never give up!