



BREANNE SMITH

CLASS OF 2021

STUDENT PROFILE

Hometown: Wake Forest, NC

Undergraduate Major: Biology B.S. with a concentration in Molecular Biology & minor in Psychology

Career Aspiration: Pediatric Dentist or Oral Surgeon

Professional School: UNC Adams School of Dentistry

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

Being able to meet a lot of different people on campus that have the same career aspirations as me or are already in the field. I have known since I was in 4th grade that I wanted to be a pediatric dentist, so entering the application cycle in June felt like the last major obstacle before achieving my dreams. I was thrilled to be able to talk about all the activities I've been working on in college and everything that I bring to the table as an applicant. It felt really "real" when I was working on my application and that was super exciting.

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

For pre-dental students, I highly recommend joining the Pre-Dental Honor Society. The club is made for students who are planning to apply to dental school and all the meetings are centered around different parts of the application process. In general, I think the pre-professional clubs are incredibly valuable for students to make connections with other students in their desired career field. Also, the PPAC has tons of incredible resources for students preparing for the MCAT, DAT, LSAT, GRE, etc.

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

I participated in research both at the UNC Adam's School of Dentistry and ECU School of Dental Medicine. At UNC, I worked with a D4 student looking at the long-term efficacy of Silver Diamine Fluoride at preventing future restorative treatments in children 1-5 years old. At ECU, I am currently working with a faculty member on a systematic review of literature about the relationship between a caregiver's oral health literacy and their child's oral health status. I also participated briefly in a Community Engaged Research Project with Building Hope Community Life Center examining if their afterschool program increased EOG test scores in the children that attended (as compared to those who did not).

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 highly, highly recommend shadowing to students interested in professional fields. Through shadowing and working at a dental internship, I gained a much different perspective about dentistry than I would have had from just visiting the dentist every 6 months. A lot of students I talk to are hesitant to shadow or put it off, but I believe it is extremely beneficial for those who are uncertain about a career path.

What type of shadowing did you do?

I shadowed a pediatric dentist, oral surgeon, several general dentists (male and female) and a general dentist in Prague, Czech Republic.

What type of volunteering did you do?

- Volunteered at 3 NC MOM Clinics
- Volunteered regularly with the American Red Cross at blood drives
- Volunteered regularly at Pitt Co Animal Shelter
- Volunteered regularly with Adapted PE of Pitt County

What was your most rewarding experience at ECU?

It is difficult to pick just one! I was able to study abroad in Prague, Czech Republic for a semester (until COVID cut it short) but that was an incredible experience that really took me out of my comfort zone and helped me grow tremendously as a person. I was also able to shadow a dentist while I was abroad which is an experience I will never forget.

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

Since I came into college with the goal of getting into dental school, I worked hard from the beginning to maintain a high GPA and tried to get into activities and clubs that would help me when applying. I joined the Pre-Dental Honor Society my Freshman year and have tried to be as involved as I could throughout my time at ECU. I found a dental internship that I worked at over breaks during my 4 years of college. I also made an effort to shadow many different dentists in a variety of places to learn as much about the field as I could. I really enjoyed volunteering at NC Missions of Mercy clinics because it allowed me to see dentistry firsthand and meet other pre-dental students, dental students and practicing dentists. Also, I joined (non-dental related) clubs that were meaningful to me that I could talk about in my application. I worked hard to create relationships with all my faculty members so that when I needed letters of recommendation, they would know me, and (hopefully) could speak highly of me.

What organizations were you involved in as an undergraduate student?

- ECU Honors College
- Pre-Dental Honor Society
- ECU Newman
- Club Swim
- Healthy Pirates
- Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society
- Intern at Building Hope Community Life Center

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

I didn't think about how much time and effort goes into completing a graduate school application. The AADSAS application covers a lot of material and it took me quite some time to make my way through the entire application. Then, there are the secondary applications, with more in-depth questions. All in all, the application lets schools learn as much about you as possible, but it takes a while to complete everything!

Any other advice, recommendations, suggestions, or comments?

Hard work pays off! I think being dedicated and driven are two qualities that have helped me the most in school and I believe will help me in life. Don't give up on your dreams and don't be afraid to set ambitious goals. Also, putting in the legwork before applying can really help to relieve some stress around the application time. Get a head start on shadowing and volunteering so you're not so stressed about it later! If you can, volunteer at an NC MOM Clinic, it's so worthwhile.