



# CHRISTIAN SMALLWOOD

CLASS OF 2021

## STUDENT PROFILE

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**Hometown: Greenville, NC**

**Undergraduate Major: Chemistry and Exercise Physiology**

**Career Aspirations: Pediatric Oncologist/ Pediatric Physician**

**Professional School: Brody School of Medicine**

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

Initially, I prepared by focusing most of my time researching schools and programs to better understand their goals and motives. It was a huge advantage targeting schools where I best fit their mission. This gave me the freedom to be intentional and specific in the application prompts.

### **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 tell prospective students, don't be afraid to personalize their applications and do things differently than "what's expected." There are so many resources online telling students exactly what they should or shouldn't do. When you're competing with hundreds of students for a seat in the class, it's a good thing to be unique and stand out. Utilize resources like the PPAC, students who have been there, and people whom you trust when seeking advice.

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

I would recommend the PPAC to any students considering a professional program. When I began pursuing medicine, I had very limited knowledge about the application, the MCAT, and medical school in general. I was very fortunate to lean on Mrs. McAllister for help. She provided me with all the information I needed to be successful. There is no doubt Mrs. McAllister and the PPAC were not only the best resources I used but the most accessible as well.

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

I believe the overall length of the process is the most difficult part. Especially early on, I underestimated how much time it would take to construct a competitive application that I was confident in submitting. Staying consistent, setting deadlines, and holding myself accountable were all crucial for me.

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

East Carolina University Baseball Team  
Sportworks Ministries  
College of Central Florida Baseball Team  
FCA- College of Central Florida

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

My favorite part of this process has been sharing the information I've learned with other students applying to professional programs. I want to continue helping students achieve their goals, just as others did for me. The opportunities I've been given would not have been possible alone.

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

I had the opportunity to shadow a variety of specialties like Orthopedic Surgery, Family Medicine, Sports Medicine, and Podiatry. I also shadowed health professionals in other fields besides medicine too. The exposure to different careers helped me better identify my interests.

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

Although I volunteered at the Maynard Children's Hospital and the Surgery Department at ECU Health, most of my volunteering was through non-medical organizations in the area. Some of these included Babe Ruth Little League, Greenville Special Olympics, Vacation Bible School, The Food Bank of Eastern and North Carolina, and the Ronald McDonald House.

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

I'm currently working on a project to advance a novel therapeutic vaccine that would provide treatment for individuals with Multiple Sclerosis and other autoimmune diseases under Dr. Mark Mannie. As an undergraduate student, I assisted on a project with Dr. Linda May that focused on the role of exercise in pregnancy and development. I also created a research project to better study how stress, time commitments, and individual coping mechanisms affect the overall mental health of student-athletes with Dr. Christine Habeeb.

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

My most rewarding experiences at ECU have come through time spent with my teammates and coaches. It's challenging and time-consuming to apply to professional programs, so I'm very grateful for my supportive circle of friends outside of academics. The best part of this process has been sharing the success with the people close to me.

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

I would advise students to contact admissions departments and be persistent. Not only does this let schools know you're interested, but it also allows you to start forming relationships with the staff involved. The people working in those departments truly want to help prospective students succeed. In my experience, they enjoyed speaking about their program and even offered tips and advice.