

DAVID MURRAY

CLASS OF 2020

STUDENT PROFILE

Hometown: Greenville, NC

Undergraduate Major: Biology with a concentration in Molecular and Cell Biology

Career Aspirations: Physician

Professional School: The Brody School of Medicine

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

My favorite part of my journey to medical school has been a combination of meeting new people and challenging myself to succeed. During my time as an undergraduate I found joy in challenging myself in difficult courses. The subsequent joy of achieving high marks made me try even harder. I knew that every minute I spent studying would pay off in the future and I am happy it did. Of course, I could not succeed in my journey to medical school alone. I had an enormous amount of help from my mentors, teachers, advisors, and peers. Forming a supportive group became pivotal in achieving my acceptance into medical school. Celebrating with those people that helped me has become one of my favorite memories in life.

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

I started preparing early. I knew it was my dream and goal to become a doctor. Unfortunately, I never took high school seriously and pursued things like sports and spending time with friends. Throughout high school the thought "I'll get serious in college" persisted. So, when college came around, I hit the ground running. However, to use an analogy, my legs were not trained, they were weak. My first semester I ended up with a lot of B's and only one A. I was clearly not prepared for college. In the end I made a lot of sacrifices with my time and I was able to achieve my goal of getting all A's. From the first day of college, I prepared with the intention of becoming a doctor.

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

Prepare early. Take the hard classes early. Don't slack off during summers. For example, you can start preparing for the MCAT as early as your sophomore year. When you complete a course that is tested on the MCAT, go over some practice questions oriented to that subject. Get used to the style of the exam. Even if you can't answer the questions correctly, still try answering them. After a while you will get used to those questions, you'll be familiar with the exam's rhetoric, the questions' style, the pace you'll need to keep, and the thinking you'll need to have. Prepare early, it will certainly pay off.

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

My greatest challenge in preparing for my application to medical school was taking the MCAT. I ended up taking it twice. I rushed into my first attempt trying to adhere to a specific timeline. The resultant score was one I could not be proud of. After sitting for the first exam, I understood I had a major deficiency, a major weakness. The MCAT forced me to meet this weakness head on. After spending hundreds of hours strengthening that weakness, I was able to succeed.

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

Pre-Professional Advising Center (PPAC)

What organizations were you involved in as an undergraduate student?

Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Advice: It may be general but pursue anything you feel strongly toward. I wouldn't be the best person to ask about student organizations. I never held a leadership role in an ECU club. I didn't have a myriad of student organization participation. I tried all that my freshmen year. I went to pre-health clubs, I attended the weekly meetings, I even joined sports clubs like the tennis club and basketball club. I'd like to say that I chose to withdraw from healthcare-oriented clubs because I held more priority on my studies, which of course was true, however, in those clubs I didn't see people like me and this was a little disheartening. Of course, this only fueled my passion to succeed and help those like me. Be that as it may, I did participate a great amount in volunteering at my local church. My church and community are two things I am passionate about and I think this was clear to each medical school admission team I met. Therefore, I would recommend following your heart or passion and don't be held down by the belief that having multiple experiences are necessary. Have something you are passionate about and follow through with it diligently.

What type of shadowing did you do?

Primary Care Physician Shadowing Program. I was invited to continue shadowing a physician in the emergency department, but I never followed up with her (it was my sophomore year, so I was naïve). If you ever get the opportunity to establish a relationship with a physician, follow up!

What type of volunteering did you do?

I volunteered at my hometown church, Greenville's soup kitchen (Joy Soup Kitchen), and ECU's purple pantry.

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

Yes, I did research in Dr. Offenbacher's chemistry research lab. My research entailed finding ways to produce unnatural amino acids and incorporate them into designed peptides.

What was your most rewarding experience at ECU?

Celebrating my medical school acceptance with my research group.

Any other advice, recommendations, suggestions, or comments?

Start early, it's never too early. Prepare early to achieve your goal. If you have a weakness attack it. Spend hundreds of hours strengthening that weakness and you'll overcome it.