

# DIEGO CARREÑO

CLASS OF 2018



## STUDENT PROFILE

---

**Hometown: Goldsboro, NC**

**Undergraduate Major:**

**Public Health Studies: Pre-Health Professions**

**Biology: Molecular and Cell Biology**

**Career Aspiration: Primary Care Physician**

**Professional School: The Brody School of Medicine**

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

Being able to meet wonderful professors, friends, and staff that guided me along my career path. I became close with my microbiology professor, Dr. Ariane Peralta, and my ecology professor, Dr. Lauren McCarthy. I was in a class of more than ninety students and it is fascinating how close I became with these amazing professors. Not only did they write my letters of recommendation but they also reviewed my personal statements, discussed obstacles with possible ways of overcoming them, provided mock interviews for medical school, and I even had the opportunity to volunteer in Dr. Peralta's microbiology lab. I will never forget these professors and will always feel indebted for all the help they have given me during this journey. I am eternally grateful, and I hope other students get the opportunity to meet them as well.

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

I was accepted to the Medical Education Development (MED) Program at UNC-Chapel Hill which exposed me to the rigorous curriculum of medical school. Within the program, we took five courses that the medical students take during their first year, and each session is condensed into a summer curriculum. We participated in the Larry D. Keith recruitment fair which allowed us to network with admissions staff from different medical schools. We also engaged in community service activities, team-building exercises, etiquette luncheons, professional seminars, MCAT/DAT preparation, patient simulations, mock interviews, and application cycle preparation. I highly encourage all pre-professional students to apply to this program as well as the Summer Program for Future Doctors (SPFD) at ECU. These opportunities will tremendously benefit and prepare you in your application process.

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

Make sure you begin seeking research, volunteer, and shadowing opportunities as soon as you begin your undergraduate studies. Ask all of your professors, friends, and peers for opportunities they may know about. Put yourself out there as networking is key to building a great resume/CV. The more hours and experience you accumulate during your undergraduate journey will definitely set you apart from other applicants as this process is highly competitive.

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

Mount Olive Eye Care, Global Medical Brigades in Honduras, Pitt County Clinic (PCC), and Perspectives in International Community Health Nursing at ECU,

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

Global Medical Brigades in Honduras, Pitt County Clinic (PCC), Perspectives in International Community Health Nursing at ECU, and Microbiology Research Lab Assistant.

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

Being able to share my story with other students from diverse backgrounds who are also on the same path.

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

Diarrheal disease amongst children and adults is prevalent in developing countries most commonly due to the intake of unsafe drinking water which can lead to serious health detriments. We conducted a research project which allowed us to evaluate the prevalence of diarrhea in a rural Maya community in Guatemala. We hypothesized that point-of-use water filtration systems significantly reduce the incidence of diarrheal illnesses. Through collaborations with organizations in Guatemala, we provided 71 households in this community with water filters in the summer of 2014. My colleagues and I then visited the town the following summer to record data and analyze our findings. We concluded that water filter usage dramatically reduces the prevalence of diarrhea. This research experience impacted the way I view medicine. It exposed me to a different setting and made me realize the vast health disparities that take place in developing countries. It was rewarding to find that we were able to reduce the prevalence of diarrheal illness in this community. We were then able to publish our findings which could be further implemented by other communities.

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

Global Medical Brigades, Alcancemos Las Metas (ALMAS), Pirates Promoting Community Wellness, Perspectives in International Community Health Nursing at ECU, Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students (MAPS), Student Association of Latino-Spanish Affairs (SALSA), and Future Health Professionals (HOSA)

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

Pre-Professional Advising Center (PPAC), Health Professions Committee (HPC) Interview, ECU Career Center, Summer Program for Future Doctors (SPFD), and the Medical Education Development (MED) Program at UNC Chapel Hill.

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

In my opinion, the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is the most difficult exam I have taken by far. I encourage students to study months in advance as it is almost impossible to prepare for this exam by rushing through the material. I recommend students to not work full-time during the bulk of their studying as this might take a toll on them. From personal experience, I came to realize that no workplace should ever make you feel that your job matters more than your MCAT or medical school application, and if that is the case then that job is not for you.

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

If you are offered an interview to medical school, then make sure you practice mock interviews with anyone and everyone. Reach out to the ECU Career Center, your friends, family, peers, etc. I had seven mock interviews a few weeks before my actual medical school interview and it helped out tremendously. Show the admissions committee your confidence and make sure to get your message across the table. If you are unable to answer the question, "Why do you want to be a doctor?", then you are not ready for your medical school interview.

Make sure to network with students from different career paths such as dental, veterinary, physical therapy, optometry, and others. Most of these professional schools have a similar application process and entrance exam. Don't limit your window to just medical students as you will probably receive better advice from other pre-professional students.