



JOSHUA FITZGERALD

CLASS OF 2020

STUDENT PROFILE

Hometown: Connelly Springs, NC

Undergraduate Major: Criminal Justice

Career Aspiration: Trial Attorney

Professional School: Temple Law School

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

Reaching out to my mentors and employers for letters of recommendations was actually the best part. Honestly, I was dreading asking for these letters because I didn't want to take up their time, but they all were so eager to help. You never really know how great your support system is until you reach this moment of the application process. Not only did they all write me letters of recommendation, but they gave me great advice on how to pick which school to attend.

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

My biggest challenge, by far, was taking the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT). I would not wish that test upon my worst enemies. Not only is it difficult, but it is one of the biggest deciding factors on whether you get accepted to law school. Luckily, I was able to get a 171 after a full year of studying, but the second I got my score back, I gave away all of my prep books and practice tests to some classmates to help them prepare.

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

To prepare for my application process, I got in contact with some friends who are currently attending their first year of law school to get any advice they had regarding applications. Given that this application process is constantly evolving, it always helps to reach out to those who have just recently gone through it so see what they experienced and what mistakes they wish they had avoided.

Where are you going to school?

Fall 2020, I will be attending Law School at Temple University on a full ride. They are ranked 48th overall, but what I am most excited for is their trial advocacy program which is ranked 3rd in the country.

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

Try your best to get experience in the field you are pursuing before fully committing to professional school. If you want to go to law school, then get an internship with a law office. If you want to go to medical school, then volunteer at a hospital or see if you can shadow someone in the profession. If you can't get experience, then meet with a professor who does have experience and find out if this is really what you want to do with your life. This is a big decision and you should never blindly rush into it.

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

For students interested in law school there are many great law organizations on campus, but the ones I am personally invested in are Pre-Law Society and the Mock Trial Association at ECU. I would also recommend meeting with ECU's Pre-Professional Advising Office or Career Services as soon as possible. They both can provide immense help and the staff are incredible.

What organizations were you involved in as an undergraduate student?

I have been a member of the Pre-Law Society for the last three years. This year, I was the President of the Mock Trial Association at ECU, and last year, I was the Representative-At-Large for the Pirate Academic Success Center Student Organization.

What type of shadowing did you do?

The summer after my sophomore year, I worked for Brian Smith, an immigration attorney in Hickory, NC. There, I prepared and filed citizenship forms on behalf of clients. Also, for the past 9 months, I have been working as an intern for the Pitt County District Attorney's Office under Deputy Chief ADA Todd Amundson. I work almost exclusively on felony cases and spend my time drafting case summaries.

What type of volunteering did you do?

Spring of 2018, I attended a week-long alternative break experience where I helped clean up the North Carolina coastline.

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

As an intern at an immigration firm, one of my responsibilities was researching countries and gangs that our clients were seeking asylum from. I would then send my research to the federal government to show that our clients would be in danger if they were not allowed to stay in the U.S. It was emotionally tolling. I felt like if I failed then someone might be in danger and so I never stopped chasing down articles. I did everything I could to help our clients and their families.

What was your most rewarding experience at ECU?

My freshman year, I met a girl and took her on a date to Todd Dining Hall. Three years later, I asked that same girl to marry me and although I treasure many experiences I've had at ECU, meeting my soulmate will always be the best.

Any other advice, recommendations, suggestions, or comments?

Don't be afraid to ask for help. No one can go through this process alone.