



# ISHANI SHELAT

CLASS OF 2022

## STUDENT PROFILE

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**Hometown:** Cary, NC

**Undergraduate Major:** B.S. Biochemistry and Certificate in Entrepreneurship

**Career Aspirations:** Optometrist

**Professional School:** Pennsylvania College of Optometry

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

My favorite part of the journey was to research the schools I wanted to apply to and find aspects of the colleges that would best resemble my values and interests. Knowing that I was accepted to a school that matched up with my criteria in a school as I did for them as an applicant, was exhilarating!

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

To make sure my application cycle went smoothly, I made sure I finished my challenging courses earlier on during freshman-junior semesters. As soon as fall of senior year started, I had very minimal course load and plenty of time to focus on application submission and interview preparations. I had time to write my statements, refer to a few people for feedback and set up mock interviews' weeks in advance of my actual interview date. This gave me the chance to work on my weaknesses and sharpen my communication skills for a successful application cycle.

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

If you are interested in a career even in the slightest, shadow!! There is nothing better than knowing what profession a good fit for you is and what isn't. Shadowing and interning with an optometrist reassured me that my path to optometry school was ideal and made sure I did everything I could to be the perfect candidate earlier on. This helps build relationships with doctors and they can even write you letters of recommendation for schools!

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

PPAC, ECU Writing Center and ECU Career Services

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

Writing my personal statement and describing my activities with a limited word count was such a challenging part of applying. There are so many different avenues you can take to describe yourself and why you should be admitted but being unique and creative while writing is no easy task. Start by writing earlier in the application cycle and think about how you want to express your unique attributes and experiences. Sometimes it's easier to talk to those close to you to know your strengths, weaknesses and important small experiences that you might have forgotten!

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

TriBeta Honor Society, Pre-Optometry Club, ECU Ambassadors, Pre-Surgical Society and Innovation Learning and Living Community

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

Shadowed optometrists in a private practice setting in both Chapel Hill and Greenville; shadowed an optometrist in a corporate setting in Raleigh. During COVID, I attended sessions through Pre-Health Virtual Shadowing and met tons of optometrists across the United States!

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

I volunteered at Vidant Hospital and through TriBeta Honor Society pre-COVID. After we were back on campus, I joined ECU Ambassadors and gave tours to prospective students and families, assisted with campus cleaning and worked with other Pitt County organizations for a positive change in our society!

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

Dry Eye Ophthalmic Research Study: I served a position as a Doctor Scribe in a Phase 3 Clinical Trial that evaluated the efficacy and safety of varenicline nasal spray on signs and symptoms of dry eye disease. I was able to perform both fluorescein and lissamine eye staining to look at pinguecula, pterygium, and conjunctivitis in the slit lamp with the guidance of the optometrist I worked with. I also learned Schirmer's Test (a dry eye symptom indication test) and performed it on patients throughout the study!!

Dr. Xiaoping Pan's Lab: Studied Nicotine Dependent Behaviors: Transgenerational Effects of Nicotine on *C. elegans*. Through the lab, I was given a position of an Undergraduate Research Assistant and opportunities to present at such as RCAW and the Thesis Defense for Honors in Biology.

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

I think meeting new people through classes and different organizations gave me the most rewarding experience at ECU. I met so many professors, mentors and friends who contributed to my acceptance into optometry school and couldn't have done it without their unconditional support!

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

Applying to professional school is such a challenging process especially since we know admissions love well rounded individuals! It is important to never lose sight of your mental health. A few low grades or failing to pursue what your peers are doing won't make you any less of a competitive applicant. Find unique things you love doing, focus on you, make your application shine and your dreams will follow!