



JOYEL PUTHUPARAMPIL

CLASS OF 2022

STUDENT PROFILE

Hometown: Cary, NC

Undergraduate Major: BS in Biology with Cell & Molecular Biology Concentration, BA in Chemistry, and Entrepreneurship Certificate

Career Aspiration: Dentist

Professional School: ECU School of Dental Medicine

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

My favorite part of my dental journey has been meeting dentists and other dental students. Seeing their passion for dentistry while volunteering at NC Missions of Mercy Clinics or at the dental school was inspiring and further convinced me that dentistry was right for me

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

The COVID-19 pandemic was at its height when I was trying to shadow during my junior year. It took several months before I found an office where I could shadow. While I was waiting to hear back from offices, I virtually shadowed a wide range of specialties.

One other challenge I encountered was writing my personal statement and supplemental questions. I began writing my personal statement later than most people, so I relied on the Career Center to help me. They helped greatly with my essay format, word choice and sentence structure. Later in the application process, I was able to do interview practice through the Career Center, as well. They are a great resource during the application process.

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

I used the Pre-Professional Advising Center (PPAC) and the Career Center to help prepare me for applying to dental school. I also talked to current dental students to learn more about the schools I was applying to. Many of my friends were also applying for professional school, so I was able to get feedback from them as well.

What organizations were you involved in as an undergraduate student?

I was involved in Campus Living as a Resident Advisor, the Pirate Academic Success Center as a Lead Tutor, the Pre-Dental Honor Society as the Vice-President, Alpha-Epsilon Delta, Dr. Zhu's research lab, and Intramural Soccer.

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

I recommend using the Pirate Academic Success Center, Career Center, PPAC, your respective pre-professional organization (ex. Pre-Dental Honors Society), and the ECU Recreation Center.

What type of shadowing did you do?

I shadowed two general dentist offices and an orthodontics office in Cary, NC, as well as general dentists, pediatric dentists, orthodontists, cosmetic dentists and implantologists, in Greenville.

What type of volunteering did you do?

I volunteered at the Pirate Academic Success Center for two years as a volunteer tutor, participated in on and off campus volunteering through Alpha-Epsilon Delta, volunteered at NC Missions of Mercy through the Pre-Dental Honor Society, and volunteered at the Greenville Food Bank in my free time.

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

I began doing research my first semester as a freshman with Dr. Zhu in the Department of Biology on the topic of zebrafish embryology. Through CRISPR-Cas9, we have looked at the effects of several genes on zebrafish development, sex ratios and oocyte maturation.

I also did research for a year with the CURE Lab in the Department of Chemistry. This is a great opportunity to get credit for CHEM 2763 and CHEM 3251. In CURE Lab, we focused on synthesizing a novel compound and tested its antibiofilm ability against *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* bacteria.

What was your most rewarding experience at ECU?

The most rewarding experience I had at ECU was playing intramural soccer. I made tons of friends, and it was something fun to look forward to every week. They have intramural sports of all kinds, and you also have the chance to win the coveted Intramural Champion T-shirt if your team wins the whole tournament!

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

Try to be consistent with important components of your application. I would recommend doing some shadowing and volunteering every month so that by the time you are applying, you will have many experiences to talk about. Although there is no official hour requirement for most schools, you do not want to be rushing right before you apply to get your hours up. Participating in weekly shadowing or volunteering is also a great way to build rapport with dentists and community leaders.

Any other advice, recommendations, suggestions, or comments?

One piece of advice is to plan out how you will achieve your academic and extracurricular goals. You also want to make time for yourself to have fun and relax. Taking care of your mental and physical wellbeing will help you excel in everything else. Not everything will go as expected, but that is part of the journey. Everyone has a different path to dental school, so believe in yourself and work hard!