

MICHAEL DENNING JR., MBA, MPH



STUDENT PROFILE

Hometown: Garner, NC

Degrees earned: BS-Public Health Studies, Master of Business Administration, Master of Public Health (Columbia University)

Career Aspirations: Pediatric Surgeon, Medical School Dean, Surgeon General of the United States of America

Professional School: Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University

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

My favorite part was and is connecting with fellow pre-med and medical students. This is a long arduous path, especially as a black man in medicine, so having additional support systems and confidants who are traveling a similar journey has been enjoyable and inspirational.

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

The most challenging part of the admissions process was rekindling connections and relationships with my former STEM Professors for recommendations. As you progress through your college career, especially for non-STEM Major, continue to foster the substantive, mentor-mentee relationship with your professors, as these individuals are invaluable during this process.

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

Experience and connections! I strived to gain experiences both inside and outside of healthcare. This provided me opportunities to learn more about the field, as well as solidify my desire to pursue medicine. A large part of any admissions process is the ability to tell a "story." By having academic and extracurricular experiences associated with one's passions, the stories will be even more authentic, individualized, and engaging. Also, connect with any and every one, as mentors and sponsors are invaluable. ECU's faculty and staff are truly student-centered. Several opportunities, past and present, are from the connections I have made while at ECU!

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

Do what you can, when you can, for who you can, as long as you can. The journey to become a physician is a long, arduous path, so it is critical to not only remember why you are here, but to also care for those who are around you.

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

Primary Care Physician Shadowing Program, MAPs, Volunteering (in general and in a health care setting), and any organization that focuses on a passion you host outside of medicine.

What organizations were you involved in as an undergraduate student?

ECU MAPS, BSU, ECU Writes, Pirate Pals, Coming Together Collective, The Honors College

What type of shadowing did you do?

During undergrad, I had the opportunity to shadow with several specialties, ranging from cardiothoracic surgery to pediatric hematology/ oncology to emergency medicine. The Primary Care Physician Shadowing Program provided a direct connection to several primary care fields. My best advice is to reach out, reach out, and reach out. Most of my shadowing experiences came from me “cold emailing” doctors who were doing something I was interested in!

What type of volunteering did you do?

Service is a critical part of my being. During undergrad, I volunteered with Third Street Community Center through their afterschool program, summer camp, and ECU’s Pirate Pals. I also was able to plan and execute college field trips for the 5th graders of Wahl-Coates Elementary School, annually. Also, with my interest in medicine, I volunteered at Vidant Medical Center and the Greenville Community Shelter Clinic, two unforgettable experiences

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

Yes, I completed a couple of research projects, mostly centered around community health engagement, public school education improvement, and childhood trauma/ ACEs.

What was your most rewarding experience at ECU?

My most rewarding experience at ECU was attending the National Academy of Medicine’s working session on the decline in black males entering medicine. This opportunity allowed me to not only contribute to the conversation about a topic intimately impacting my life but also engage with minority medical leaders that I grew up idolizing.

Any other advice, recommendations, suggestions, or comments?

My favorite civil rights leader, Fannie Lou Hamer, often stated “Whether you have a Ph.D., or no D, we’re in this bag together. And whether you’re from Morehouse or Nohouse, we’re still in this bag together,” so it is critical to always fight for what is right, with the skills you are bestowed, when the opportunity is present, and as long as you are breathing.