



NEAL PATEL

CLASS OF 2021

STUDENT PROFILE

Hometown: Morrisville, NC

Undergraduate Major: Public Health Pre-Health Professions Track

Career Aspirations: Physician

Professional School: Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM)

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

To prepare to apply to medical school, I relied on the resource's provided by ECU and the PPAC. I had various advisors help me develop my personal statement which I felt was the heart of my application overall. Additionally, I was able to meet with individuals that were successful in their application process and better understand how to stand out as an applicant.

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

The biggest thing is to not let a score or an entrance exam dictate your whole application. Having not done the best on my MCAT, I always thought of it as an anchor to my application. However, it quickly became a strong learning lesson and being able to openly talk about your setbacks and will get you much further than ignoring them. Additionally, a strongly worded application is very important in my opinion. Being able to convey your experiences into words allows you to show that you are a well-rounded individual. These are somethings I learned during my application process.

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

I recommend career services. I used this for both my writing and interview preparation. I would like to shoutout Ms. Waters, Ms. Person, and Ms. McAllister for helping me more than I could've asked for. I highly recommend everything both the PPAC, and Career Service Center has to offer.

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

The biggest challenge was imposter syndrome. From the initial application process to sitting there in a group interview, it's easy to let the thoughts that you aren't good enough engulf you. But at the end of the day, it is not as big of a comparison as you may think since everyone's journey thus far is different as well as their end goals.

What organizations were you involved in as an undergraduate student?

I was involved in AED and Pre-Surgical Honor Society.

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

My favorite part about would have to be meeting others who are in the same boat as me. It is nice to have a strong kinship with my peers that will one day serve as the nation's healthcare providers.

What type of shadowing did you do?

I shadowed a family medicine physician in Greenville as well as did weekly virtual shadowing during the lockdown period. I had also worked as a surgical assistant helping in the removal of skin cancer(s) which allowed me to gain clinical experience.

What type of volunteering did you do?

I volunteered at Vidant Medical Center and The Community Hospice Center throughout my time at ECU.

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

Yes, I did research with Dr. Soule in the public health department regarding the Electronic Cigarette and Combustible Tobacco Use Behaviors Inside of Vehicles. I was fortunate enough to be involved in data collection both virtually and in-person during this study during my time at ECU.

What was your most rewarding experience at ECU?

My most rewarding experience at ECU was being able to volunteer at the hospice center. It was here I felt my biggest impact as a person by simply being a helping hand or a shoulder to lean on for patients who are at end-of-life care. This was the experience that I hold close to me.

Any other advice, recommendations, suggestions, or comments?

If your plan is to pursue a certain career, keep at it as time will go on regardless of if you pursue your dream or not. Additionally, building a strong network of likeminded individuals will help you have strong support system. When applying, rejection is inevitable, and having a strong support system will mean the world to you when the time comes.