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

I greatly enjoyed learning more about myself and about my passion for the field, through the process of writing application essays. Some of the questions were extremely thought-provoking, and my engagement with them consistently reminded me of why I want to become a physician. I also had a lot of fun interviewing at different schools and meeting other applicants along the way.

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

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of the process was taking standardized tests. I suffered a great deal of anxiety while studying for and taking the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), but I’m also grateful for the mental fortitude that it afforded me and the awareness it provided of my areas for improvement.

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

Knowledge is power, so I tried to do as much research as I could, about the process itself as well as the individual schools that drew my interest. Over time, I also became very familiar with the average metrics (GPA, MCAT score, etc.) at each of the schools I planned to apply to, as to formulate the most realistic school list.

What organizations were you involved in as an undergraduate student?

American Medical Student Association, Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students, Pirate 2 Pirate Mentoring
What services or organizations would you recommend pre-professional students utilize?

The Pre-Professional Advising Center, of course! I would also recommend that students interested in pursuing professional school, utilize tutoring services; not only did the Pirate Academic Success Center (formerly the Pirate Tutoring Center) help me maximize my GPA, it also later became a wonderful avenue for me to become involved on campus and give back to other students who were struggling academically. Additionally, I suggest seeking out informative organizations that tailor to one’s background, especially those individuals representing marginalized groups (e.g. Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students), as it relates to professional school admission.

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

Apply early! Retrospectively, I hurt my chances during my first application cycle by delaying submission. More and more students apply every year, and there are only so many seats in each school’s class, so being proactive puts you in the best position to receive an interview invitation and hopefully gain acceptance. Also, try to enjoy the process. Embrace every step of the journey and make the most of each opportunity to learn and grow.

What type of shadowing did you do?

My initial shadowing opportunities arose as a result of gaining acceptance into the Primary Care Physician Shadowing (PCPS) Program, which is co-sponsored by the Pre-Professional Advising Center and the Brody School of Medicine. Essentially, the program provided exposure to a wide range of primary care specialists in the Greenville, NC area – which further prompted me to seek out additional shadowing experiences in other fields such as orthopedics.

What type of volunteering did you do?

As alluded to prior, I became heavily involved as a tutor at the Pirate Tutoring Center, where I ended up tutoring both organic chemistry and anatomy & physiology. During my sophomore year, I also began volunteering at Vidant Medical Center, where I assisted in the Ambulatory Surgery Unit (ASU). Perhaps my most rewarding volunteer experience occurred after I graduated from ECU, when I started helping out at a community center for LGBTQ+ youth in the greater Charlotte area.

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

I initially became involved in organic chemistry research, under the mentorship of Shouquan Huo, who assigned me to assist with graduate student projects. The common focus of these projects was centered around organometallic synthesis and catalysis. I later began working with Dr. Damon Swift, whose “HI-PACE” study aimed to understand how high intensity exercise could modulate the risk of developing type II diabetes in middle-aged African Americans.
Where are you going to school?
Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) in Atlanta, GA

What was your most rewarding experience at ECU?
My most rewarding experiences at ECU collectively contributed to a multidisciplinary education, due to me taking courses in other academic areas such as philosophy and African American literature. Over the course of my 4.5 years at ECU, I really learned a lot about myself as well as the world around me, and my diversified exposure to multiple schools of thought during this time, significantly lent towards this achievement.

Any other advice, recommendations, suggestions, or comments?
The journey to professional school is long, not to mention arduous. So, make sure that pursuing this venture is what you really want to do. And above all else, listen to your heart and to your mind. Take time off when necessary and be kind to yourself, because everyone’s path is different. Ultimately, only a happy and healthy professional can most adequately ensure the most effective care of their patients/clients.