

# ARDEN VESSIE

CLASS OF 2019



## STUDENT PROFILE

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**Hometown:** Archer Lodge, NC

**Undergraduate Major:** Biochemistry; Hispanic Studies Minor

**Career Aspiration:** Emergency Medicine Physician,  
Pediatrician, or Intensivist

**Professional School:** The Brody School of Medicine

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

I did neurophysiology research at Brody during undergrad that focused on uncovering the pathophysiology behind Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS). My project was on differential dopamine receptor expression in animal models of RLS.

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

Do not be afraid to take a gap year! I took two electively and I'm so glad I did. These two years enabled me to see what working in healthcare full-time was like (I'm an EMT with Wake County EMS), further improve my application, save money for school, spend extra time with my family and friends, and develop healthy self-care habits that I believe will carry me through professional school. I currently feel so ready to attack the challenges of medical education with all of my energy when I matriculate this summer, and I'm not sure I would feel this ready had I not taken my gap years.

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

I started my shadowing with the PPAC's Primary Care Physician Shadowing Program, and this was a great way to dip my toes into different medical specialties. After completing this program, I shadowed more in family medicine, and then I spent a month after graduation shadowing at Maynard Children's Hospital at Vidant, where I was able to be exposed to pediatric critical care, inpatient care, radiology, sedation medicine, and outpatient surgical procedures.

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

My favorite part of the journey to apply to professional schools has been meeting other students who have similar goals to my own in medicine and getting to work alongside each other and support each other in reaching these.

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

My largest volunteer experiences were volunteering at Vidant Medical Center and a three-month public health internship in Guatemala through one of Timmy Global Health's partner organizations. I also volunteered as a medical Spanish interpreter at Brody's Pitt County Care Clinic and did some environmental clean-up with the Honors College.

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

My most rewarding experiences were my medically-related volunteer opportunities. Getting to work with and help real patients and regularly be exposed to the career that I was working hard for was very motivating!

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

I've been preparing for the application process since the beginning of my freshman year of college. I had known for a while that I wanted to become a physician, but at the beginning of school at ECU, I wasn't really sure exactly how to do that. I relied heavily on the PPAC, older students who were further into the application process, the AAMC's website, and websites like Student Doctor Network. These resources helped me develop a plan of action for applying.

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

I was most involved in Timmy Global Health, Honors College Student Council, the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures Council of Student Ambassadors, and Brody's Pitt County Care Clinic as an undergraduate at ECU.

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

Definitely utilize the PPAC for any questions you have about completing applications or how to best improve your competitiveness as an applicant. They were so helpful during this process. I also recommend doing mock interviews with ECU's Career Center, and joining at least one healthcare-related student organization so you can meet mentors and fellow pre-professional students and learn from them.

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

My biggest challenge when applying to schools was studying for the MCAT. It was unlike any kind of studying I had done before in the level of consistency that you need to have in your studying to do well on the test. I actually took it twice, and ended up improving my score by 14 points the second time because I had completely changed my study strategy to something that worked better for my learning style. That being said, don't be afraid to change your study strategy if it's not working for you! There is no right or wrong method to study for content review. The key is consistency, and then lots of practice problems!

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

Self-care is so important during this process! Find an outlet that's not related to school (mine were running and spending time with my dog) and spend a little time doing that each day. Also, don't forget to enjoy the moment - take the time to connect with the patients you're working with in volunteer opportunities, study with friends, get yourself that cup of coffee, or make time to go to that football game you want to go to. It's about the journey.