What’s been your favorite part of the journey to apply to professional schools?
Getting to shadow in different fields and specialties was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed getting to see the different areas of medicine first hand, and I think that having those experiences really helped me in choosing my career path.

What were some of the challenges you came across when preparing to apply to schools (or what was tougher than you thought)?
No one ever undersells the MCAT, but even then, it was a lot tougher than I imagined. I wasn’t able to buy one of the private tutor programs or guided reviews that some companies offer, so I really had to do my research to figure out how best to study for it. It is also very expensive to apply, so you have to make sure you’re in a place where you can financially support yourself during the application process.

How did you prepare yourself for the process of applying to schools?
I met as often as I could with Pre-Professional advising to make sure that I was on track and I talked with people that have experience with the process to make sure that I was in a good position to apply. I also looked up the prompts from previous years for the secondary applications while I was waiting on my scores to come back so that once I got the applications I had already somewhat started on my essays. I just tried to stay ahead for as long as I could.

Looking back, what advice would you give students who are interested in professional schools? Is there anything you wish you had known earlier?
My best advice would be to put yourself out there and find opportunities to shadow as soon as you can. If you think that you’re interested in medicine, or a particular field, you are never going to know until you get some first-hand experience in that field. Also, don’t do anything that you don’t enjoy. College is supposed to be about figuring out your likes and dislikes, and if you don’t enjoy doing research or being in pre-med organizations then just don’t do it. I spent a lot of time doing things because I thought that I had to do them to get into med school. I wish I had known that there’s a million ways to get accepted and that I should’ve just focused on doing what I loved.
What services or organizations would you recommend pre-professional students utilize?
I recommend taking advantage of Pre-Professional advising and the volunteer services at Vidant Health. The PPAC sends out so many opportunities for research, shadowing and volunteering. I tried to take advantage of as many of these opportunities as I could. Also, I recommend volunteering at Vidant. It’s a great way to get experience in a clinical setting where you can get a first-hand look at the healthcare process. It is also a great way to meet doctors at the hospital that you may or may not want to shadow.

What organizations were you involved in as an undergraduate student?
ECU Honors College: Honors College Student Council President, Honors College Ambassador
Pirate Academic Success Center Peer Tutor
Campus Living Resident Advisor
Timmy Global Health Treasurer
ECU Alumni Association Scholar
Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society Member

What type of shadowing did you do?
The most rewarded shadowing I did was the PPAC Primary Care Physician Shadowing Program. I knew that I wanted to do Primary Care, but I was unsure of which field interested me the most. This experience allowed me to shadow in Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Internal Medicine, and Emergency Medicine. Being exposed to these fields was really eye opening and allowed me to figure out that I wanted to do Family Medicine or Emergency Medicine. I also did a lot of shadowing in my home town with my childhood pediatrician during the summers.

What type of volunteering did you do?
I volunteered in several different areas. I was a peer tutor for the Pirate Academic Success center for four years. I tutoring General and Organic Chemistry during that time. I also volunteered at Vidant Medical Center in patient escort, and at the Leo Jenkins Cancer Center. Lastly, I volunteered as a Science Olympiad Coach at the Wahl Coates Elementary School where I was able to teach science to 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders, and help them with their events.

Did you do research? If so, what was the topic?
I did research with the Chemistry Department, and at the Brody School of Medicine in the Kinesiology Department. With the chemistry department I worked with Dr. Robert Hughes created fusion proteins for biological assays. At the BSOM I worked with Dr. Carol Witczak studying glucose transporters and the effects of glucose uptake on diabetes.

What was your most rewarding experience at ECU?
My most rewarding experience at ECU has to be working as a Resident Advisor. As part of my job I oversaw between 40 and 50 of my own residents, and helped to oversee about 350-400 in my building during the year. RA’s help our residents get acclimated to college life, provide on campus resources and information to our students, and help during times of need for our residents. As part of my job I’ve been able to help residents during times of crisis, provide safety and security for my floor during difficult situations, and form lasting connections with my residents.

Any other advice, recommendations, suggestions, or comments?
Do your best not to compare yourself to other people as you’re applying. All that you’re ever going to do is drive yourself crazy. There is always going to be someone that is just a little bit better than you at something, and you can’t let that discourage you. It’s better to be the best version of yourself, rather than a second-rate version of someone else. That applies for other people’s time tables as well. Don’t feel like you have to take the MCAT or submit your application or take a certain class just because other people are doing it. Do your own thing, and it will all work out.