

Through my life experiences and dental hygiene education, my passion for providing community service has grown. In the beginning, I wanted to be a hygienist, and as I pursued education and my love for the practice and teaching of oral care, I availed myself of numerous volunteer and research opportunities. From these, I have learned I am motivated by challenge, responsibility, proficiency, the desire to help others, and a dedication to help disadvantaged populations. All of this has opened my eyes to becoming a dentist. To further understand this commitment, I continued my research, education, volunteering, and shadowing of dentists to explore the patient care possibilities and familiarize myself with the responsibilities of leading my own practice.

The clinical experiences in my dental hygiene program have heightened and reified my attraction for working with people via dentistry. Past clinicals and rotations have provided me with learning opportunities enabling me to become adept with patient communication and technical skills, while allowing me to become aware of my meticulous attention to detail and commitment to providing excellent patient oral health care. These learning moments have intensified my enthusiasm to be in a clinical environment to help patients, to see what I will learn that day, and to be the best dental professional that I can be for my patients.

My compassion for people; my understanding of existing income-influenced health disparities; and my knowledge of psychosocial reasoning preventing people from seeking oral health care have all been fostered by my volunteer responsibilities. From experiences such as morale boosting visits with senior citizen residents; implementing a local Linus Blanket program; delivering lunches to the homeless; and being the Molar, talking to families at Give Kids a Smile Day, I have learned I desire to bring hope and comfort to people, irrespective of demographics but with a firm dedication to those in need. I became interested in serving low income families and individuals while visiting Detroit on a mission trip. I was unaware of the degree of poverty that exists so close to my rural hometown. The severity of the conditions I witnessed had such a significant impact on me that I now see this as a major goal for my future practice. I am heartened by the numerous outreach possibilities available in dentistry, such as the basics (nutrition counseling and daily care education) as well as pain relieving restorations and extractions. I find dedication to service vital to my character and will continue to incorporate this commitment into my practice.

I crave challenge, knowledge, and high functioning responsibility--a personal insight gained from my research. Initially, I started in research as a volunteer--doing dishes, making reagents, learning lab safety, and observing other's research. After time, I applied for my own fellowship, and winning, I began my own research, which has led me to additional, more prestigious fellowships and research. From this, I have gained leadership, team work, collaboration, communication, and project completion skills--all of which I feel will be greatly assistive in managing my practice. It has also enhanced my understanding for the role of research in dentistry and evidence-based treatments as well as the importance of close collaboration between dentists and doctors, based on the growing research exhibiting correlation between oral and systemic health. I feel it is important to remain knowledgeable about the latest research to provide quality care for my patients.

Shadowing dentists has been valuable for gaining a deeper understanding of what is required to operate my own successful practice as well as affording exposure to the additional dental

services I would be able to provide to my patients. I am eager to expand my practical skill set with the ability to do restorations, extractions, periodontics, and oral surgery. I have integrated my learning into my future plans, while acknowledging the inherent challenges of business management, especially in conjunction with my commitment to serving at-need patients.

My goal is to establish a patient- and community-centered practice, employing best practices and philosophies as shaped by my personal value system and strong work ethic. I will treat each patient as a person and develop personalized treatment plans. I am dedicated to helping others through dentistry by becoming a dentist.