

Every Road is Different

The CSU Student's Prospective Guide to
Dental School



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Special Thanks goes out to everyone who has helped out with the guide including: Alicia Irizarry, Samira Azeez, Sara Fadlalla, Sarah Easton, Brittany Wampler, and Randi Myers.

If you would like to learn more about how you can contribute to future publications of this guide, contact Brittany Wampler (b.wampler@csuohio.edu).

Introduction

Welcome to Every Road is Different: The CSU Student's Prospective Guide to Dental School. This guide contains valuable advice from Cleveland State Alumni about the journey one takes in order to get to final destination—dental school. The information provided includes advice from students in their first year of dental school through those who have graduated dental school. This guide will cover topics such as:

- The Cleveland State Experience
- Preparation for the DAT
- The Application Cycle
- What I Wish I Knew
- What to Expect in Dental School

This guide provides answers to the commonly asked questions from students, but it is important to remember that this guide is not comprehensive. Each of these students have different and unique obstacles and have taken unique paths toward dental school.

This guide is not intended to replace the invaluable input of your pre-professional advisors, but could answer some of the more personal questions we all think of, but never ask. Each of the alumni have been through the exams, ate nights, pre-dental stage, and the breakdowns. Hopefully this guide can give you some insight and peace of mind about your journey ahead.



Alicia Irizarry

Undergraduate Institution: Cuyahoga Community College (1 year), Cleveland State University (3 Years)

Post Baccalaureate Student? No

Undergraduate Major: Anthropology

Undergraduate GPA: 3.7

Science GPA: 3.4

DAT Scores/Total: I took the DAT 2 times. First round: DAT-17 and PAT- 19, Second round: DAT-20 and PAT- 22

How many schools did you apply to? Three: CWRU SoDM, OSU SoDM, and Mid-Western in Chicago

How many schools did you interview at? Three

How many acceptances did you receive? Three

Dental School Information

Dental School: Case Western Reserve University

Current Year: May 2018 graduate

Why did you choose your dental school? I am from Cleveland and I wanted to go somewhere where I could live at home for a few years and save more money. I lived at home for my first year, then I moved to campus in Little Italy for my last three years.

CSU Information

Favorite place to study on campus? Fourth floor, silent floor, library! I did not live on campus when I went to CSU, I was a commuter, so the silent floor was my home away from home.

Favorite professor? Dr. Phil Wanerka; he was my anthropology professor.

Most difficult CSU class? Statistics, I really hate stats to this day, but you do use it in dental school, believe it or not.



Samira Azeez

Undergraduate Institution: The Ohio State University

Post Baccalaureate Student? Yes

Undergraduate Major: Nutrition

How many schools did you apply to? 2

How many schools did you interview at? 1

How many acceptances did you receive? 1

How many waitlists did you receive? 0

Dental School Information

Dental School: The Ohio State University

Current Year: D1

Why did you choose your dental school? It was where I did my undergrad and I loved being a Buckeye! I worked at the College of Dentistry as an undergrad, and I truly didn't see myself anywhere else.

CSU Information

Favorite place to study on campus? I liked studying at the library. It was a quiet atmosphere and allowed me to focus.

Favorite professor? Dr. DePaoli was the best!

Most difficult CSU class? Cell Biology was tough for me.



Sara Fadlalla

Undergraduate Institution: Northwestern University

Post Baccalaureate Student? Yes

Undergraduate Major: Communication Sciences and Disorders

Undergraduate GPA: 3.17 (Including Post-Bacc)

Science GPA: 3.6 (Including Post-Bacc)

DAT Scores/Total: 20 Overall and 18 on PAT section
How many schools did you apply to? 19

How many schools did you interview at? I interviewed at 2 schools before December 1st, then got 2 more interviews after December 1st. I had heard back from my top choice on December 1st, so I did not go to my other interviews.

How many acceptances did you receive? 2

How many waitlists did you receive? 0

Dental School Information

Dental School: The Ohio State University College of Dentistry

Current Year: D2 (2nd Year)

Why did you choose your dental school? OSU has always been my dream school for dental school, but even if it were not, the atmosphere of collaboration, support, and price are all reasons why OSU is still the choice I would make again gladly.

CSU Information

Favorite place to study on campus? I always studied really well in the commuter lounge on the top floor of the Union!

Favorite professor? Dr. DePaoli!!!! Organic Chemistry. She was truly a Rockstar!

Most difficult CSU class? Probably Biochemistry; Dr. Stacey was a kind man, but he did make the course difficult. Organic Chemistry 2 was also challenging. Human Gross Anatomy—that class was TOUGH, but SUPER worth it.



Sarah Easton

Undergraduate Institution: Cleveland State University

Post Baccalaureate Student? No

Undergraduate Major: Biology

Undergraduate GPA: 3.84

Science GPA: 3.9

DAT Scores/Total: 19/21 (PAT)

How many schools did you apply to? 7

How many schools did you interview at? 5 invitations, accepted 3

How many acceptances did you receive? 2

How many waitlists did you receive? 1

Dental School Information

Dental School: Case Western Reserve University Current Year: D3 (Class of 2020)

Why did you choose your dental school? Award winning curriculum, early patient exposure, close to home.

CSU Information

Favorite place to study on campus? Library

Most difficult CSU class? Biochemistry

Experiences at CSU



Who or what was your best source information en route to you becoming a dental student?



Alicia- I am a first generation everything, so I did not have a family member to help guide me through undergrad, let alone dental school. I relied heavily on peers at CSU who had applied before me, and I developed a good relationship with the head of admissions departments at the dental school. I networked with them so they knew who I was and I bugged them like crazy with questions (it's their job, don't forget this, they want you to come to their school, they want to help you!)



Samira- The admissions office to the schools you're applying to are your best resources. They can answer any questions you have about their school specifically. And you become a real person to them, not just a number, when your name is constantly in their ear. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone and talk to them!



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Sara- Definitely Brittany. I knew coming to CSU that my ultimate goal was to get into dental school, but until coming to CSU and planning out my course load and path I had not truly realized what I needed to do to get to where I wanted to be. Brittany was my personal superhero and guide, answering everything I wondered about and helping take me from a pretty lost but determined student to one with focus and direction. She meets you where you want to be met, so if you are willing to put in the hard work then she will meet you right there. It was not easy, but so worth

What service experiences / jobs / or shadowing experiences did you have prior to medical school that you believe made you stand out? Would you recommend it to others and how did you find out how to get involved?



Alicia- I worked in between classes at CSU in downtown Cleveland and I had previous work experience. As a result, I could not do many extracurriculars. While many may have thought this would hurt my application because I didn't have a lengthy list of extra curriculars, I actually used it as an advantage. I worked the angle of customer service, that I was able to have conversations and work with people really well. I was able to be part of a team and it taught me really good time management to be able to study, work, and play. I did volunteer where I could through HandsOn North East Ohio; they had a calendar of random events throughout the month and I picked up where I could. I was the president of the Pre-Dental society at CSU and I set up the events there. I did do research at community college and CSU which helped immensely (but everyone does research these days).



Samira- The best thing I did was get actively involved during shadowing. You don't do yourself any favors by standing and watching quietly. Build a good rapport with one or two dentists and put yourself in the practice! A general dentist and a periodontist allowed me to assist on some procedures and I'm still in contact with them now. Plus, they can write you some great letters of recommendations.



great!

Sara- I definitely think getting in shadowing hours is pretty much a necessity nowadays, and it was really eye opening in telling me whether this was really the path I wanted. I volunteered in the pediatric department of MetroHealth, also which I think showed dental schools that I was not just someone who wanted to help underserved/children, but someone who actually did try and do that as best I could. Volunteering at MetroHealth was actually something I found out through the Post-Bacc program at CSU, the Volunteer Pipeline program; it was



Sarah- An array of observing at different dental practices, both general practice and some specialty practices. I also participated in Pre-Dental events at Case specifically because it was my first-choice dental school. In doing that, I already knew some of the professors, admissions staff, etc. I also remember shadowing in the DMD student clinic (which is totally fine for anyone to do – come and assist whenever you want!).

Did you receive any letters of recommendation from faculty members at Cleveland State? If so, how did you go about establishing a relationship in order to get the best letter of recommendation?



Alicia- It is not easy, to be honest. I had one from a PI I did research with at CSU, I had one from a biology teacher at community college, and then one from my anthropology professor. It's hard because at CSU the classes are big, and everyone seems to be pre-med or pre-dental. The advice I can give is that, if you have a working relationship with a professor with research or a small group thing, as them. Even if you don't have this, I would just go up to them, ask for a meeting, and tell them directly, "Hey I am pre-dental, I am looking for someone to write recs for me, we will be having three classes together, would you be interested in helping me?". If they say yes, schedule a meeting. They have plenty of students ask them for this, it is part of their job. If they say no, oh well, on to the next professor!



Samira-I got two letters of recommendation from faculty at CSU. I established relationships with them by attending office hours regularly and getting to know them on a more personal level. You don't always have to talk about school stuff. Ask about their kids, their pets, what they did before coming to CSU. They usually have photos, awards, and souvenirs all over their office. Pick one and ask about it. From there, it's easy to let them know more about who you are as well, so they can craft a personal and unique letter of recommendation for you that will stand out and show that there's more to you than just academia.



Sara- I did get my letters of recommendation from professors at CSU. The way I built relationships with these professors was by being in their offices from the beginning. Even if I did not have a question the first couple weeks of school, I still made an effort to pop in and introduce myself. There are hundreds of students that our professors meet, so I think one-on-one interaction is the most important way of forming a relationship. Even if that first interaction of me just introducing myself was a bit awkward in some instances, whenever I did have a question, going into their office hours after that first exposure was way easier.



Sarah- I went in my Junior year knowing that I needed at least 2 letters from faculty still, so after the first week of classes when we meet the professors, I just picked 2 that had office hours when I didn't have classes and made a point to come up with questions, review tests, and meet with them. I did well in class as well and showed that I put effort in them. I received one from Organic Chemistry (which I took both I & II with the same professor) and one from Biochem. It was very intentional – with CSU being on the larger size, unfortunately, you have to put the extra effort in. Brittany and a local dentist that I shadowed at for 60+ hours also wrote recommendation letters for me.

What organizations or opportunities did you get as a result of being a CSU student that you might not have had otherwise?



Samira- CSU has a large non-traditional student demographic. This made it easy for me to relate to other students who weren't your typical 18-22 year olds. I'm also a dual citizen, so having a relatively large international student demographic allowed me to connect with other Nigerian students and grow my connections within the African community.



Sara- Definitely volunteering at MetroHealth. Cleveland is such a hub for incredible hospitals, getting involved and actually helping people is luckily pretty easy, and amazing especially if interested in a career in healthcare.

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Prepping for the DAT



What point in your career at CSU did you take the DAT and how early before the test did you begin studying? Did you plan for the DAT in your class schedule by taking fewer classes around the time you were studying for the test? What advice do you have about timing for the DAT for students planning to apply during the summer?



Alicia-I took the DAT twice. The first time I studied 1 week and suffered food poisoning. The next time I took it, I studied casually for 3 months. I know no one wants to hear this, but this worked best for me (and I used this method in dental school). A little studying every day, for a longer time, helped me. I would casually read a book, but as the time grew closer, my study days grew more intense. The last month I was studying 8-4 whenever I could, I made it my job outside of school and my real job. I could not afford to take fewer classes (I was taking 20 credit hours) because I was majoring in Anthropology, and had to satisfy my Pre-Dental requirements, and my major requirements.



Samira- I took the DAT before I enrolled at CSU. I studied that summer for 8 weeks, 6 days a week, for 8-12 hours to prepare. Luckily, I had no classes or work obligations so I was able to focus 100% of my energy on preparing for the exam. I would advise anyone who can to study this way so you don't get burned out or distracted.



Sara- So I took the DAT after my 1st year of school at CSU. I took the exam in June. I studied by taking a Kaplan online class in January. I began studying for the DAT by reading the Kaplan book in December/Winter break before my DAT class started (because there is no time to do the reading they assign in the class during the semester). After that and the class ending in March, I kind of took a bit of a break from studying the DAT just because it is hard to balance school work and studying. Then after finals in May, I essentially designated 2 straight weeks for final prep and practice test taking. If you do plan to take it during the school year I would recommend planning a lighter course load around studying because it is a pretty huge test.



Sarah- I took the DAT the Saturday before Memorial Day before I started the application process in June. I studied for a consecutive 3 weeks after finals, but was studying during the semester as much as I could between exams. I unfortunately did not have a lighter load that semester, but the classes that I was taking were tested on the DAT.

Did you use a class to prepare for the DAT like Kaplan or Princeton Review or were you able to study on your own in preparation for the test?



Alicia- I SWEAR by the materials I used. I was broke so I could not afford a class. For biology, I ONLY used a AP Biology book (yellow and black) and I read this like a novel beginning in my first of three months. I would casually read it, then I'd read it again and make notecards for things I couldn't immediately commit, then I would study my notecards and continue reading. My first question on the DAT was how old the earth was, and this was the first sentence in the AP Biology book. For math, general chemistry, and organic chemistry, I used "Chad's videos". I paid for a one or two month subscription. He is a life saver and I would not study anything other than him. I supplemented his lectures with DAT Destroyer. I would just do practice problems. They are super hard, but their explanations in the back of the book were incredible. I would break down the DAT destroyer questions to simulate the DAT, so 40 biology, 30 general chemistry, and 30 organic chemistry. I wouldn't time myself, but I would assume my percentage current. DAT destroyer was tough; I would be getting 35-45% correct. All I can say is practice, practice, practice questions and exams; you can study all day, but you need to be familiar with the questions, how they're asked, and it shows you where you need to work. The more questions you get wrong, the places you fail the most, teach you the most where you need improvement.

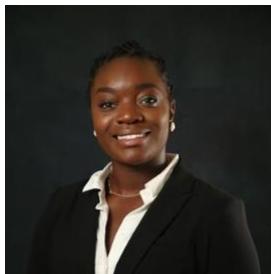


Samira- I didn't use a certain class, but I used online resources to study on my own. I found this beneficial so I could structure my days and was able to be flexible if anything came up.



Sarah- I did not use a class. I had the purple Kaplan book, Crack the DAT software, Kaplan flashcards, and DAT Achiever software that I used on a strict schedule that I made before I started.

What was your best resource for the study period?



Samira- I found “Chad's videos” to be particularly helpful to study for the organic chemistry portion.



Sara- I definitely think that practice exams were the best. Kaplan was great for the science section (because Kaplan was harder) and Ari's boot camp was great for the PAT and reading and math sections in being close to the official exam.

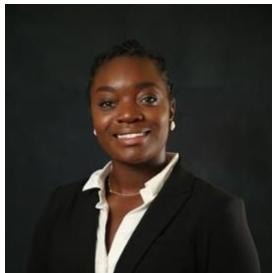


Sarah-Crack the Dat, but everyone learns and studies differently, so finding out what best works for you before your allotted 3-4 weeks studying is pretty important. You want to waste as little time as you can. I remember having the same printed schedule that I made for myself hung multiple places in my house to ensure that I stayed on track.

How did you find balance during your study period? Also, how did you pick yourself up if you had a bad practice exam or bad day at the books?



Alicia- I would not study past 4pm, I couldn't do it. I would try to study 8-4 around classes and work, but I needed an outlet. I think if I did bad or something, you have to realize, at that point, there is nothing you can do, you tried your hardest, but you can't change your grade or how you did, you can only improve next time. Apply this to dental school, too.



Samira- Luckily, I studied during late Spring/early Summer so there was plenty of daylight and sunshine during my breaks. I would take walks or go out for ice cream with friends. I still found time to have fun. If I had a bad day or an off day, I'd give myself time to refresh by going to a movie or just relaxing and come harder the next day.



Sara- I would never let myself study for an entire day. I would make a routine about it. At first, I timed myself on how long it takes me to get through a section or so, and I would then plan accordingly on how many sections I needed to finish to stay on schedule (you have to make your own schedule—including fun things, like seeing friends, and spending time with family, and even exercising because you cannot get rid of self-care, you just have to be responsible with how you incorporate it). If I would have a bad day, I would not let it get my discouraged, and I would take short mental breaks if I did not do well, but always reminding myself that if I did not do well now it is getting it out of my system before the real test.



Sarah- You have to give your brain a break. Eat enough, drink enough water, and have at least one break day during the week or 2 nights off. If you don't find the adequate balance, you will get to test day, brain is mush and you are burnt out. Do not study after about 12pm the day before the test.

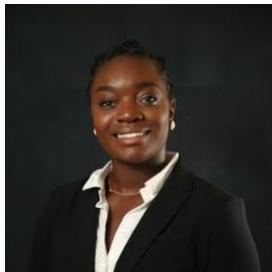
The Application Process



Where did you initially seek information about the application process? Was it from an advisor, a meeting about the process, the ADEA website, or peers? What online tools did you use to help you decide where to apply?



Alicia- I made an account through AADSAS the year before applying and I pre-wrote all my short answers so come the next year when I went to apply, I was ready for the questions and was already familiar with the application. Remember if you don't pay, you're not applying, I suggest making an account beforehand and getting comfortable with the application.



Samira- I met with the admissions counselor at Ohio State University. First, over the phone and then in person. I also sought advice from current dental students at the time.



Sara- Meeting with Brittany was step 1. Then using the ADEA book that gave dental stats was something else I used to figure out where to apply. The Post-Bacc workshops also helped in organizing how to figure out what you are looking for in a future school.



Sarah- I initially used the pre-professional advisor for information, but I also used the ADEA Guide to Dental Schools while applying. This book was really helpful in narrowing down which dental schools were worth applying to based on location, cost, pre-requisites, recommendation letter requirements, GPA averages, DAT averages, etc.

How long will it take to get my application done, start to finish? When did you begin working on application materials? When did you ask for letters of recommendation?



Alicia- The application was easy, it was waiting for recommendation letters to be uploaded. When your application is complete, email the schools, let them know it's done, even if you're waiting on a recommendation letter, sometimes they will look at applications before.



Samira- It took me a few months from start to finish. From filling out the actual application to locking in letters of recommendation. I asked for letters while I was still in the classes I wanted the letters for. You have to kind of remind them a few times because they do get busy and you want to make sure they are submitted on time!



Sara- I was essentially finished with my application by January. I worked on it over Winter break and asked for letters of recommendation in March/April, so that by the time they were due (June 1st is what I told the professors, since that was the day the application opened) I was able to just submit everything.



Sarah- I started getting recommendation letters in March of application year. I took my DAT in May of application year. I opened application early June and submitted early July. In saying that, there are more open ended questions in the application that are pre-released, so you can draft those responses (like I did) in order to make best used of your time. Put the transcript requests in early (June) to your undergrad school(s) because those take about a month to process.

What did you do in order to get the perfect personal statement? How did you make your personal statement stand out?



Alicia- This is such a difficult question, I think I made mine stand out by my choices in undergrad. I majored in anthropology when everyone else was psychology, biology, or chemistry, that alone made me stand out. I also talked about how I worked during school and how this gave me a social advantage, I was able to communicate I was comfortable working with people. I used my negatives as positives and showed them what I learned from all the failures I had gone through.



Samira- I wrote what I thought was a good first draft—I tried to make it unique by including personal stories that weren't typical to just dentistry. You have to basically make yourself come alive on paper. Then I had multiple people read it and give me feedback. My parents read it, my advisor read it, my friends and boyfriend read it, dental students read it, a few of my mentors read it. After getting those bits and pieces of advice, I was able to compile the changes into a statement that could get the attention of any admissions committee.



Sara- I asked for a few trusted editors, not too many, because too many cooks and the personal statement loses a lot of its flow. I had Brittany take a look at it when I had it essentially following the specific guidelines for the application, and after about 3 or 4 editing meetings we were able to set it aside. I think making the statement concise and clear was the best way to make it stand out. Focus on just a couple major points about yourself/experiences, and extrapolate on why they are important.



Sarah- I had a pre-professional advisor assist in writing process and had library proofread and edit. Avoid clichés – the admissions committees read many personal statements.

What is the best advice that you heard about the interview process?



Alicia- Be authentic, they will know if you're lying. Also, don't sweat the small stuff. Sure, everyone can get straight A's, but when they open their mouth can they actually have a good genuine conversation with you? Are they able to actively listen to you. Brains are not everything in density.



Samira- I heard over and over again to just be yourself! And it's super cliché, but it's true. It's important not only to let them know the kind of person you are, but also to show yourself if that particular school is a good fit for you. Another piece of advice I got, which I think a lot of people overlook, is to put your phone away! We are so conditioned to pull our phones out mindlessly in everyday interaction. Seriously, turn it off and leave it at the hotel. If you need to know the time, buy a basic watch from Walmart.



Sara- Remember that they asked you to come interview, so it is not just them seeing if YOU are a good fit, but you seeing if THEY are a good fit. It made me realize that it was more of a partnership/team effort than just me being self-conscious and worried about making a good impression. I was just making my impression and seeing how they impressed me too. It took the pressure off.



Sarah- Be yourself because it shows when you are trying too hard to impress the interviewer.

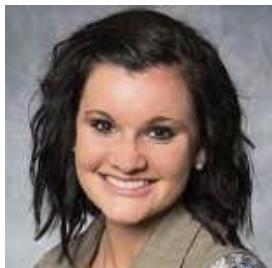
Did you ever contact schools during the application process or find it necessary to update them on your information?



Alicia- I was not a straight A student, but I was a good communicator. I met up with admissions advisors, but I also talked about applying, talked about life, about families. Show them how you can interact. Show them how you got that C in general chemistry, changed your study habits, and grew from it. I took my DAT twice, that's not a red flag, it's that I knew I could do better and I wanted to show them that. Communicate with them, talk to them, the more they know you BEFORE the application, the better off your chances. Think of it this way, everyone likely has a 3.5-4.0 GPA, everyone does research, everyone volunteers, if they know you before, they will be WAITING for your application.



Samira- I called my school of choice multiple times for a few reasons. I did need to update them on some information involving classes and requirements, but I also, again, wanted to make sure they were associating my name with a whole person and not just a number. Don't be annoying or aggressive, but find a way to make sure they remember you.



Sarah- I did send a confirmation type email to CWRU, my top choice dental school, stating that I just submitted my application and am looking forward for them to review it and to reach out if there are any questions. I always sent a thank you email to whoever interviewed me upon returning home from an interview (always ask for a business card).

What I Wish I Knew



What was the best piece of advice you heard along the way about the journey to dental school? If you could look back at yourself prior to dental school is there any advice you would now give yourself?



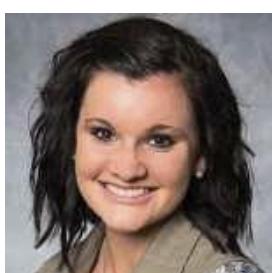
Alicia-I honestly don't know. I really did it alone and with the support of my family. I think that's why I want to help so much with pre-dentals because I really didn't. I had to find it all out for myself and it was an incredible journey.



Samira- For me, the best advice was to not give up. My route to dental school was definitely of a scenic nature. I wasn't "supposed" to be here. I'm 27 years old and a D1. If you want it, just keep trying. If I could go back, I'd tell myself that there is no one way anyone's plan is "supposed" to look and just stop comparing myself to others. I'd do what I need to do specific to my goals and my needs and just do them.



Sara- Be better at time management/incorporating self-care. School and life are not mutually exclusive anymore in dental school, so I think I wish I knew to practice that a bit more in undergrad and post-bacc.



Sarah- Maintain a healthy balance of work and fun with effective time management. Dental school, at least CWRU, is very busy and it is important to be able to stay on task without getting burnt out. Learn different stress management techniques that work best for you – everyone is different.

If you had to go through any step of the process over would you have done anything different (experiences, DAT prep, apps)?



Alicia- I would have studied the right way for the DAT the first time; \$400 is a lot of money.



Samira- I think I would have majored in Spanish. I loved Spanish in high school and it's becoming apparent how much of an advantage it would be to be bilingual, especially since I am considering moving to Texas after graduation. Plus, it's just another thing to set you apart from all the biology/chemistry/microbiology majors in your class.



Sara- I don't think this is necessarily something I would have done differently, but I think it is important to mention DOING THINGS YOU LOVE! Like maybe I would take away that one year of research work I was doing a research project I was uninterested and would have focused on the research I actually enjoyed researching (early intervention with children on speech and language development); what you love does not have to entirely surround itself around dentistry or healthcare, just be passionate and show that you care and the schools will notice that.



Sarah- Observe, observe, observe. Try different specialties, different types of practices.

What classes were most beneficial to you once you got to dental school? Is there a class you wish you would have taken?



Alicia- Microbiology; not all schools require this course, but Dentistry is about all the bugs that cause cavities leading to root canals, perio disease, etc. It's all about the bugs, get comfortable with that. Oh and Biochemistry, it is not important for Dentistry, but you have to know it for boards, and it helps with medicine mechanisms .



Samira- Anatomy with Cadaver lab was a huge benefit. That's been the bulk of my D1 year and I'd be super behind if I had come in never having seen a human cadaver.



Sara- Human Gross Anatomy with the Cadaver lab. Anatomy was the most difficult class of D1 and had I not taken that course beforehand I would have struggled even more than i did in that class! Otherwise, just learning good study habits early is important, you will need them again.



Sarah- I did take human gross anatomy (separate from the basic A&P) my senior year before dental school. This was a great foundation for the first year or two of dental school when you are exposed to it again. CSU has a cadaver lab too – intricate dissections start your fingers for the manual dexterity in dentistry.

Was there ever a time where you wanted to give up and what did you do to overcome that? What drove you toward your ultimate goal?



Alicia- First year in undergrad I was at community college. I wanted to settle in to their hygiene program. Also, second year in dental school, taking 5-7 finals a week, every 3 months. Also, if something happens in your personal life, it can be a lot all at once. Second year is no joke, but I actually enjoyed it, pushes your limited beyond anything you could imagine, but when you're done, you feel really accomplished.



Samira- I can't even count how many times the thought crossed my mind. I think most of us have felt this way at least once. I would talk to my parents and they would always bring me back up. It is so important to have that support system. We all need those people in our lives who will fight our own negative thoughts of ourselves and remind us all what we're capable of. The thing within myself that really drove me was the thought that I didn't truly see myself being happy doing anything else. It can be dangerous not to have a backup plan or to limit yourself to one option, but for me it was the biggest blessing. When you only have one choice, you throw everything into it to make sure you get there.



Sara- I do not think there was ever a time I ever wanted to give up, but there were loads of times where I never thought I would actually make it and self-doubt took over. I think reiterating how important this goal was to ME was the key. If this was something that was imposed on me, whether by family, friends, societal expectations, I would have burnt out, but because it was something that I wanted truly, I was able to hold onto that flame, even when dimmed and continue to push myself, while still trying to remember that my goals need a healthy me—so yes I will see the people I love and I will go to the gym and I will eat ice cream even if that means I take an hour study break.



Sarah- Yes – quite often. Go shadow or observe a dentist. It will give you a much better look at the big picture and what you are working for.

What to Expect in Dental School



What was the most difficult part of the transition from CSU to dental school for you? How did you overcome feelings of being overwhelmed?



Alicia- The 8-5 classes. Yes, you're in class from 8am to 5pm, and the classes are 2 hours long. In that week, you get to go to waxing lab or operative lab, but the long hours are tough. No breaks, just tons of power points. Just like in undergrad, you just want to pass initially, but every class you take in dental school is integral to your success as a clinician.



Samira- The volume of course load has been challenging. You really have to stay on top of your studies and not fall behind. I overcome those feelings by reminding myself that all my classmates are in the same boat and we'll all get out together. Again, that support system is invaluable.



Sara- The abundance of coursework and the expectations being incredibly high. I think not comparing myself to classmates was something else I needed to remember. I spent a lot of time outside soaking in the fresh air anytime I started to feel overwhelmed, that helped me re-center my thoughts and remember the bigger picture—wanting to help people.

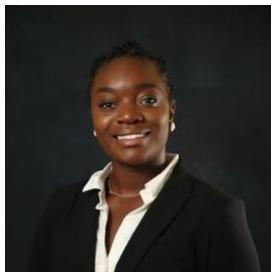


Sarah- Your schedule is locked in without the ability to adjust it. Some classes are easier than others, but all classes are equally as important. In undergrad, I tried to take one fun class a semester, and there simply is no way to do that in dental school. You are exposed to dentistry or sciences all day.

What in your opinion is the best part about your school? Is it the learning environment, people, curriculum, patient approach, etc?



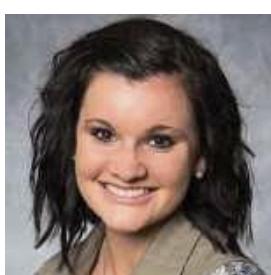
Alicia- I loved the curriculum. When you're learning it, you don't really care, but when you graduate, you realize how important all the classes you took were and why they're necessary. CWRU really does a good job at preparing you for the real world.



Samira- Ohio State is just such a "help me, help you" environment. My classmates all help each other out and it's not a competitive atmosphere at all. It makes a huge difference knowing that we all want each other to succeed.



Sara- The students in your class and those older than you will become your family members. Everyone is very cooperative and happy to help you. Our student affairs office is also full of gems from our therapist to our student organization director—everyone rocks.



Sarah- Everything that we do is done in attempts of excellence. We aren't doing things for completion, but there is a lot of extra attention to detail. We are taught by these measures and then is followed in our clinic education. We have very early patient exposure. At the end of the first semester (Thanksgiving), you will have rotations to place sealants on elementary school students in the Cleveland schools. The next semester you will start doing prophies (cleanings) on your classmates and then real patients. Cleanings continue throughout second year as you are exposed to more dental procedures in the preclinical lab. Third and fourth year are 2 hour lectures and 6 hours clinic time on real patients. We have a new school being built! It is set to open in June 2019 – I will graduate from there and all new upcoming classes (you) will have all of their education there.

I have been hearing balance is hard in dental school -- How do you find balance in dental school? Is there still enough free time to have fun ?



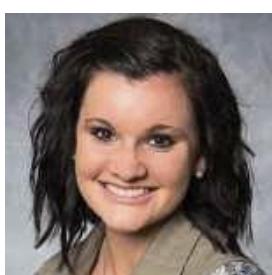
Alicia- I never study on a Sunday. I also learned that to succeed, for me personally, I had to start studying a little earlier. I couldn't do a cram session anymore, there is too much volume of material and so many classes, it is literally impossible to do it all. So I start early, and that way I can enjoy more, or skip a day of studying because I budgeted time for it. Time management is huge; if you can get it right in undergrad, you will be fine in dental school.



Samira- You have to be realistic and just come to terms with the fact that you can't know it all. If you try to learn 100% of the material all the time, you will burn out quickly. Take that thirty minutes before bed and close your textbook to watch your favorite show. Take a few hours on Sunday to hang out with your significant other or get brunch with your friends. You will have time for whatever you decide is a priority. Personally, I needed a dog. And he has been the highlight of my life every day. Having him isn't easy and I wouldn't recommend it to everyone, but he's my best friend and I make time for him. Decide what you can or can't handle and just make it work.



Sara- So balance is really, really tough. As long as you start to figure out how much effort and time YOU specifically need for everything you do in school you will be able to start incorporating what you need and what you want in your schedule. Do not ever give up the things that help you relax because your well-being will wear thin. So, take the first couple weeks of school to orient yourself, figure out which classes are more important than others, the ones that will need the most effort and the ones that need less, then incorporate what you need, if that is a weekly movie night, or working out 3 times a week, or baking, or tv time, include that in your schedule too regardless of finals week, midterm weeks whatever. Because just like studying is imperative, so is keeping yourself mentally and physically sound to continue to endure the relentless hustle and grind. Balance is tricky, but definitely doable!



Sarah- There is time for fun. Unfortunately, I do commute to campus which takes some of my time out of my day, but I believe giving yourself at least 1 hour of relaxation every night is absolutely essential. Oftentimes, you will be able to swing more than an hour, but during the busier weeks, 1 hour after school may be all you can manage. Allowing your brain to relax after a full day will be more effective than trying to work straight through and getting burnt out.

What is something that I should do in the first few weeks or months of dental school?



Alicia- Get to know your class, be social, be outgoing. They're your family for the next four years, it is identical to high school all over again. Also, befriend the professors, they're going to be your colleagues.



Samira- Make friends with your classmates, find a routine, learn how to cook. Some of your classmates are about to become your lifelong friends so you might as well link up right off the bat and find your people. Get into a routine ASAP. Use Google calendar to plot out specific times to study, work out, etc. Cook your meals and bring lunch to school. Eating out will quickly drain your loans if you make it a habit and cooking also gives you a little bit of "me time" when you need it.



Sara- Visit all of your professors, even just to let them know how you are attempting to study for their course and see if they can give you tips on how to improve your methods even before the first test. Be proactive with your studies and life and it will certainly pay off.

Sarah- Spend time with your fellow classmates. Get to know everyone. These are the people you will be spending four years with. You will be taking the same classes, going through the same stresses, etc. There will be no other people that fully understand what you are going through than them. Having a support system outside of school is absolutely essential as well, but having a group of friends at school is just as important. During the first few months, there is often adequate time in order to get to know everyone and once the busyness comes, those opportunities may become more limited.



Additional Info

There is a lot we covered in this guide, however, if we have not answered all of your there is an additional list of resources that you may find beneficial:

American Dental Association (ADA)- Home Page

<https://www.ada.org/en>

ADA Resources for Dental Students

<https://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/dental-student-resources>

American Student Dental Association (ASDA)- Home Page

<https://www.asdanet.org/>

ASDA- U.S. Dental Schools

<https://www.asdanet.org/index/get-into-dental-school/before-you-apply/u-s-dental-schools>

ADEA- AADSAS Application Login

<https://aadsas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>

ADEA- AADSAS Application Prep

https://www.adea.org/GoDental/Application_Prep.aspx

