

### Dental School Personal Statement

Every time I went to the dentist growing up, I had the biggest smile on my face. The cleanliness of the office, the funny and sincere talks with my dentist, and the feeling of clean, healthy teeth made me giddy with excitement.

Still intrigued by the dental profession as a college freshman, I spoke to my childhood dentist, my orthodontist, and a periodontist I interned for about their careers. They all struck me as competent, skillful, and genuine professionals. As a student who enjoys studying the sciences, I was excited to hear about the technical and scientific foundations of their educations and careers. I was drawn to their ability to simultaneously work alone and engage in a network of other providers. Most importantly, they have a balanced life; they have time for meaningful work and for their families and other passions. These qualities and values are in line with my own, but with a passion for service, I wanted to explore the extent to which dentists can make an impact on the lives of their patients before deciding to pursue a dental career.

In 2015, a medical mission team traveling to the Dominican Republic advertised for student assistants. I was only nineteen, but I fundraised for the trip and traveled alone. No experience has had such a profound impact on my life.

During this one week trip, I helped serve over 2,400 patients in a temporary clinic in Santo Domingo. While sterilizing dental instruments and taking vitals, I witnessed incredible things. Poor access to dental care was evident; many patients had few teeth, if any. Decay and infection were the norm. The people in Santo Domingo were sick and in pain. Still, they were grateful for the small things our team could do. I translated French for a man from Haiti who told me that the extraction he received would dramatically change his quality of life and ability to work.

I saw that dentists make a huge impact. After watching so many people wait hours outside in summer weather to get a tooth extracted, I knew I had found my calling in dentistry. The work dentists do dramatically affects the quality of life and overall health of their patients. I was touched by the strength and resilience of patients in the Dominican Republic. Their gratitude inspired me to tackle the problem of limited access to dental care in my own community and the world.

With this inspiration, global health policy and the pursuit of a dental career consumed my mind. The experience fueled my love for education and focus on the future. I have studied diligently and taken many opportunities to serve again, including a similar medical mission to Guatemala and an executive board member position for the Whitman County Relay for Life. These experiences have given me chances to lead, improve my skills within a team, and challenge myself to communicate with all kinds of people.

While loading each semester of my college experience with many courses and employment, I have also enriched my career with involvement in dance, recruitment, and service clubs. My family and friends are incredibly important to me, and they encourage me to keep my life balanced through everything. I work hard, but I also truly enjoy decorating gluten-free

Rachel Wittenberg  
Edspective Submission – Graduate School Application

cupcakes and rooting for the Seattle Seahawks on Sundays. Although each semester has brought on its own challenges, with the support of these caring people in my life, I have come out of each one proud of my efforts, passionate about the organizations I am a part of, and even more determined to reach my goals. I like the challenge.

Dental school will be a greater challenge, but I know that the skills I have tuned throughout my undergraduate experience to succeed along the way will make a difference. With these skills, I will tackle the coursework with dedication. With experience as a leader and working in teams, I will learn alongside my peers, communicate effectively with professors, and thrive in a care network with other professionals. I have the drive and support to succeed.

There is a need for dentists in our communities as much as there is a need throughout the world. I want to become a dentist because of the opportunity to profoundly impact people, while using the skills and practicing the balance in life that I value most.