

What are the best things about attending ECU School of Dental Medicine?

ECU School of Dental Medicine is a fairly new school, with less than 10 graduating classes thus far. Because the school is young students are able to impact the school in positive ways. Whether it be starting a new club or doing research with faculty, there are many opportunities to build a CV worth recognizing if you want to apply for a residency program.

Technology is a big push at ECU SoDM. The entire dental school runs Mac OS, so everyone will have the newest MacBook Pro and iPad Pro. One of the plumb lines of the school is to “create the most technologically competent dentists possible.” Every three years, the technology in the school is replaced with the latest and greatest. Thus, every student will be trained and prepared to use practically any dental technology after graduation. Some of this technology includes 3D scanners and printers, crown milling machines, warm-lateral condensation and surgical guide production.

The best part about the school is the Community Service-Learning Centers (CSLCs). During the 4th year of dental school, each student will rotate out to 3 locations for a few weeks at a time and learn to treat patients in a private practice setting. On average, you will see 4-6 patients a day on top of routine hygiene patients, which is more than what you see in a normal student clinic (about 3-4). These CSLCs are also placed in very diverse area of North Carolina, so the populations you are treating will come in needing all types of procedures, including root canals. extractions, crowns, fillings, etc. In short, the 4th year feels like a “built-in-residency” programs where you will acquire lots of experience and build a competitive CV before entering the workforce.

ECU SoDM does not have many residency programs, but we see this as a positive. Because we do not have the specialties here, all the complex cases for endo, ortho, OMS, perio, and prosth come down to the student clinic. We are exposed to a large variety and amount of complex cases, and we are allowed to treat them under the supervision of the faculty. Some of these cases include 3rd molar extractions, periodontal flaps, and root canals. Plus, ECU is in Greenville, NC, which is the only major medical city on the east coast of North Carolina. People from all over the area come to see us for treatment.

When it comes to affordability, ECU is in the lowest quintile for tuition and cost of attendance. The school does a great job in making the school affordable with the average debt only being around 150K in Federal Loans (numbers from 2018). By keeping the debt so low, students are able to pay it off in around 2-3 years. This means

the graduates are able to practice anywhere in North Carolina without worrying about their loans and payment plans.

Lastly, the community of ECU School of Dental Medicine is great. With the small, diverse class of 52 students per cohort, you will get to interact with everyone in your class and build strong relationships with upperclassmen. There is a big/little system in place at the school, so you will always have someone looking out for you. Since the class size is smaller, the teacher-to-student ratio is normally good. You are able to talk with your teachers without much trouble. In fact, the teachers are so involved with the students that they will take you out for dinners to get to know you more and understand how they can better serve you as their teachers. The school has a very positive atmosphere and wants you to succeed.

What are the worst things about attending ECU School of Dental Medicine?

The Program at ECU is very rigorous the first year. The speed of ECU's curriculum is incredibly fast. All basic biological classes will be completed and fulfilled by the end of D1 year. This means you will have summer classes and examinations (37 to be exact). The aim of the school is to have all required classes and skills completed by the end of third year so that you can do the CSLCs without any lingering requirements. In short, ECU is like a 3-year dental school program with a built-in residency. It will be fast paced, but there is a reason.

Since ECU is a younger school, the curriculum is still changing a bit. The school is trying to figure out the optimal teaching order for some of the classes so that the burden of learning is not so great; they are trying to make it more doable while still satisfying all the requirements for dental schools. Because of this, notes taken in one class may not be very helpful to another incoming class. As of now, we have not found this to be too impactful of our academics, but it is worth noting.

ECU is notoriously known for Yammer. Yammer is a platform where students can collaborate with each other to problem solve patient cases, ask questions, and learn to communicate on a professional level. While the purpose of Yammer has good intentions, it puts a lot of stress of the students as this platform constitutes to your overall points and rank at ECU. Students at ECU have to learn how to balance classroom learning with Yammer while not becoming too overwhelmed with either one.

What do students need to know/What do you wish you knew before attending the

ECU School of Dental Medicine?

The primary vision of ECU is to “create quality dentists for servicing rural North Carolina.” Therefore, ECU stresses not only the clinical hand skills of dentistry, but the medical diagnostic attributes as well. Coming out of ECU, you may not do a lot of research, but you will feel very competent as a dental clinician who can diagnose and treat a wide variety of patients. At times, you may even feel more like a medical physician than a dentist because of how much medicine you will be learning.

As stated above, due to the organization of the program, the first year is extremely fast and tiresome. If you can get over that hurdle, you are doing great! Students enter the clinic about halfway through their second year. Though this may be a bit later than other schools, the volume and quality of clinic we have 4th year far exceeds what we miss during the first year.