

What are the best things about attending UNC Adams School of Dentistry?

UNC has a very strong reputation in the world of dentistry, and this reputation creates high expectations for both students and faculty. Having had world-renowned leaders in various fields who authored many of the most widely used textbooks (Proffit (Ortho), Turvey (OMFS), Sturtevant (Operative Dentistry), to name a few...), there is a strong tradition. Many are attracted to UNC due to the idea of being able to learn from some of the best in the world. This reputation also provides many opportunities for students, especially in terms of specializing. Although UNC isn't necessarily focused on being a 'specializing school', its reputation does well in opening doors for students.

The culture at UNC is unique. There is a strong bond from the oldest alumni down to the current students about the privilege it is to be a 'Carolina Dentist'. The school has an incredibly cohesive, family feel. Even though UNC attracts highly competitive applicants, there is no cutthroat environment. To help enhance cohesiveness the school uses a normal grading system without +/- grading. UNC also doesn't rank by place, but rather by percentile (top 20% and top 40%). Rank is not public, and is only available by request (if planning to specialize). In the past, students outside of those two thresholds have still been successful in matching competitive programs.

It's hard to find a prestigious program that remains affordable. However, UNC is one of the few schools left that still offers in-state tuition to out-of-state students after the first year of school. This, in combination with relatively inexpensive IS tuition, makes it an exceptional value. Contrary to some states, becoming a resident in NC is not tedious and is a relatively simple process. There are also a number of scholarships provided by the NCDF, and the cost of living is relatively low.

There is a great balance of clinical strength and research experience. I wouldn't say that Carolina has the best research, nor does it have the best clinical experience. However, we would argue that it has one of the best balances of both. UNC is consistently ranked among the top 10 in research funding from the NIH, and still provides early/heavy clinical experience. Also, having every specialty at the school allows for opportunities to have other unique experiences with things like rural healthcare, international mission trips, and so forth.

Chapel Hill is regarded as one of the best college towns in America. There is a lot to do; whether it's watching UNC beat Duke, or enjoying the great food. Along with Chapel Hill, a number of students live in Durham/Raleigh, which was ranked one of the best places to live for young adults. The weather is generally fantastic (except for some hot summers), the area is beautiful, and we're situated 2 hours from both beaches, and mountains. Although the program is challenging, it's structured in a way that you will have time to enjoy all of these things.

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I find that we don't have the best basic science curriculum. The current basic science curriculum is designed to help students be successful with the dental boards. However, for students pursuing OMFS for example, we fall a little behind in terms of medical knowledge compared to some other schools. This generally means that UNC students have to study a bit more for exams like the CBSE. For those students pursuing other specialties or general practice, this doesn't really have any effect.

UNC got a new dean a couple of years ago that is currently revamping a few things with the school (specifically the curriculum). His mindset is to "Move Beyond Excellence", inferring that he hopes to make UNC the global model for dental education. The plans look great, and it seems that it will help improve the basic science curriculum. As of now, it looks like it will be a block-based curriculum that eliminates redundancies between courses and helps students see more clinical application with what they are learning in the basic sciences. Ideally, the professors will work side by side with dental faculty in presenting the material. There will also be updates with the addition of intraoral cameras, and more digital dentistry. Of course, there has been some pushback getting these changes in place as some older faculty think that things are great as they are... I note this as a negative as there will likely be some wrinkles the first year or two with a new curriculum.

Our clinical requirements could be improved (will likely be updated soon). All students are able to get their requirements taken care of, but it does depend somewhat on the proactiveness of the student (and a bit of luck). We have some students that finish early and are able to do an OMFS internship the last half of their 4th year. Whereas others are working till the end of the last semester to complete those requirements. You will never have to find patients at UNC as there is actually a lottery system to get treated at the school (too many patients). It's more so a matter of getting the right cases that you need to fulfill requirements.

What do students need to know/What do you wish you knew before attending the UNC Adams School of Dentistry?

UNC has a really unique atmosphere, and the people here are happy. It is a very challenging program (largely due to the expectations), yet they do a great job at taking care of their students. I think that many students come here because they know that it is a positive environment and that they will genuinely enjoy their time in Chapel Hill. I would highly recommend UNC to students who value the cost of their education, yet, want to keep doors open to specializing and other opportunities. As noted above, UNC is very well rounded and provides essentially every opportunity that you would find elsewhere. It's hard to say how much things will change in the coming years with the new curriculum revamp, and there may be some wrinkles at first. However, it should be a great improvement in the long-run.