

# YOUSHMANNIE SUKRAJ

(VALEDICTORIAN)



## Why did you choose Chemistry as your major?

During my time as an undergraduate student, I spent my first few semesters determining the career path I was most interested in. I recognized that I wanted to work in healthcare and to be in a field that inspired creativity and innovation. Dentistry quickly became a newfound passion and I decided majoring in Chemistry would be a great start to my academic journey. The Chemistry major included courses that were also pre-requisites to many dental schools. This ensured that I would be able to complete my degree and the dental school pre-requisites within the time frame I was hoping for while simultaneously enjoying courses that truly sparked my interest. The Chemistry major allowed me to take multiple courses which included a great amount of hands-on activity. I appreciated the complexity of the major and was fortunate to learn to from professors that were determined to share their passion for the subject.

## What is your best advice for student choosing to major in Chemistry?

Majoring in Chemistry will come with many ups and downs. It is likely that some courses will be much more difficult than others – do not let this discourage you! We are only able to grow as individuals when we are forced out of our comfort zones. Use moments of struggle to learn ways in which you can improve yourself. If you are struggling to manage the course load, studying with classmates, and attending office hours with professors is always useful. Seek out mentorship and advisement earlier on in your undergraduate career so that you may devise a plan which will help you achieve your goals. Be mindful of opportunities that exist outside of the classroom; research, internships, and volunteer work are enriching additions to your education. I would also recommend researching applicable scholarship opportunities to alleviate any financial burden pursuing your degree may pose. Most importantly, be kind to yourself during your academic journey and do not compare your progress to that of others.

## What is next for you?

After graduating with my bachelor's degree, I decided to take a gap year to begin preparing my dental school applications. This time will also be used to save up as much money as I can so that I am more financially stable when starting graduate school. I am hoping to begin my real estate investment journey by the end of this year and look forward to a year of opportunities and growth.



## Student Corner: How did you decide on pursuing a career in dentistry?

I was first exposed to the field of dentistry when I began a position as a dental assistant during my sophomore year of college. In this position I gained insights to various specialties such as pediatrics, anesthesia, endodontics, oral surgery, and cosmetic dentistry. This valuable experience led me to develop a strong passion for the field. I also volunteered at a local hospital where I provided oral hygiene education to an immigrant dense population. Through this program and my own experiences as a first-generation immigrant, I recognized the significant healthcare disparities amongst BIPOC communities resulting in neglected oral care. My goal is to become a provider that advocates for patient education and offers empathy and kindness during treatment.

