

Emily Aarons



Hey everyone, my name is Emily and I'm feeling extremely lucky to be in Asheville for a year of clinical rotations. I'm originally from Raleigh and have primarily lived in the Triangle throughout my life, so it's awesome to experience WNC.

I studied Spanish in college at Duke, where I tried to take advantage of opportunities to travel. In the realm of medicine, I am interested in working with Spanish-speaking populations and found some ways to continue doing so in the

first 2 years of med school in Chapel Hill. I'm hoping to keep using Spanish in Asheville and engage with new NC communities. Otherwise, my primary interests include bagels, Duke basketball, soccer, music/violin, dogs, and hiking (especially in Asheville).

Amanda Antono

Hi everyone! My name is Amanda Antono and I grew up in the Bay Area, California. I did my undergrad at NC State University where I studied biology and nutrition. Between undergrad and medical school, I spent time running a before-and-after-school center in Raleigh, serving in Kyrgyzstan as a Health Education Peace Corps Volunteer, and working as a research assistant for the UNC Center for AIDS Research.

I always knew I wanted to do the Asheville program because I wanted a longitudinal curriculum with a smaller cohort. I also wanted to explore my interests in primary care and rural medicine – not to mention, I love living in the mountains! Even with the ups and downs of the COVID pandemic, the staff and faculty in Asheville have been incredibly supportive! In my free time, I enjoy hiking, cooking, gardening, knitting, and keeping my houseplants alive!



Jesse Bossingham

Hey everyone! I'm happy to be a representative for Asheville. I came here as an out of state student, so did not know Asheville well, but I can't think of a better spot for riding out a pandemic.

I grew up in Wisconsin and then went to the Philadelphia area for college, where I studied political science and economics. I took a couple years off before medical school, first on a Watson Fellowship where I traveled to Ireland, the Netherlands, India, Botswana and South Africa and studied cultural, spiritual and medical understandings of death and dying around the world (documented in a blog), second working for a healthcare nonprofit in NYC. As that implies, I have an interest in palliative care and geriatrics, as well as writing about medicine.

I came to Asheville because it was the program that most supported an out of the box approach to studying medicine in third year. Kathy and Ira who lead the Ethics and Humanism curriculum are the GOATs, and have supported my outside reading and writing. The one-on-one time with attendings offers a chance to dig deep into how they think about the work they do, which has been invaluable. And what a beautiful place to be, out here in the mountains. It's so nice to be back in a place with snow.



Sydney Butler



Greetings! My name is Sydney, and I'm completing my third-year rotations at UNC's Asheville campus. I grew up outside of Washington, D.C. in Olney, MD. I studied Human Evolutionary Biology at Harvard and also received a foreign language citation in Spanish. During college, I was very active with tutoring and mentoring programs that served our surrounding communities in Boston and was on our club taekwondo team. After graduating, I worked as an Asthma Educator with the IMPACT DC Asthma Clinic at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Since starting at UNC, I've been active with our SNMA chapter, participated in the CAMPOS medical Spanish program, and traveled to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico with other medical students to complete health screenings and research projects through Proyecto Puentes de Salud.

The Asheville longitudinal program has been an excellent fit for me so far! I've enjoyed

working closely with my preceptors and attendings while learning more about the patient populations in western North Carolina. I'm still somewhat undecided on specialty, but I'm leaning toward primary care pediatrics. I'm passionate about preventative medicine and eliminating health disparities and hope to be involved with advocacy/policy work in the future as well!

Juliete Castillo-Anderson

Hi! My name is Juliete, and I'm one of the third years in Asheville for application phase! I grew up in a military family and had lived in Ft. Bragg, NC for 7 years before moving to El Paso, TX for 11 years. I did my undergrad at UT Austin and majored in Psychology, and after graduating, I moved back home to El Paso and worked as a scribe for two years before med school.

I decided to come back to North Carolina for med school to go to UNC to get a chance to come back to this area that I loved as a child. Growing up and working in El Paso and coming from a Hispanic family, working with Spanish speaking patients has always been a goal of mine that I would like to incorporate into whatever work I do. During third year so far, I've enjoyed all of my rotations and have found aspects in many fields that I enjoy.

Coming to Asheville for third year has been amazing! The mountains make me feel at home, and I've been able to explore new activities that I hadn't experienced before coming from a desert environment. I've really enjoyed getting into rafting and other water activities on the French Broad River! In addition to the great location in Asheville and the surrounding areas, being at the Asheville branch campus has allowed me to benefit from a smaller and more tight-knit learning experience. Being here has been such a great experience that has benefited my learning and personal growth in so many ways, and I can't imagine doing my third year anywhere else!



Michelle Chaffee



Hi, I'm Michelle. I've grown up across the NC Piedmont, but have never lived in the mountains, so I'm excited to be here at the Asheville program. I went to undergrad at Catawba College and my original plan was to pursue a Masters in classical vocal performance.

Ultimately, I decided a performance career was not for me and spent a few years exploring various fields trying to find my path (non-profit, software design, winery, Quality Assurance). Eventually I settled on medicine and went back to do a post-bacc at UNCG before starting medical school at UNC Chapel Hill. Definitely a non-traditional journey but it's been fun!

In my spare time I enjoy making music, hiking, playing with my cats and trying all the local restaurants. I can't pick a favorite so far; Asheville has too much good food. I'm still undecided about my future specialty, but I am strongly considering OB/GYN. I would like to work in primary

care and form strong partnerships with my patients, but love being in the OR as well. OB/GYN has a great mix of both! Although I am not entirely sure what I'll go into yet, I am truly enjoying the journey of finding out! The Asheville program creates the perfect environment for that exploration and provides outstanding support for their students.

Tyler Clay

My name is Tyler Clay and I am happy to join the Asheville campus of UNC Chapel Hill School of Medicine. I was born in Concord, North Carolina. I attended UNC Chapel Hill for undergrad, where I majored in French Literature and Biology. After graduating, I moved to Limoges, France, where I taught English to middle and high school students.

I was originally torn between pursuing further education in French literature and medical school; however, shadowing physicians in the university hospital at Limoges and viewing the care provided in a different healthcare culture and system solidified my decision to apply to medical school. I have no idea what area of medicine I want to practice, and that's okay! (Please tell me it's okay!)

My interest in the humanities has followed me into medical school, where I was privileged to serve on the UNC Hospital Ethics Committee, attend ethics consults, and discuss hospital policy updates. I have a passion for transgender health care and promotion of gender-affirming care education in medical schools and am happy to have had many opportunities to discuss and advocate for increased integration of gender-affirming care education with UNC SOM administration. I am excited about the Asheville program's flexible schedule, allowing white space to pursue all of my interests. I am fortunate to live incredibly close to the Mountains-to-Sea trail, where I walk (am pulled along by) my dog, Rhubarb, every weekend.



Bryan Dobbs

Hello soon-to-be doctors! I am Bryan Dobbs, one of the students spending application phase in Asheville. I grew up in Concord, NC (a town just outside of Charlotte) but flew off to New York City after high school to get my undergraduate degree at NYU where I studied neuroscience and music.



While in New York I got to try out all kinds of amazing things like playing gigs around the city with my music school friends and working on clinical research on neurostimulation for symptomatic management in MS, but when I decided to apply for medical school home called out to me and I am so happy to be back in NC.

In the end my decision to spend application phase at the Asheville campus was a simple one. The program seemed great, the people were lovely, and the place was beautiful. After all, it is hard to turn down a year living in Asheville. Even though COVID-19 made for a turbulent year I have had a wonderful experience here. Even during the first phases of lock-down you could escape to the many trails around the city and beyond where social distancing was as easy as could be!

Megan Foster

Asheville is home to me. I was born and raised in McDowell County, but grew up going to Asheville as a kid. It was the fun place to go. It still is. Many of my family members have been treated at Mission Hospital and now I have the opportunity to be a part of the team.

I attended Appalachian State University and pursued a degree in molecular biology. I worked as a tutor and CNA and received my phlebotomy license. I worked for a year after graduating and saved up some money for my beloved, trusty Corolla. Being a first generation student has been a challenge, and receiving my acceptance into UNC felt like quite the blessing. I enjoy anything outdoors (especially on a body of water), tennis (I am not good at all), and finding the best/coziest coffee shops (Asheville has so many).

At Asheville, I love how the longitudinal program is structured. It just makes sense. You have so much autonomy, which I found so appealing. The preceptors and residents are amazing here. Everyone is so willing to teach and are even more willing to grab a beer after clinic.

I personally have a passion for the rural and underserved, and in Asheville there are plenty of avenues to pursue in order to fulfill that passion. I do some of my outpatient rotations in Hendersonville and I have loved seeing the mom and pop shops decorated with pumpkins and advertising the numerous apple orchards open for the season. The rigorous nature of medicine is perfectly complemented by the grace and beauty of the mountains in Asheville.



Adam Glenn

Hi everyone! My name is Adam Glenn and, as you may have guessed, I am one of the 3rd year UNC students at the Asheville campus this year. I am from Conway, SC, a small town close to Myrtle Beach, SC, and did my undergraduate at USC in Columbia, SC.



One of my favorite things to do as an undergrad was to find a weekend to sneak up to Asheville and enjoy the Blue Ridge for a few nights. It's just hard to beat the mountain air up here. I studied chemical engineering at USC and worked as a medical assistant before coming to UNC for medical school. Outside of medicine I enjoy hiking, camping, playing basketball, and sharing a meal/a drink with friends. All of those interests made Asheville a very easy decision for me! Oh, and the longitudinal curriculum, wonderful administration, and one-on-one time with wonderful preceptors here helped too!

In terms of my medical interest, I find myself being drawn more and more towards working in underserved primary care and have had a great time working in some of the more rural clinics in western NC during my time at the Asheville campus. I enjoy working through medical and social issues with patients in order to help them get what they need on every level. Asheville has a little bit of everything and is a great place to spend your clinical year!

Anna Janecek

Hello! A brief life summary: I was born and raised in Columbia, SC, went to high school in New Hampshire, spent a year in Americorps in St. Louis, and moved out to Arizona to climb and work in EMS before coming right back here to the Southeast for medical school. I majored in geology and chemistry in college, and it took me a while to realize my passion was in medicine and several research labs - but I'm so glad to be here!

In my spare time (which actually is more than I thought!) you'll find me climbing, reading, trail running, and maybe catching up on my Anki deck. The man in pink is my husband, who I met while climbing in California. He's quite a catch.

I fell in love with the mountains around Asheville the first time I went climbing out here, and so Asheville was an obvious choice for my third year. Longitudinal care is great - I've already gotten to follow a mom from her prenatal visits all the way to delivery day! The team out here is phenomenal, and help me through all my blundering.



Lucas John

Hey everyone! My name is Lucas John, and I am a Family Medicine FIRST student at MAHEC. I attended UNC-Chapel Hill, graduating in 2016 with a Bachelor's in Psychology. While in college, I gave tours for prospective undergrad students, served as a counselor for Camp Kesem, and helped found UNC's chapter of Be The Match on Campus. Outside of school, I was a member of the Summit Church, which offered opportunities for personal growth and service in the community. It was during my undergrad studies that I developed a passion for mental health. The integration of behavioral health in all aspects of medicine along with the privilege of being able to connect with patients on a physical, mental, and spiritual level as a physician steered me towards pursuing primary care.



Having spent some time in Asheville prior to Application Phase through the FIRST program, I can personally attest to the excellent quality of education at the Asheville campus. The white space time offers an underrated amount of flexibility for individual curricular opportunities, research, studying/assignments, or even personal free time. I have utilized white space

to attend family medicine procedure clinic, do extra ED shifts, experience rural medicine, and follow my preceptor into Mission for deliveries. By having your core rotations longitudinally, you benefit from the spaced repetition of clinical experiences. In addition, you can build long-term relationships with your preceptors and patients. In many cases, this allows you to attend specialist visits with you patients or follow them into the hospital during your white space time. My decision to choose the Asheville Campus extends beyond Application Phase as it is also where I will be doing my residency training. MAHEC is a pioneer in providing healthcare to underserved populations in western North Carolina as well as offering support to primary care practices in their region. They have statewide and national leaders in addiction medicine and Point of Care Ultrasound. Finally, the core campus faculty here truly go above and beyond to stay in contact, make sure you are completing assignments, and guide you through your career decisions.

Ultimately, the decision to come to Asheville has been rewarding in both an academic and personal way. The city has everything to offer when it comes to enjoying yourself outside of school. It has everything you'd want from a city in terms of food, breweries, music venues, etc., all while being surrounded by a wide range of outdoor activities. I couldn't be more fortunate than to spend Application Phase in such a great city surrounded by such great people!

Kelsey Keverline



Hey! I'm Kelsey. My family is from Pittsburgh, PA. I was born my mom's first year of medical school and she couldn't afford childcare, so she had to take me to all her lectures. My family loves to joke that this is my second go-around of med school.

I am so excited to be a part of the Asheville program because I love the outdoors. I am a big whitewater kayaker and even before I came to UNC, I spent a lot of time in Western NC kayaking the Nantahala River. Before med school I studied Public Policy and Biology at the University of Virginia. I also worked as a bartender, coffee shop barista, apartment cleaner, ophthalmic technician, yoga teacher, haunted house actor, semi-professional comedian, and emergency medicine scribe.

My professional interests include reproductive justice and care for Spanish speaking populations. I am someone who changes my mind every day about what I want to do when I grow up but I know that I love hospitals and I want my future career to be primarily inpatient-based. Feel free to reach out if you have any

questions about how to get the most out of the Asheville program even if you know you want to be an inpatient physician!

Maria Mongo

Hey everyone! Originally from New Jersey, I grew up in Wilmington, North Carolina where I also went to undergrad at UNCW. I studied biology and psychology because my professors were amazing and I wanted to keep learning from them!

After undergrad I took two gap years where I worked in a pediatric clinic which specializes in children with neurodevelopmental disorders. There, I discovered that I wanted to continue in the medical field so I applied to UNC School of Medicine. I was conflicted when deciding between branch campuses, especially since my hometown of Wilmington was an option. However, I ultimately decided to come to Asheville, and I can say I definitely made a great choice!



The program has been wonderful, everyone on staff, including those with MAHEC and in Mission are dedicated to student learning. It has also been so nice to live in the mountains! I have enjoyed going hiking and having so many things to do. At this point I am unsure what I want to specialize in, but I am excited for the rest of my rotations and to see where I eventually end up.

Arunima Punjala

Hi everyone! My name is Arunima and I am thrilled to be a student in the Asheville campus program! I was born in India, but spent the majority of my life growing up in North Carolina. I graduated with a BSPH in Nutrition from UNC's Gillings School of Global Public Health.

My main reason for choosing Asheville campus was to explore, serve, and learn from Western North Carolina physicians and patients. Having studied health disparities rural and minority populations face during my public health education, I aim to make a difference for these groups as a future physician. The Asheville program has been such an incredible decision for me, and I highly recommend exploring branch campuses to all medical students.



One of the best parts of being a learner here is the individualized attention students receive from preceptors. All of my preceptors have been eager to teach by providing many hands-on experiences for students. I'm also looking forward to the longitudinal curriculum where I can continue to tailor my learning and form long-term relationships with my patients. While COVID has made it difficult to explore Asheville to the extent I originally hoped, I am eternally grateful for all the outdoor hikes and nature scenery

nearby. A huge perk of rotating here is that MAHEC and Mission Hospital have breathtaking views of the mountains that I feel blessed to enjoy every day.

As the Asheville Campus Representative this year, please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions about the program! No matter what your interests in medicine are, goals for future practice, or hobbies outside of school, Asheville is sure to provide you with an excellent, high-quality education and fulfilling third year experience.

Jared Sain

Hey everybody,

My name is Jared and I have really enjoyed spending my third year here in Asheville. I am from Morganton, NC, which is a quick drive down the mountain on I-40 East. I went to UNC for my



undergraduate degree and majored in Religious Studies. In my free time I like to play the guitar, go for runs, talk endlessly about trucks and work with my hands.

Asheville's proximity to my family was a big draw, but I also appreciated the opportunity to work in tight knit teams, have more hands on experience and get more flexibility in my schedule to tailor to my interests. Asheville is not only an awesome place to learn, but also an awesome place to live. It has lots of interesting places to eat, great trails to hike and cool sights to see! I am also partial to the culture, heritage and folks of Western North Carolina, so that has been an added bonus.

Overall, Asheville has more than lived up to my high expectations!

Kacey Scott

My name is Kacey, and I'm one of the UNC MS3s and Kenan Rural Scholars fortunate to call Asheville home!

I previously worked as a clinical librarian at MAHEC and decided to more directly apply my love of medicine by becoming a doctor. I was thrilled to return to the mountains for my third and fourth years of medical school! The longitudinal format of the Asheville program is a unique opportunity that allows students to develop lasting relationships with patients and encourages focus on the pursuit of healthy work/life balance and community engagement.



After graduation, I hope to focus on rural women's health and eventually practice in the mountains one day. When not at the hospital, I enjoy spending time with my husband Josh and our cat Lily, our dogs Dobby and Zeb, cooking, gardening, visiting family and friends, and enjoying our beautiful Western North Carolina home.

Misha Sims



Hi everyone! My name is Misha and I'm a third-year medical student at UNC SOM Asheville Campus! I was born in Lexington, KY, but the age of 20 months moved to Cary, NC. So, for all intents and purposes, I'm a North Carolinian through and through, and love it!

I attended Bryn Mawr College for undergrad, where I majored in Geochemistry. While I enjoyed Philadelphia, upon graduating I immediately moved back to North Carolina and worked on groundwater remediation projects and as a food pantry coordinator for Urban Ministries of Wake County. I love soccer, hiking, biking, kayaking and Asheville's wineries with amazing views. Asheville's friendly, holistic, and cooperative vibe is exactly the community I want to learn from.

Reyanne Strong

I hail from the Southern Tier of New York but consider myself a Tarheel since my Buffalo Bills Blue faded in 2013 when I came south for UNC undergrad. Since then I've expanded my Old North State presence to its medicine and mountains, and am now pursuing my dream of becoming a surgeon, and more broadly a leader within medicine.

When I'm not suturing in the OR, you can find me threading the needle between the trees of Bent Creek on my mountain bike or stitching together home-cooked meals amongst friends here in Asheville. Cold, frothy IPAs, smooth pour-over coffees, and insta-famous foodie restaurants are among my favorite things, making Asheville a great fit for me. I'm constantly trying to spend as much free time as possible doing outdoor adventures, making the minutes count instead of counting the minutes.



Chase Thompson



Hi y'all, my name is Chase Thompson! I am thrilled to be spending my third year in Asheville. I am originally from Shelby, NC, so Asheville feels like home. I went to North Carolina State University and graduated in 2016. After graduation I traveled and did various mission work before moving to Cary, NC, where I worked as a medical assistant.

There are so many reasons why Asheville was my top choice for third year. It is the most beautiful city and has a diverse group of people. I feel extremely fortunate and happy to be here.

Rebecca Varnell



Hi everyone! I'm Rebecca. I was born and raised in Winston-Salem, NC. I ventured to the Midwest for undergrad at Kenyon College, where I majored in International Studies. At Kenyon, I spent the majority of my time in the dance studio, very far away from pre-med coursework.

I first became interested in pursuing a job in healthcare after spending a portion of my junior year around Tucson, Arizona and El Paso, Texas. While I was there, I met a handful of healthcare providers who completely changed my perception of what medicine could look like and started me on a somewhat meandering path that led to UNC SOM. Highlights of foundation phase for me were being part of CAMPOS, becoming involved with Medical Students for Choice, and working with the Gender Affirming Care Clinic at SHAC.

I had lived in Asheville for a little over a year prior to medical school and was excited by the opportunity to come back to western NC for Application Phase. Some other factors that went into my decision to come to Asheville were a smaller cohort, fewer learners at the hospital, and a longitudinal curriculum that offered the opportunity to hopefully really get to know patients and preceptors in the outpatient setting. Our schedule has been shaken up a bit by COVID, but I have been grateful for the support from MAHEC administration and so far have had overwhelmingly positive interactions with residents and attendings.

Outside of med school, I love to hike, camp, and ride my bike when I am feeling brave against the big hills. I have a failing vegetable garden and a fish that I co-parent with fellow-MS3 Emily Aarons named Jimmy John "The Rock" Johnson. He is celebrating his one month birthday this week and is meeting all developmental milestones! Asheville has offered seemingly endless opportunities for outdoor adventure during this otherwise shut down time, and I am incredibly grateful to be living in such an awesome place.

Sahana Venkatesh

Hey everyone, my name is Sahana, and I'm one of the MS3s in Asheville for Application Phase! I grew up in Raleigh, NC before going to Texas for undergrad where I studied Biology at UT Dallas. I always knew I wanted to go into medicine, but took some time in undergrad to explore other interests – from primate behavior to peacebuilding.

After graduating, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to return to NC for med school. I had found a strong interest in global health during undergrad, and really enjoyed getting more involved with this work at UNC. During foundation phase, I worked with the Refugee Community Partnership, N-648 clinics, and spent the summer studying traditional medicine in north India. I have always loved the mountains of western NC, so when I heard we had the option to move to Asheville for a year, I was very excited to join! Now, several months into application phase, I can say that the longitudinal program, the smaller cohort, and the strong support from program staff have all been incredible. When not at the hospital, I love hiking to the many waterfalls in the area, trying new restaurants, and exploring Asheville with friends. During my time here, I've also found a new love of pediatrics and look forward to pursuing peds or med-peds in the future!



McKensie Wall



Hey friends! I'm McKensie, one of the fortunate MS3s who gets to call Asheville home during clinical rotations! I grew up in Lexington, NC, a smaller town east of Asheville. I attended UNC-Chapel Hill for undergrad where I studied biology and psychology. After college, I spent two gap years working as a CNA at a nursing home near my hometown. It was this experience that solidified my desire to pursue medicine, thus began my journey to medical school!

As soon as I learned about Asheville being an option for clinical rotations, there was no question what my number one choice would be! Thus far, I have loved my time in Asheville and am very grateful for the compassionate preceptors and patients who shape my education every day. The small student-to-faculty ratio Asheville offers has allowed me to have hands-on experiences that I know I would not have experienced elsewhere. When not in clinic, I enjoy all the outdoor activities Asheville has to offer. I also love how dog-friendly Asheville is and my dog, Homer, is most definitely a fan!

Nadiya Yerich



Hi everyone, my name is Nadiya! I'm originally from Ukraine, and immigrated to Colorado as a kid. I lived in CO for almost a decade and then relocated to NC in high school. Afterward, I attended East Carolina University where I double majored in Public Health Studies and Religious Studies. I was then accepted into the Air Force Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP) and came straight through from college to UNC SOM.

I chose to come to the Asheville campus for my MS3 year because I just missed the Colorado mountains and great outdoors so much! I absolutely love the nature scenery up here in Western NC - my dog and I go on so many nature walks and hikes now (at least on the outpatient rotations). A group of us at the Asheville campus also got Biltmore annual passes, and go on walks there regularly. If you haven't been, the gardens are beautiful and there are so many places for trail running or biking.

Aside from the outdoors, the Asheville campus also allows such one-on-one contact with preceptors which has been pivotal in helping me decide on a specialty! The longitudinal curriculum allowed me to explore every primary care field within the first 2 months of third year, and now I am already on my inpatient rotations in my third month! I am leaning towards specializing in orthopedics, and it has been so amazing to work one-on-one with 6 of the orthopedists here in their ORs in just my first week on inpatient. The administrative support at this campus is also truly incredible. I have been able to reach out for guidance on any question I have and have been met with very helpful, individualized responses. If I were to re-select campuses, I would still definitely choose Asheville! Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions at all!