

Tarun Sontam

UGST 181

Personal Statement

When I first applied to Texas A&M University, I was sure that I wanted to enter the pre-med track, but I had no idea of how I wanted my undergraduate experience to be. I applied for the University Honors program quite frankly because I thought it would improve my resume for medical schools. Looking back, I am surprised to see just how enriching my time in University Honors has been.

In my original essay, I said that I was interested in University Honors in order to “develop a strong foundation that will serve for life, not just a living.” Such has been the case during my freshman year, as I was able to greatly develop crucial interpersonal skills that were very weak during high school. Living in McFadden Hall was a great experience for me, and while I was never able to spark a friendship with my roommate, I made many good friends on my floor. During family meetings, I made a concerted effort to speak up as much as possible, as I knew the family meeting environment was a friendly and collaborative one. I learned to accept different people’s perspectives, as all of us come from different cultures and backgrounds, and I expanded upon skills like listening and empathy during our conversations on various topics. My first year in the University Honors setting has reinforced my passion for medicine, as I was able to make friends with other like-passionate students and learn about the crucial concepts of advocacy and serving the community in which everyone is indebted to. As per major coursework, it did not have a significant effect on how I approached my first year in Honors, given that many students in the program are also pursuing the pre-med track. In fact, most of my friends I have met in my pre-med classes are University Honors students. Their input has changed the way I have approached my undergraduate career here at Texas A&M (for example - which professors and classes to take, what research labs are best, where to shadow in College Station, etc.). That said, while the courses I took were not impacted by the Honors Program, the way I approached them did. Key skills like time management and note taking emphasized in

family meetings and house meetings changed the way I studied for these classes and how I balanced my academic and social life. The emphasis on research in Honors has also motivated me to look for labs to join, as before I was never truly interested in research. Now, I realize how crucial research is for medicine, and I am interested in completing a capstone in research in order to further my experience.

Of course, while reminiscing is very important, looking ahead is just as, if not more, important. Because of the Honors Program, I have been able to establish clear goals and personal values that will guide me for the rest of my time here at Texas A&M, in medical school, and for life as a whole. I look to get more involved in extracurriculars while participating more in the extracurriculars I am already in so that I can continue to build my network of relationships. Academically, I want to take more classes that will challenge me not only on an academic level, but on an intellectual level where I have to look beyond the concepts taught in class and see how I can apply them to my life and for society. I want my signature work to reflect my intellectual curiosity and personal values of time, family, and serving the community. While this may be difficult to express in such a technical field like research, I hope to build upon my research experience and make it more personable. To me, a “life well-lived” is one where I can enjoy with my family and work for the betterment of society. People should remember my legacy long after my death, and that is what constitutes a good, impactful life. My goal of serving the community has solidified my passion for medicine, while my personal values of family, empathy, and time will continue to shape who I am as a human being. After all, medicine is only part of who I aspire to become; more importantly, I want to be someone that people can rely on at any time. Of course, the path ahead will have obstacles, whether it be related to my real world problem of sports injuries or personal difficulties that come ahead. Challenges like balancing work and life will persist regardless of whether I continue my path in medicine or switch to another career, but making sure that I have established my personal values will help in combating these problems.

Overall, my time in the University Honors Program has been a great one for me to better who I am as a person. I hope to get more involved the next few years at Texas A&M, and I know I will carry the lessons I have learned during this time for the rest of my life.