

Accepted Medicine, start Fall 2025

Jada Nelsen

Class of 2021

Biochemistry and Molecular Biology



I grew up on a small farm near Worthington, a rural town in southwestern Minnesota. Living in a medically underserved area shaped my perspective on healthcare from an early age.

I chose Gustavus Adolphus College because it offered the perfect combination of academic challenge, community, and a strong foundation in the sciences. Several of my high school classmates had attended and spoke highly of their time at Gustavus, which gave me confidence that it would be a place where I could thrive. The smaller class sizes allowed me to build meaningful relationships with my professors and classmates. I felt seen and supported throughout my time there. Gustavus felt like home, not only because of its proximity to Worthington but because of the sense of belonging I found on campus.

During my years at Gustavus, I discovered how science, service, and leadership could come together in powerful ways. I did not arrive on campus knowing I wanted to become a doctor. That decision came through many moments of reflection and hands-on experiences in research, shadowing, studying abroad, volunteering, and working in various healthcare roles. These moments allowed me to see both the beauty and complexity of patient care and confirmed that medicine, and specifically becoming a physician, was the right path for me.

My journey to being accepted into medical school took time, persistence, and resilience. It took two application cycles before I was accepted, but each step along the way helped shape me into a stronger candidate. During my four gap years, I gained invaluable experiences and continued evolving into a better version of myself. I worked as a medical assistant in both orthopedics and internal medicine. I witnessed the realities of healthcare up close and learned the importance of collaboration within care teams. I also lived in North Carolina and Texas, which broadened my understanding of how healthcare systems and patient needs vary across different regions. Along the way, I found joy in new hobbies like golf, running, and raising a chocolate lab, which taught me the importance of balance and personal fulfillment. By the time I reapplied, I felt confident and fully prepared to demonstrate to admissions committees that I was ready to begin my training to become a physician. That sense of clarity and purpose made all the difference.

Throughout my pre-med journey, the Office of Health Professions at Gustavus was a constant source of support. Heather Banks and her team helped me identify the areas where I needed to grow and gave thoughtful feedback on my application materials. They were there to answer questions, offer encouragement, and remind me to keep moving forward, even when I doubted myself. Their support continued even after graduation. They were truly invested in my success, and that made the process feel far less overwhelming.

Looking back, I can say with certainty that Gustavus was the right choice for me. It gave me the academic foundation, personal support, and meaningful relationships that helped shape the person I am today. The Office of Health Professions was one of the many reasons I felt prepared to pursue medical school. Their guidance helped me find my place in medicine.

To any future Gustie thinking about a career in healthcare, know that you will be supported every step of the way. Take your time, explore your interests, and trust the process. Your path may not look like anyone else's, and that is more than okay. Sometimes the longer road gives you exactly what you need to succeed.

Top Five Activities/Experiences: (in no particular order)

1. Working as a medical assistant
2. January Interim Pre-Health Career Exploration at the Mankato Clinic
3. Volunteering with Caring Hands

4. Gustavus Dance Team
5. Study abroad to Tanzania

Advice:

1. **Don't feel rushed to go straight through.** Taking a gap year, or several, does not set you back. I took four, and those years were filled with experiences that helped me grow personally and professionally. I gained clinical experience in different states, learned more about myself, and even found a new passion for golf. Trust your own pace. This journey is not a race. Everything will happen when it should.
2. **Explore passions outside of medicine.** Having outlets like dance and golf helped me recharge and avoid burnout while studying. Medical schools are looking for well-rounded individuals, not just future physicians who live and breathe academics. These interests make you a more resilient and balanced person.
3. **Your "why" doesn't have to be a single moment.** It's okay if your motivation to pursue medicine came from a series of experiences instead of one big lightbulb moment. What matters is that your path reflects growth, purpose, and a genuine passion for helping others through healthcare.

Future:

Attending University of Minnesota Duluth campus starting Fall of 2025. My current specialty interests are pediatrics (neonatologist), dermatology, and OBGYN.