

Use the space provided to explain why you want to go to medical school. The available space for your response is 5300 characters, or approximately one full page.

Although I am the child of a doctor, I have not always known that I would too seek a career in medicine. In fact, my decision to apply to medical school evolved very recently from three primary experiences. I will discuss each in the context of a specific event: killing a crayfish, walking away from a six-year-old child, and crawling like a salamander.

As a freshman, I had not quite mastered the art of pipetting. I pressed my thumb down too quickly and expelled nearly twice as much epinephrine onto the crayfish heart as the BIO101 laboratory manual instructed. Instantaneously, the pumping heart beat faster and faster. Before my lab partner and I could uncap the GABA, our crayfish's heart suddenly stopped altogether and our TA told us to 'call it.' I must admit that my grief for our crayfish was overcome by astonishment at his cause of death. While I had dutifully read the lab manual's discussion of neurohormones, I was unprepared to witness their function in such a tangible capacity. Simple displays of the application of science such as this have driven me to pursue a major in Biological Sciences at Notre Dame.

In high school, I enjoyed learning new mathematical functions, biological mechanisms, and explanations for the way everyday things work. I especially loved finding connections between my classes, and these glimpses of the 'big picture' motivated me to learn more. At Notre Dame, my love of the feeling of discovery in the sciences heightened as classes became more difficult, more in depth, and more specific. My research experience, working in the Sukumar and Hyde laboratories and for the Journal of Young Investigators, has also enhanced this appreciation and provided a structured outlet for my curiosity. Thus, to elaborate on my budding quest for knowledge, it seemed appropriate that I should pursue a Ph.D. to conduct research following graduation – that is, until I walked away from a six-year-old child.

It was the last day of my summer service project at Hibiscus House, a temporary shelter for abused children. One little boy frequently called me “Mommy,” and although I corrected him every time, I cannot deny that I felt a slight maternal bond with him. I had saved his goodbye for last. When he saw me approaching, he ran over to me and jumped into my arms to hug me. So innocently he asked, “Are you leaving for good?” I told him that I had to go back to school. As he slid out of my arms and hugged my legs, he began to sniffle. Then he began whimpering, “Don’t go, Mommy. Please don’t go, Mommy.” I crouched down, assured him that I would never forget him, and walked away from that six-year-old child before he could see I was crying too.

This little boy had been at Hibiscus for nearly three months without receiving a single visit from a family member or a friend. Just as I had started to develop a healthy relationship with him based on love and trust, I had to leave. I feared that my leaving may have negated all the effort that went into forming this relationship, that he thought I was now abandoning him too, as everyone else in his life had done. I had driven 18 hours down to Stuart, Florida because I felt a restlessness to serve. I left eight weeks later feeling immensely more restless with the knowledge that no act of service is ever enough or ever complete.

After I had traveled away from that six-year-old child all the way back to school in Indiana, all of my career goals directed me toward medical school. As a physician, I would be able to serve others while simultaneously entertaining my enjoyment of science and learning. Crawling like a salamander merely affirmed my decision to apply.

I lay on the ground. “You are a salamander,” my modern dance teacher informed us. With hesitation, I reached my right hand and right leg up, pulled myself forward, and then did the same with my left hand and left leg. I did what I was told, but uncomfortably – after all, I was

a junior in college, becoming more grown-up and serious every day. After glancing around at the awkward movements and smiles of my classmates, however, I laughed at my self-consciousness and started crawling like a salamander full speed ahead. Gradually, my classmates did the same until we all fell over in laughter.

While my ballet and modern dance classes in high school focused primarily on technique, theory and philosophy of dance became important at the collegiate level. For me, this has brought awareness of the tradition of dance as a communal ritual, practiced universally as a celebration of humanity and of life. Simple exercises such as crawling like a salamander have demonstrated this capacity of dance as my classmates and I affirmed and enjoyed each other through movement. As I wiggled across the floor, I also realized that dance is accessible to everyone because the dancer's instrument is the human body. This property roots the art form in the commonality of all people, in physicality, and consequently, in science.

It was there, crawling like a salamander, that I found the interface of my interests and goals. I saw that the function of the body – to move, to dance, to love, to learn – is the most basic human attribute. The healing of the human body is therefore the most fundamental form of service one can offer another human. I want to go to medical school so that I might pursue such a noble career. And perhaps someday, my healing will give someone else the chance to enjoy crawling like a salamander. (5,468 characters)