

# Student Profile: Alana Campbell

## **Year in School:**

I graduated in May 2021 with my B.S. in Physiology.

## **If graduated-Where are you now:**

I am currently a first year medical student enrolled in the M.D. program at Rosalind Franklin University in Chicago.



## **Why you chose SIUC Department of Physiology for undergrad:**

I chose SIUC Department of Physiology because I believed their program was the best fit for my educational expectations and my goals to get into medical school. There are not many schools that offer a degree in Physiology so I felt lucky to have an opportunity to start learning about human physiology as an undergraduate. In addition to the classes themselves, I liked how SIUC had unlimited extracurricular activities for me to participate in that would further facilitate my learning and prepare me for the next step in my education.

## **Favorite PHSL class and why:**

I thoroughly enjoyed all of the PHSL classes. The PHSL classes offered at SIUC are very unique undergraduate classes that I was so lucky to be able to take. The basic anatomy course was one of my favorites (PHSL 301) because you get the opportunity to learn on cadavers.

## **Favorite extracurricular activities (undergraduate research, clubs, etc) and why:**

My two favorite extracurricular activities that I participated in while a student at SIUC were research and teaching. I did research in Dr. Phil Jensik's lab in the Physiology department. Research forces you to think about the material you are learning in a critical way and use it to solve research questions. While I was in the lab I participated in REACH which allowed me to work on an individual project. Watching the project evolve from a simple question at the beginning to a poster summarizing a year's worth of my research was incredibly rewarding. Research allows you to work closely with faculty, explore your interests, and gain critical thinking skills that help you apply what you learn in class to situations outside of the classroom. I highly encourage everyone to try research even if it is just for a short period of time.

I also had the opportunity to teach within the physiology department twice as a teaching assistant for the basic anatomy course. As a TA, I was responsible for overseeing the learning of students in the cadaver lab. I really enjoyed this opportunity because I was able to revisit material I had previously learned and build leadership skills, simultaneously.

## **Secret Weapon for Success:**

A secret weapon for success is to get involved with the physiology faculty as much as possible. They are your most accessible and most valuable resource. There are so many amazing opportunities to work with faculty that you might miss if you don't reach out to them. They are also so encouraging and truly want the best for their students. Never be afraid to ask them

questions or ask if you can participate in an academic project they may be working on. They have all been in your shoes before and have years of wisdom that can be very valuable. For a majority of physiology students, undergrad is a stepping stone to graduate school. Having faculty within the program that you can rely on while you navigate that process is the biggest tool for success. Take advantage of it!

### **Best Advice for future Physiology majors:**

The Physiology program is challenging but also very rewarding. From my experience as a first year medical student, the curriculum sets you up for success in whatever path you may choose after graduating from SIU. I started my M.D. program with solid foundational knowledge in basic sciences and human physiology that has made my learning easier. Advice I would always share with prospective students when I gave campus tours is that the opportunities an academic program offers outside of the classroom are just as important if not more important than the classes themselves. Taking advantage of academic programs such as teaching and research, etc. enhances any learning you may be doing in the classroom. In addition, getting involved in areas outside of your academic program allows you to explore your interests, learn about yourself, and form connections with other students and faculty that may last a lifetime. The best part of being a Saluki is you have the opportunity to get involved in literally anything you want and those experiences are priceless. You want to get involved in activities that you thoroughly enjoy, not just because you think it will help you check a box for admissions to graduate school. Being able to talk about memorable experiences and how they impacted you regardless of what they are is way more important. Most physiology students go to graduate school, so I cannot emphasize enough how important quality is vs quantity. Not only will doing things you enjoy make your interviews better, they will also make your time as a SIU student more enjoyable. If you do not prioritize time in your schedule for yourself to have fun you will burn out. Enjoy these four years while you can because they go fast and they really are the best years of your life!! Take advantage of as many opportunities as you can. Don't be afraid to try something new, you might actually like it.

**If you have any questions about the physiology program, medical school, or anything else related feel free to reach me at [alana.campbell@my.rfums.org](mailto:alana.campbell@my.rfums.org)! Good luck, you got this; Go Dawgs!!**