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SHU Occupational Therapy Graduate Program Essay

June 13, 2023

When I was in high school, family and friends always asked me what I wanted my career to be once I started applying to colleges. My answer always was “I am not sure. I know I want to pursue a career where I can help the people around me”. This response first stems from my desire to pursue a career in occupational therapy. Many of the life lessons, experiences, and people I have been so grateful to encounter have led me to this point in my decision to apply for the Occupational Therapy program at Sacred Heart University.

In my junior year of high school, I was fortunate to get the opportunity to shadow an occupational therapist at a local elementary school. I had high expectations for the career, but I didn’t realize how inspiring it would be. Although I was only able to observe her work, I was eager to jump in and do it myself. That was the moment I knew this was what I was meant to do with my professional career. I went home that day filled with hope that the college I would choose would be one where I would not only earn a degree but also gain the experience and knowledge to become the best occupational therapist I wished to be. When I came across Sacred Heart University and the program they offered, I knew this was something I needed to explore. I did research, spoke to admissions and alumni, and attended open houses and virtual sessions. Once I received the acceptance letter, I was sure this was the path I needed to head down. Ever since then, Sacred Heart has given me nothing but assurance that my education is being solidified in the most positive ways. I know with the support of the university, my professors, and the classes I am taking, I am bound to succeed in this career.

Growing up in a family dedicated to healthcare, I was surrounded by an environment that would teach me the value of helping others. Values such as passion, drive, and kindness were always the mottos my parents, brother, and I pushed for one another. I am thankful I grew up in a household such as this because they continue to motivate me to do better each day. They do this not only with my educational and professional goals but my personal goals as well. Since the age of three, I dedicated a lot of my time to dancing at a dance studio. During that time, I danced competitively for 12 years and gained experience in terms of patience, practice, and confidence. Dance has allowed me to open a part of myself that is vulnerable but also filled with strength. As the years have gone on, I have been able to put that strength into other parts of my life that include other passions I have, my education, and long-term professional goals. I want to continue to put those positive breakthroughs into practice as an occupational therapist to teach others how to put their strengths into working to achieve their goals, whether it is through rehabilitation or human development.

With occupational therapy being at the forefront of my future professional career, I believe getting experience in a similar field would be beneficial. Two years ago, I got certified to be a pool lifeguard at a local country club. I loved this job and was ready to get recertified after my two-year certification expired. However, I failed the recertification by four seconds. Although I was deeply upset for a day or two, I took it as a sign that there needed to be a change. Immediately, I applied to multiple jobs and believed it was time to find one that would allow me to receive experience within healthcare. Two weeks later, I started working at a physical therapy office as a physical therapy aide. The job allowed me to build relationships with patients, guide them through exercises, and provide other interactive acts of care as needed. Ever since then, I am so glad I failed that recertification test. It taught me that failure comes in all shapes and sizes,

but it is how we decide to deal with them afterward that matters. Now, I am in love with this job and look forward to walking into work each day with something new to learn.

Many of the life lessons, experiences, and people I have been so grateful to encounter have led me to this point in my decision to apply for the Occupational Therapy program at Sacred Heart University. A motto I always follow and never seem to stray from is “Everything happens for a reason.” Whether I encounter something positive or negative, I try to look at it as though this is just a part of the path I am supposed to be on. The first time someone asked me what I wanted my career to be once I started applying to colleges was only the beginning of the direction of my life filled with hopes, dreams, and a drive for a passion I know will become a beautiful reality.