



BMS student profile

Aitana
Sandoval

Graduate
student

When are you expecting to finish your Master's degree and what took you on that path?

I'm expecting to finish my Master's this spring. I transferred to CCSU around the same time that I decided a career in medicine wasn't what I wanted. I was floundering a little when some faculty and students encouraged me to explore more of the courses and research opportunities in the BMS department. The BMS department as a whole and the chemistry department were both incredibly welcoming and I got a chance to try out research in different labs and get hands-on experience on what benchwork was like. Research can be frustrating at times, but I really enjoy it--it's always amazing. It's been those experiences that led me to choose a career in science.

What kind of advice do you have for any CCSU BMS majors who want to go to grad or medical school?

Okay three pieces of advice!

1. Talk to faculty! I know it can feel awkward initially, but all of the BMS professors are really nice. Having a teacher you feel comfortable asking for advice is really helpful.
2. Show up to class prepared and ready to engage! Especially in your intro classes, getting a strong understanding of the foundational material will help you forever. The best way to do that is to put in work outside of school so you're prepared to learn all you can in class. Don't be afraid to ask for help or ask questions!
3. Pick a lab and get started with research as soon as possible! The seminars are a great way to find out about your options, as are other students.

For those who want to go to med school—take care of yourself! You already know the importance of grades, hospital experience, and preparing for the MCAT. Equally important is making sure you're emotional and physically prepared for another 6+ years of intense work. Build good habits around sleep, nutrition, and stress relief now and it will 100% help in the future.

For those who want to go to grad school- DO RESEARCH ASAP!!! Getting an understanding of what research is really like day to day will show you if you'll enjoy doing it for years in a Master's or PhD. There are many different types of science careers, explore all your options.

How did COVID interrupt your academic progress and how have you been since the return to on-campus learning? Do you have any advice for students still adjusting?

I really struggled to finish my last credits of undergrad when we went online during the start of the pandemic. It's gotten better, but it's still tough honestly. Personally, I find online learning hard, I'm much more likely to put off the work or pay less attention. I think that creating study groups is a great way to get both social interaction and ensure you study in an online class.