

Personal Statement

I can still remember dissecting frogs and grasshoppers in my middle school science class. While others were afraid and sickened by the thought of cutting them open, I was already grabbing the scalpel and scissors to begin the dissection. The art of dissection and the anatomy of my specimen just fascinated me. This fascination only intensified during anatomy lab in medical school when I worked with my first human cadaver. I remember being in the lab for hours after my classmates had left because I was so intrigued and I wanted my work to be perfect. Since then I knew I wanted to be a surgeon.

It was not until my clinical rotations when I realized I wanted to be a general surgeon. In a medical world where everything is becoming more and more specialized, including the various fellowships available to surgeons, my general surgery attending epitomized the general surgeon. He performed a wide array of surgeries—everything from laparoscopic appendectomies, cholecystectomies, and lung lobectomies, to open colectomies, thyroidectomies, and AV fistulas, to name a few. The vast amount of knowledge and skill required to perform surgeries involving many different organs and systems was unbelievable and something that I strive for in my practice.

Growing up on a small farm in rural South Dakota, I have acquired the traits of determination, hard work, responsibility, and compassion that will help me to succeed as a general surgeon. It was through helping my dad raise cattle, corn, and soybeans on our farm that I learned hard work and determination. It was from observing my mom, a radiology technician at a rural hospital, from whom I learned the compassion and kindness that I now demonstrate to my own patients. Finally, it was my general surgery clinical rotation that further strengthened these traits.

In my surgery rotation, I was able to actively participate in the pre-op, intra-operative, and post-op care of the patients. I would perform H&Ps on patients in clinic and in pre-op so I had an understanding of them as a person and their condition. In my surgery clerkship I was able to scrub-in and actively participate in over 80 cases. I was often second assist where I frequently ran the laparoscopic camera and closed the incisions. I was even able to first assist on a handful of cases, like AV fistulas. Learning how to run the camera and close incisions was initially very difficult and frustrating for me. Through hard work and determination I was able to become much more proficient at these tasks throughout my rotation. Post-operatively I was often able to see the patient at their follow-up clinic appointment where I could see their progress and help answer questions they had.

It is through a lifelong acquisition of skills like determination, hard work, responsibility, and compassion, along with my fascination of human anatomy and surgical skills, which drives me to become a general surgeon. In the future, I hope I will be able to serve as a mentor and teach some of the traits I have acquired to future medical students and general surgeons.