

My career aspirations have always centered around my passion for public service. Initially, I aspired to provide healthcare to underserved individuals and communities. I visioned becoming a healthcare provider to serve through various avenues such as Doctors without Borders, practicing in community health clinics, and providing free healthcare to individuals who cannot afford it. However, through my educational journey and work/life experiences, I learned that my interests really lie in systems level change, looking at the bigger picture and addressing factors that influence disparities.

In my senior year, I had the opportunity that would allow me to turn my passion for public service into a reality. This was through serving low-income and underserved communities in rural South Africa as a Community Development volunteer. Over the next three years, I worked two jobs to help pay for my studies and save for this trip. Finally, my senior year arrived. I was excited to serve and apply concepts and principles that I learned in the classroom on a more practical level in rural South Africa. During my volunteer trip, I embraced feeling uncomfortable. I learned that stepping outside of my comfort zone was necessary to connect with the locals and help foster understanding and appreciation of our differences and similarities. Through conversations and readings, my eyes were opened to the complex issue of poverty. This newfound awareness sparked an interest and made me wonder how individuals, organizations, and systems influence poverty and inequality and how they are interconnected.

Inspired by my summer experience, I obtained a Master's degree in International Development. I was determined to help uplift low-income and marginalized communities. To accomplish this, I knew first I would need to further my understanding of the various factors influencing poverty, explore old and new theories informing development work, and gain the skills needed to make a difference in issues impacting marginalized communities. After graduation, I aspired to use my research and writing skills to serve the community. I obtained a position in the public sector that allowed me to empower community organizations and inform them about ways to improve programs/projects/services to ensure they meet community needs and intended outcomes. To my surprise, I learned that many programs intended to assist low-income individuals and improve equity were actually ineffective.

Motivated to make a change, I was purposeful in obtaining a position that would allow me to improve resources available for vulnerable, low-income individuals. In my position with Mecklenburg County Public Health, I have the opportunity to collaborate with the community to develop and implement projects aimed at increasing equity. However, when developing and implementing projects, my team and I face challenges due to factors beyond our control such as policy and regulations currently in place. Working in this position has been instrumental in solidifying my desire to go to law school. I realize that advocating and developing projects only goes so far, that the true driver of change is policy. This role has provided me a better understanding of how a law degree can advance my career in public service. One way being, providing me with the skills needed to shape legislation, agency rules, and reforms.

My experience working with the community and diverse groups of people has only deepened my passion for public service. To advocate for those most vulnerable, affirm policy is just, and ensure laws do not sustain inequalities, I want to obtain a law degree with a focus in public interest law. A career in legal practice will allow me to advance and fulfill my passions of public service, public policy, and community advocacy. Whether it is through pro bono work for the community or city government, proposing policy changes, serving as counsel to community clinics that serve marginalized populations, or advocating for the interest of residents, I know a JD degree will provide me the training needed to serve the community in various sectors such as domestic poverty, health, and education. It will also equip me with the skills needed to not just scratch the surface of issues but get to the root of issues, leading to more sustainable change.