

Dear Future Medical Laboratory Scientist,

Some day you will be done with school and you'll be glad you went through it all. If I could do it, you can do it. Be prepared to hurdle obstacles both academic and personal. I wasn't a great student when I first applied to internships. In fact, I didn't get in the first time I applied. I wanted to give up. I didn't want to retake classes. Devastation had me wondering if it was meant to be and then I realized that I am the one who decides that. I retook classes and proved myself in spite of my long distance relationship, my father who was sick, and my self-doubt. As hard as it may have been to pick up the pieces sometimes, I always did. Look to your family and support systems because they never want to see you give up. You must remember that this is the rest of your life. This isn't just something to do after you graduate high school. This is your career; it's part of who you are. You will get tired. You will come across obligations or occasions that are more important to you than your upcoming exam. Just remember that your career path is a life long journey that you must fulfill to be happy with yourself.

Once you've been accepted into the program, get excited! I remember being so nervous. I read these letters and started feeling like I probably wasn't going to make it. Even throughout the year I had doubts. I lost my dad half way through and didn't want to go back. Once I made it back, most days I just wanted to go home but I never let it be an option. Tell yourself that you're going to be busy, but know that this will get you good grades and confidence in your abilities. Prepare yourself for that homesick feeling, but know that in a year you can be wherever you want to be with your new degree and career. Most importantly, tell yourself that this is also going to be really amazing. You're done taking gen-eds and classes that were necessary but not always directly related to your field. Now you'll get to experience Blood Bank, Chemistry, Immunology, Hematology, Phlebotomy, and Microbiology both clinically and technically. You're finally going to feel like a professional with a wealth of knowledge and confidence. You will begin to play a direct role in helping patients; that's an amazing responsibility. So be the best you can each day you arrive at your internship!

If you don't understand a subject area, get help. Even when you do understand, review it because you'll be learning something completely new the next day. In terms of academic advice, pay attention in lecture! Lectures are long. Some days you're tired, hungry, or just sick of it but you have to pay attention. I believe I remembered a lot of material and still do because I tried my best to fully engage in lectures. I didn't just mindlessly copy notes as I did in college. I listened carefully, and took a good look at diagrams and pictures. Michele gives amazing lectures, tools, and advice. If you have trouble nailing something, find her. More than likely she can come up with a creative way to help.

Alongside of that, don't review for hours one night a week. Fully engage and actively review a little bit each day. Don't fall behind and you'll do just fine. Second rotation is more fun than first because you get out into the lab. Take advantage of the laboratory scientists that work there; ask questions. They want you to learn and feel confident with what you're doing. Everyone at WCA Hospital genuinely wants their students to succeed but just remember it's up to you as well. So get excited, get engaged, get interested, become invested in your schooling. It'll all be over soon and you'll be glad you did when you get your first paycheck doing something as rewarding as medical laboratory science.

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