

German as a pathway into medicine: CofC German alumna and MD Chelsea Matthia explains how German and Political Science gave her an advantage in Medical School



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**Chelsea Matthia, MD, College of Charleston,
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It is a great privilege to practice medicine, and I am so grateful for the opportunity! Over the past few years, I have glimpsed the joy, triumph, frustration, and heartache that often accompany a career in medicine. There is so much that we know, and even more that we have yet to comprehend. My path to medical school was a bit untraditional, but I find that these unconventional aspects have taught me immensely about myself and about humanity. Majoring in German and Political Science pushed me more towards medicine than any basic science course ever did. In these classes, I learned and thought deeply about life. My German film class waltzed through some of the most trying moments in German – and world – history, and my current events course helped me internalize the struggles of my own generation.

My knowledge of German has initiated countless conversations with patients and other physicians alike. Although you may encounter physicians who are not interested in practicing global health, it is rare that you encounter a doctor who does not enjoy travel. I have come to realize that Germany is one of the most visited and most desirable travel destinations for physicians. From a medical school admissions perspective, I did not have a single interviewer who did not discuss my study abroad and internship experiences. In fact, even when interviewing for residency, I entertained countless questions about my untraditional majors and my experiences abroad. In a world that is increasingly interconnected, demonstrating cultural awareness is extremely valuable. I also recently learned of the German medical internship opportunities offered by CofC. Being able to discuss Germany’s universal health care system from a firsthand perspective is exceptionally unique and affords an enormous advantage in medical interviews at any level.

There are specific prerequisites required for entry into medical school. These courses aside, all of the science needed to practice medicine will be learned in the first and second years of medical school. This fact is well-known, and I heard this statement many times when I served on the admissions committee during my final year of medical school. The medical field needs physicians who are diverse and can relate to people, not just the inside of a textbook. Entering the medical field has been and continues to be one of the best decisions I have made, but I do not think I would be here now if not for the experiences and insight gained from my German and Political Science majors.