

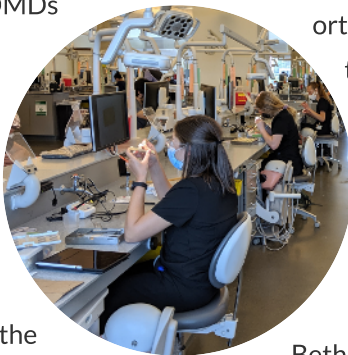
HOW I GOT TO DENTAL SCHOOL

ELIZABETH BURGSTAHLER

Elizabeth "Beth" Burgstahler is a fourth-year student in OHSU's pre-doc DMD program. She grew up in Sandy, Utah, a suburb just outside of Salt Lake City. Before dental school, Beth graduated from the Culinary Institute of America and worked in the restaurant industry for ten years. "I gave up holidays, time with family and friends, and even occasionally my health to do my job," she shared. "Eventually, I just couldn't see myself continuing down that career path. I knew that I wanted a profession that would take care of me so that I, in turn, could take care of others." At this point, she decided to go back to school and explore her options.

Beth enrolled at Portland State University, and at the end of her first year of taking classes, she was still unclear on which direction she should go professionally. She decided to sit down with her chemistry professor and see what suggestions they had. After thoughtfully listening to Beth, the professor suggested dentistry. Beth knew instantly that dentistry was the right fit for her, so she started taking the pre-requisites needed to get into dental school, and she shadowed dentists. In her second year of her undergrad, Beth volunteered in OHSU Dental Clinics, assisting DMDs on the clinic floor with procedures. Her experience in the dental clinic, combined with the fact that she would be paying in-state tuition, made OHSU the school of her choice.

This is now her last year of dental school, and when asked what the most challenging part of being a dental student is, Beth shared, "In terms of clinic and the last two years, patient management is by far the hardest aspect. What I wouldn't give to have someone make my scheduling calls!" When asked what she loves most about dental school, Beth replied, "I'll say it until I'm blue in the face: the people! My classmates have kept me going through the hard times. One of the most important times of the day to me is lunchtime. I try to never work through lunch if I can help it because it's when we get a chance to briefly relax and just laugh and share what has happened throughout our day."



Pictured above: DS4, Elizabeth Burgstahler, watching manatees at the Tampa Electric Manatee Viewing Center in Apollo Beach, Florida, Christmas 2019.

Giving back is important to Beth. She has participated in pediatric dentistry events such as *Give Kids a Smile Day* and *Sealant Day*, and she coordinated and helped bake over 300 desserts for the *Donor Memorial Event*. After graduation, Beth will be doing an orthodontics residency in Minnesota and plans to return to Oregon to practice. In the future, she wants to contribute locally to food security. "I'm a big believer in preventative medicine, of which adequate nutrition is a critical component," said Beth. "I'd love to do some work with the Oregon Food Bank and local elementary and middle schools."

Beth is excited about what lies ahead, and looking back on her dental school experience, she encourages her peers to take time to treat themselves. "Dental school is such hard work," she said. "Maybe get a monthly massage!"