Student Spotlight: Jonathan Rich

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“’It doesn’t matter what degree you pursue so long as you pursue it with passion and do well. There is no correct or incorrect route to where you want to go, only shorter and longer ones.’” - Jonathan Rich

Jonathan Rich came to Utah State from a rural community just across the border in Bear Lake County, Idaho. He received a bachelor’s degree at USU in psychology with minors in chemistry and biology. Rich went on to graduate in the top 5% of his class at the University of Utah School of Medicine and is now pursuing a specialty in anesthesiology at Washington University in St. Louis. He plans to complete a specialization in anesthesiology with fellowships in cardiac anesthesia and critical care medicine. Rich aspires to work at an academic medical center where he will be able to split time between practice, teaching, and research.

What advice do you have for students in the Psychology Department?

Get involved early. How you become involved is less important than becoming involved. DO what interests you — research, service, leadership, or other extracurricular activities. Getting to know your professors will help you when you apply for graduate school or jobs. Some of my best college memories were made while doing service activities, and I met tons of incredible people and friends in the process.

Who influenced you most during your time at USU?

Dr. Amy Odum adopted me into her advanced behavioral analysis lab during my second year of college. She believed in me and gave me a chance, and it has made all the difference. She taught me to be a scientist, and I learned how to think critically in her lab. She shaped my mind and taught me to question things that didn’t make sense and to think about things creatively. She also pushed me to become better on each project we worked on. Finally, she was a friend and mentor to me as I developed as a student and continues to be a friend and mentor to me as I develop as a professional.

What is the most important thing you learned at USU?

Hard work, dedication, and resiliency are more vital to success than all the natural talent in the world.

Share your best college memory.

I was a soccer coach for the Special Olympics team at USU in 2014. Taking the athletes to compete at the state games was an absolute blast. The other coaches and I rode down with the athletes on a bus; then stayed overnight in a hotel after the first day of competition. There were tons of booths and activities set up while the competitions were occurring. It was so fun hanging out with the athletes and coaches and representing USU at this event.

What was applying to medical school like?

When I decided to go into medicine as a 4th year undergraduate student I felt as if I was starting from scratch. Starting on this path was intimidating. Everyone else seemed far ahead of me. Some of the other pre-med students scoffed at my choice to be a psychology major. Several professors and even some of my friends and family questioned my decision. Each course I finished gave me more confidence. I focused on the inches in front of me and made every effort to walk each inch as best as I could. I didn’t stop to see how far I had come until I was graduating college and had been accepted to medical school.