

Patrick Bettiol and Caroline Freedle

How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect your education and match process?

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COVID started middle of second year. And so we were finishing up clerkship or clinical rotations, we kind of go through the process of thinking, Okay, we have to be prepared to apply for our away rotations. Here coming forward, what's that going to look like? The next year, still, there was no idea. And the year before us didn't get to do any way rotations. They did all virtual interviews. So we were expecting a lot of the same. But we ended up getting able to do one away rotation. As a couple, we were hoping to rotate at the same place. But unfortunately, the way that things fell, we ended up rotating in two different places. And so that was a very difficult thing for us. Because when you think about away rotation, it's really a rotation that if you perform well, it's a slam dunk, and you have a really good opportunity to go to that place. And so that was that was difficult. From that perspective, think about applying and going through that process.

How did you meet?

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Yeah, so we met the first day of our MBA, I had broken my finger, and it was splinted. And he came up to me and asked what was wrong with my finger, and I said, it's broken duh, and was more interested on focusing on my academics and, you know, nervous about the MBA and starting Medical School and was just really not interested. Unfortunately, or fortunately, he continued to bother me. So we built a really good friendship over the summertime. And then in the fall of our first year is when we started dating.

Do you feel that Dean Berk's comments during your white coat ceremony had any effect on your relationship?

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Yeah, so he says something along the lines of you, some people meet their spouses in medical school, and it gets a good chuckle. And I think a lot of people think that he's being sarcastic, but

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I think it convinced her if I'm being honest. I think it did. It opened the door I think.

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Maybe, yeah, maybe he opened the door for us. And yeah, I would feel like I met my other half here so.

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Agreed.

When did you start making plans to go through the match process as a couple?

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We didn't really think about a couple's match until second year, and well I say second year, really early third year about how to approach the match. Just because I think we're just really focused on being the

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best we could and controlling things to control going into it. And we had some really great friends who helped mentor us during their fourth year going through couples match together.

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That advice was awesome. And that was I think, how we started navigate that by just using our other fellow med students. And that was the best resource for us. And definitely faculty were helpful, but the best on the ground advice came from people who had done it before us.

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Yeah, and I agree with that. And then I think just being able to talk to someone that had gone through it and was successful in matching as a couple was reassuring, because I think for both Patrick and I, we don't want to impede each other's goals and aspirations in life. And so finding a way that we could support each other, and then also end up in the same place was very important to both of us. And so I think just having some of those conversations early on of what does this mean? And what does this look like for our careers and in our personal life? And how do they align? And how can we maximize and get what we want, by doing the couple's match?

How are you dealing with the difficulty of matching as a couple on top of your already competitive specialties?

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I think for us there, I think there are a lot of moments of stress, and when we had those moments of stress, we just communicate with each other. And I think that was the most important thing for us to get through it. Because yes, on paper, it is extremely difficult to do what we're doing. And but when we kind of reflected on it, we just were able to know the intention of the other person so well, to say, this is what you want to do, and I've support you in behind you 100%. Let's just go after it. And like Caroline said, give 110% and do give it our best. And so that's how I felt and you can share some too.

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Yeah. And I think you know, like I said, being honest about what our goals were, as individuals played a role in it, and they are two competitive specialties. And so sometimes, we were asked, you know, well do one of y'all want to pursue another route? And what happens if you don't match into these specialties? What are your backup plans? You know, just all of those questions. And I think those are reasonable things to think about and I think those are things that we did think about, but also, really just going after our goal and saying that, you know, there isn't another option. This is what we want to do. And I think when we had that mindset, we had a path that we were able to go down to meet those goals.

How do you feel that TTUHSC's School of Medicine prepared you for the next step in your careers?

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Texas Tech gave me a lot of flexibility. And when I say that, you know, Texas Tech has a very unique ability. And this is me speaking from my own perspective. We were affiliated with undergraduate campus, and some things I was really interested in was innovation, public policy, and those sort of

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things. And Texas Tech was always supportive Dean Berk's office was always supportive, anything I wanted to go and do that would help increase awareness, or even just helped me grow as a person. That's how it supported me in my journey, specifically related to orthopedics. I mean, we have a great orthopedic department here, which was awesome.

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Texas Tech allowed me to grow a lot as a person, I grew not only academically, but also just personally, I felt like it. Texas Tech, there was moments where being involved in different organizations allowed me to grow as a leader, and then also challenge myself in ways that I had not before. And so with research, and then, you know, managing people, academics. And so I think just overall, I really learned how to be a well rounded person instead of someone that was just strictly here for academics. And to me, that speaks volumes, because I think those are the best doctors when you can teach someone, not only academically, what's important, but also what are the other components of just being a human that are important, and maximizing those. It's just a unique characteristic of this school.

What are your top choices for the match?

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Anywhere we match together is like our top choice. With couples match, you have to rank anywhere from, you know, one to 95. So if we can stay in our areas in the top end, where we match together, that's what matters to us. from a training perspective and just knowing who we are. We're going to maximize revenue we are and so that's what we're most interested and most happy about, I think and most excited about, I would say.