



# FINDING THE PERFECT FIT

**W**HEN DAVID LEANDER '20 WAS A CHILD, his parents encouraged him to pursue a wide array of interests and since then he clearly has left no stone unturned. As an undergraduate at Northwestern University, he took extra classes each term, enough to earn a B.A. in materials science, economics, and Spanish, and a minor in global health and pre-medicine. "I enjoyed the challenge of a well-rounded education," he explains with a smile in his voice. "So I took advantage of every moment."

Interested in medicine from a young age, Leander says he always knew he wanted to work in healthcare in some way. His father has a rare genetic disorder, so during his childhood Leander spent a lot of time in hospitals and clinics. "I became very comfortable in that environment," he says. "ERs, clinics, and hospitals were fascinating to me and the doctors always took time to speak with me about my dad and their work."

After college, Leander spent three years as a project manager at Epic Systems, a software company that creates electronic health records (EHRs) for healthcare organizations around the world. Troubleshooting issues in EHRs tapped into his interest in problem-solving and further piqued his interest in medicine, "I decided to take a risk and apply to medical school because I wanted to have a larger relationship with patients."

When he interviewed at Dartmouth, Leander knew he'd found a good fit, especially because of the combined MD-MBA program offered by the Geisel School of Medicine and the Tuck School of Business. "Dartmouth has a special feel to it. The medical community here is small, but very strong, and the faculty are deeply invested in students. My interview with Dr. Stephen Plume was especially impressive. He knew my application in-depth and we talked about the possibility of working on Epic projects while I was in medical school."

Since arriving at Geisel, Leander says that his early impression that Dartmouth was the right place for him was spot-on. As a medical student, he has worked closely with teams of clinicians such as pediatric pulmonologist Alex Gifford, MD, and researcher Eugene Nelson, DSc, MPH, to develop customized Epic office visit notes to populate registry-defined fields for the Cystic Fibrosis registry as part of a learning health system model, standardizing the way that this data is captured and reported to registries. He plans to share these customizations within Epic with other Cystic Fibrosis centers around the country. The experience strengthened his interest in working as both a clinician and an informaticist.

As a second-year medical student, Leander also collaborated with On Doctoring co-directors Roshini Pinto-Powell, MD, and Adam Weinstein, MD, to provide an in-depth training class on Epic software for second-year medical students. "Epic is widely used in hospitals and clinics across the country, and I realized third- and fourth-year students were being asked to use the software in clinical rotations, without being sufficiently trained on the system," he says. Though they eventually figure out how to use the software, the transition is frustrating. Leander and fellow medical students Jade Avery '19, a former Epic project manager at the University of California, San Francisco, and Travis McCain '20, a

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former informatics designer at Stanford University, joined forces with Geisel emergency medicine physician and informaticist Todd Morrell, MD, to create an On Doctoring session that teaches second-year medical students to use Epic.

Responses were overwhelmingly positive.

"When we surveyed second-year students, we found that over half had no previous experience with EHRs prior to our On Doctoring class, which really put them at a disadvantage during clinical rotations. Our training aims to bridge this knowledge gap."

Given his unique understanding of their complexities along with his clinical knowledge of patient care, Leander is confident that he will continue to work with EHRs. "I'd like to defy the notion that MD-MBAs are all headed toward a future solely in healthcare administration. I want to practice medicine working at the intersection of patient care and healthcare delivery enabled by IT."

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