A non-traditional path to medical school can be a great thing

For Dr. Aleshia (maiden name Cox) Magee, class of 2009, the Baptist College of Health Sciences offered her things she never imagined. Not only did she meet her husband Landon at the College, she also earned her bachelor’s degree in nuclear medicine. After several years of working in nuclear medicine, Magee wanted to fulfill her dream of going to medical school. And she did. She graduated from Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, NC in May 2019 and will start her anesthesiology residency with the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. in July 2019.

Magee’s path to medical school isn’t a typical one. She found herself interested in the College as a high school student in Greenville, Miss. because it was one of few programs in the country to offer a bachelor’s degree in nuclear medicine. As a student, Magee was always busy on campus, being involved in Student Government Association and serving as SGA president while pursuing her degree.

“Serving as SGA president helped teach me about leadership, a skill I will use as a doctor,” said Magee.

For several years after graduation, Magee worked in nuclear medicine. First she worked in Jackson, Tenn. in a cardiology office overseeing stress tests. She then transitioned to a hospital in Dyersburg, Tenn. and ultimately ended up at a hospital in McKenzie, Tenn. where she ran the nuclear medicine department. While working in McKenzie, Magee started taking additional pre-requisite classes for medical school at University of Tennessee Martin and preparing for the MCAT entrance exam for medical school. Magee knew she was interested in anesthesiology before starting medical school because she saw a parallel with nuclear medicine.

“As a nontraditional student taking pre-requisite classes, you have to be internally driven to succeed and keep the motivation alive,” said Magee.

In the fall of 2015, Magee started medical school at Wake Forest. Most of her classmates had majored in pre-med or biology in their undergraduate study. But most also didn’t have real life health care and patient experience like Magee did.

“I think that nuclear medicine as a career really prepared me to be a great physician,” said Magee. “I had 11 years of experience of starting IVs for example and some of my medical school classmates had never even held a needle.”

Magee was also recently awarded the Arnold P. Gold Foundation Humanism in Medicine Award, voted on by her Wake Forest medical school peers, for her compassion with patients.

Magee, her husband and their three-month old daughter Mary Alice are moving to Rochester, Minn. in June 2019 before her residency begins.