

Dream Jobs: Doctor and researcher

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Image 1. Russell Joseph Ledet is earning his medical degree and business degree at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Ledet wants to focus on child and adolescent psychiatry so that he can help children in his community. Photo: NYU School of Medicine

Russell Joseph Ledet never thought he was smart enough to go to college. But his wife changed his mind. Today, Ledet has finished college. He also finished a doctorate (Ph.D.) program.

Now, Ledet is working on a medical degree and a business degree. "Dare to be what you doubt you can be," he said. "It worked for me."

Background And Interest In Science

Ledet grew up in Lake Charles, Louisiana. His mom raised him and his sister. "There were times when we struggled to make ends meet," he said. "I didn't think college was an option."

Ledet finished high school a year early. Then he signed up for the Navy. He served for almost 10 years. After, he went to college. He got help paying for school from the GI Bill. This helps all service members and veterans of the armed forces.

Ledet majored in chemistry and biology. He went to Southern University and A&M College. It is in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. "I loved everything about chemistry," he said. "It just made sense to me."

Ledet also learned he loved scientific research. This means asking questions and doing experiments. The point is to answer a scientific question.

Ledet got into a Ph.D. program at New York University. It is located in New York City. He studied prostate cancer. This is the most common cancer diagnosed in black men. "I wanted to study the things that might affect me or someone like me in my lifetime," he said.

Ledet met other black scientists. They could identify with him. "At times I felt like I didn't fit the mold," Ledet said. "I looked different and talked differently from those around me," he said. Having people who understood me meant a lot, he said.

Looking Ahead

Ledet received his Ph.D. in 2018. Then, he decided to go to medical school. He chose Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Now, Ledet wants to help children and teens.

At times, it was a struggle to get to where he is today. But he made up for it by being curious. He asked questions of everyone he met. This led him to the science career he has now. "Curiosity is the first sign that you love science," he said.



Quiz

- 1 Where did Russell Joseph Ledet grow up?
 - (A) Lake Charles, Louisiana
 - (B) Baton Rouge, Louisiana
 - (C) New York City, New York
 - (D) New Orleans, Louisiana

- 2 Which sentence from the section "Background And Interest In Science" explains WHY Russell Joseph Ledet studied prostate cancer?
 - (A) "There were times when we struggled to make ends meet," he said.
 - (B) This means asking questions and doing experiments.
 - (C) "I wanted to study the things that might affect me or someone like me in my lifetime," he said.
 - (D) Having people who understood me meant a lot, he said.

- 3 What happened because Russell Joseph Ledet served 10 years in the Navy?
 - (A) He got help paying for college.
 - (B) He got into a Ph.D. program.
 - (C) He helped children and teens.
 - (D) He finished high school early.

- 4 How did Russell Joseph Ledet change after meeting other black scientists?
 - (A) He decided to go to college.
 - (B) He started to feel like he fit in.
 - (C) He got interested in research.
 - (D) He wanted to study chemistry.