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- *U.S. News & World Report*



Partnerships and innovation: The future of nursing education

Collaboration, design thinking, and competencies are critical to prepare nurses to work at the top of their practice.

By Catherine Spader, RN

Nursing education is evolving rapidly to prepare nurses for mounting health-care challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare inequality, integration of electronic health records, and care across various settings. The World Health Organization (WHO), in its State of the World's Nursing Report—2020, is calling for an ur-

gent investment to accelerate nursing education. (Visit [who.int/publications-detail/nursing-report-2020](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/nursing-report-2020) to read the report.) WHO also advocates for strengthening leadership so nurses have an influential role in developing health policy and decision-making and can contribute to effective health and social care systems.



Here's a look at some of the innovative strategies associations and schools are using to ensure future nurses are well prepared to meet evolving healthcare needs and work at the top of their licenses.

Covering the essentials

"Unprecedented changes in healthcare delivery needs are accelerating innovative efforts in nursing education," says **Deborah Trautman**, PhD, RN, FAAN, president and chief executive officer of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

In addition, the 2019 *Activating Nursing to Address Unmet Needs in the 21st Century* report by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation states that one of the core functions of nursing practice is to build partnerships within and outside the health sector to find solutions to today's healthcare challenges. (Visit bit.ly/36wRQa6 to read the report.)

AACN is taking a big step into the future by re-envisioning its *Essential Series*, the elements and framework on which to develop nursing curricula. "We are moving from baccalaureate, master's, and doctor of nursing practice curricula essentials toward competency-based education and assessment," Trautman says. The goal of this approach is to ensure equitable learning experiences and achieve a consistent level of competency in domains such as primary care, coordination of care, public health, and population health management.

Many of the changes schools of nursing have implemented because of the current public health crisis will likely continue and evolve, including online education and virtual simulation. "Our experience during COVID-19 has shown us high standards can be met with online education," Trautman says. "Before this crisis, there was some concern about how well students would accept virtual simulation programs, but we have found it is not a problem, and some students even prefer them."



Deborah Trautman

Creative collaborations solve problems

Schools of nursing are responding to rapidly changing healthcare demands by developing creative new clinical collaborations and strengthening existing ones.

"There is an ingenuity happening that is providing benefits to patients and a great learning experience for nursing students," Trautman says. "These academic-based teams are helping students learn and addressing care needs throughout the country. I believe these partnerships will continue to grow and strengthen in the future as a result of the pandemic."

Since 2013, the University of Connecticut (UConn) School of Nursing in Storrs has strategically focused on educating nursing students in the science of innovation. Initial efforts encouraged undergraduate nursing students to work with teams of engineering, business, and allied health students to take their ideas and solutions from concept to successful prototype. Projects include new products, services, and processes that students develop and then conduct initial tests in clinical environments or in the simulation lab.

"The more we can get students to work together and think about how to creatively problem solve, the stronger we will be in uncertain times," says **Tiffany Kelley**, PhD, MBA, RN, DeLuca Foundation Visiting Professor for Innovation and New Knowledge at the UConn School of Nursing.

UConn integrates innovation education throughout its curriculum across all degree programs (bachelor of science through doctorate). For undergraduates, innovation is introduced in their first semester. "We prepare undergraduates to be thinking early about care delivery in different ways," Kelley says.

The school also offers the newly launched Healthcare Innovation Online Graduate Certificate. The 12-credit program integrates innovation theories from



Tiffany Kelley

"The more we can get students to work together and think about how to creatively problem solve, the stronger we will be in uncertain times."

— Tiffany Kelly

“Teaching design thinking is an opportunity to reboot and think differently about the future, as opposed to returning to old ways of thinking and old process models.”

– Daniel Pesut

business and social sciences and teaches medical and nonmedical professionals how to apply critical thinking skills to shift healthcare culture. The program, which stresses healthcare innovation theory and application and workplace cultures that foster innovation, encourages students to be divergent thinkers and teaches them how to assess potential benefits and risks associated with launching their ideas to determine viability. The program’s capstone project is designed to advance students’ ideas as far as possible with guided mentorship over 14 weeks.

“One of the most dangerous statements we hear in healthcare is, ‘That’s the way we’ve always done it.’” Kelley says. “We evolve when we become personally invested in addressing what is not working for the betterment of all.”

Solving real-world problems in real time

Students at Duke University School of Nursing in Durham, NC, are learning to solve real-world problems in real time in the Duke Health Innovation Lab. The lab is a physical space where practicing nurses, nursing students, faculty, physicians, physical therapists, engineers, and other professionals collaborate to develop, build, and test prototypes of new healthcare products and delivery processes. Projects include much-needed 3D-printed face shields, now in clinical use at the Duke University Health System, and telepresence robots in the intensive care unit to increase patient communication and reduce personal protective equipment use. (Visit [youtube.com/watch?v=KOLcTKhPEhE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOLcTKhPEhE) to see a telepresence robot in action.)

“The lab and the team played a critical role in the journey of the robots and face shields from concept to use,” says **Ryan J. Shaw**, PhD, RN, associate professor and director of the Health Innovation Lab.



Ryan J. Shaw

Thinking by design

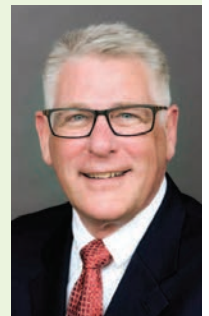
Schools of nursing also are adapting the design thinking approach to foster innovation. Design thinking teaches students how to challenge their own assumptions to better understand patients and their needs to create quicker, more effective solutions.

“The end goal of design thinking is to make the user experience the best it can be. It’s about creatively thinking forward, rapid prototyping, and testing ideas and products,” says **Daniel Pesut**, PhD, RN, FAAN, professor of nursing at the University of Minnesota School of Nursing, and director of the Katharine J. Densford International Center for Nursing Leadership.

The five phases of design thinking are discovery, interpretation, ideation, experimentation, and evolution. The University of Minnesota School of Nursing has adapted design thinking into its Health Care Design and Innovation Post-Baccalaureate Certificate program. Courses teach the knowledge, skills, and abilities to bring design thinking to nursing leadership and innovation.

In one student project, a nurse observed and listened to patrons at the local library and discovered they frequently discussed unmet health issues. She used design thinking to activate ideas about how libraries can become portals to promote health and health literacy. Possible library services could include health counseling, a nurse practitioner clinic, and a health and human services professional to help patrons access health-related resources.

“We are seeing many dysfunctional systems in healthcare colliding and breaking down as a result of the pandemic,” Pesut says. “Teaching design thinking is an opportunity to reboot and think differently about the future, as opposed to returning to old ways of thinking and old process models.”



Daniel Pesut

Uncovering the real problems to find the best outcomes

The University of Pennsylvania’s School of

Nursing in Philadelphia also has incorporated design thinking into its Innovation in Health course, which is open to all university undergraduate and graduate students.

“We need more rapid solutions to problems, especially now with the COVID-19 pandemic,” says **Marion Leary**, MSN, MPH, RN, director of innovation at the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Nursing. “Design thinking allows nurses to rapidly create and test solutions to problems in months instead of years.” Leary also is a founding member of the Society of Nurse Scientists, Innovators, Entrepreneurs & Leaders.

Students begin by learning about the foundation of empathy, which refers to seeking out the true cause of a problem, rather than relying on preconceived ideas. For example, in one project, students performed interviews and observations in Philadelphia public schools with a goal of improving food insecurity. What they discovered after working through the design thinking activities was that the problem wasn’t what they thought it was. The real issue was asthma attacks in the classroom—and a shortage of school nurses trained to respond. Nursing students tackled the problem by creating a mock inhaler and a scan code. The code links online to each child’s individualized asthma action plan, so teachers can quickly look up how to treat the child.

“We can’t tell people what we think they need. Design thinking begins with allowing patients to tell and show us what they know they need,” Leary says.



Marion Leary

Primary care competency

To address the healthcare needs of the future, WHO is recommending that nurses are educated and trained in the scientific, technological, and sociological skills needed to drive progress in primary healthcare and that they work to their full potential.

“Due to the shortage of physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners, primary care is moving toward team care, and RNs are a vital part of the team,” says **Mary A.**

Dolansky, PhD, RN, FAAN, Sarah C. Hirsh Professor at the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing, Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH.

Nurses’ role in primary care is partnering with patients to foster optimal patient self-management. This includes monitoring health, managing medications, teaching and coaching health improvement strategies, supporting success, and providing motivation for healthy activities, such as exercise and healthy eating. To achieve this, primary care RNs must be able to work to the top of their licenses—which they haven’t be able to in the past, according to Dolansky.

Times are changing, and educational partnerships and better training are supporting nurses to practice at the highest level possible. Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing has teamed up with Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center in a federally funded program to strengthen primary care training for nurses while enhancing veteran healthcare. Program competencies include care coordination, population health management, behavioral health integration, and chronic disease management. Other skills include relationship building, teamwork and collaboration, and leadership.

“Nurses need to know how to step up and influence others and be the role model for the professional delivery of care,” Dolansky says. “This requires a transformation of curricula from a narrow focus on acute, inpatient care to a wider education and training in primary care and health management.”

The faculty is developing an observational assessment of primary care competence. The goal is to establish that baccalaureate nurses are competent in primary care nursing as new grads.

“It’s an exciting moment for nursing,” Dolansky says. “Primary care is a specialty in which we can shine and show the world the full extent of what a nurse does.”



Mary A. Dolansky

“Nurses need to know how to step up and influence others and be the role model for the professional delivery of care.”

– Mary Dolansky

Catherine Spader is an author and healthcare writer based in Littleton, Colorado.

Trending jobs

Learn about specialties in demand from nurses in the roles.

Are you looking for a new career opportunity? Consider these specialties, which experts say will be in demand for the near future: forensic nursing, health coaching, legal nurse consulting, nephrology nursing (acute and chronic), nursing and healthcare innovation, nursing informatics, primary care nursing (nursing in settings outside the hospital), and school nursing. Many employers also will be seeking nurse practitioners and nurse scientists.

Here's an overview of some of these roles from nurses working in them. You can access profiles for the others online at myamericanurse.com/?p=67427.

flourish throughout their most formative years and connecting with families are just a few of the rewards of school nursing.

Challenges. Working in isolation with limited resources is one of the greatest challenges, along with nurse-to-student ratios that can be unsafe and untenable. One school nurse responsible for hundreds, if not thousands, of students, sometimes in multiple buildings, isn't unusual.

Education requirements. No universal education requirements exist for school nurses. Many states require state certification through the department of education, much like a teacher, while other school nurses work for the department of health. The Nationally Certified School Nurse credential involves taking a rigorous exam through the National Board of Certification of School Nurses. The credential reflects competence and professionalism.

Professional associations. The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) supports school nurses across the country through ongoing, high-level, professional development that includes continuing nurse education via online courses, webinars, podcasts, and an annual conference. NASN has two peer-reviewed journals: *The Journal of School Nursing* and *NASN School Nurse*.

Bottom line. "School nursing is an independent specialty practice that ensures our nation's 56 million students are safe, healthy, and ready to learn."

Robin Cogan, The Relentless School Nurse, blogs at relentlesschoolnurse.com and serves as a Nurse Influencer for *American Nurse Journal*. She's a Nationally Certified School Nurse, currently in her 19th year as a New Jersey school nurse in the Camden City School District.

Watch Robin talk about her role at



myamericanurse.com/?p=67461

Legal nurse consultant

Laura Grossman Nissim, MS, RN, CNS, LNCC
Legal nurse consultants (LNCs) review and analyze facts and information identified in legal cases that involve an injury. They use their nursing



School nurse

Robin Cogan, MEd, RN, NCSN

School nursing is an independent specialty practice that combines the best of public health and pediatric nursing. School nurses are responsible for the health and safety of their students, staff, and school community. The National Association of School Nurses says, "School nursing, a specialized practice of nursing, protects and promotes student health, facilitates optimal development, and advances academic success. School nurses, grounded in ethical and evidence-based practice, are the leaders who bridge healthcare and education, provide care coordination, advocate for quality student-centered care, and collaborate to design systems that allow individuals and communities to develop their full potential."

Characteristics needed. Successful school nurses are flexible and can practice independently.

Rewards. Watching children grow and



Robin Cogan

and research skills, knowledge of nursing theory, and familiarity with medicine and healthcare systems to evaluate medical records in various types of litigation, including medical malpractice, personal injury, and workers compensation.

Characteristics needed. LNCs should have experience in theoretical and clinical nursing and possess a general knowledge of healthcare. Reviewing medical records, translating information for use in litigation, and writing and reporting on findings require strong research and analysis skills.

Rewards. Legal consulting offers a great deal of flexibility. LNCs can work independently, manage their own business, or work as a consultant or an employee for law firms, insurance carriers, hospitals, or government agencies.

Challenges. Educating attorneys about the difference in value and expertise between LNCs and paralegals can be challenging. LNCs go far beyond the paralegal role to provide more analytical thinking and theoretical knowledge.

Educational requirements. No education or certification requirements specific to practicing as an LNC are required, but obtaining certification as an LNCC® through the American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants (AALNC) demonstrates expertise. The LNCC is the only legal nurse consulting credential recognized by the Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification.

Professional associations. AALNC is the only nonprofit organization for LNCs. It publishes the peer-reviewed *Journal of Legal Nurse Consultants* and offers education via webinars, online courses, and an annual conference.

Bottom line. “Legal nurse consulting is a remarkably interesting and exciting way to meld nursing knowledge with the law. My experience working as a legal nurse has afforded me the opportunity to use my nursing skills practically in a field that impacts a variety of populations, legal situations, and business practices.”

Laura Grossman Nissim is a board-certified legal nurse consultant and president of AALNC.



Watch Laura talk about her role at myamericannurse.com/?p=67467

Dialysis nurse

Barbara Odom, BSN, RN, CDN

Dialysis nurses administer kidney replacement therapy treatments needed by patients who have either end-stage kidney disease or acute

kidney injury. Therapy can be provided in outpatient settings (for example in-center or at-home hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis) or acute-care settings where dialysis nurses may administer or coordinate hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, continuous renal replacement therapy, or plasmapheresis therapies.

Characteristics needed. Dialysis nurses must be self-directed (both with tasks and the pursuit of knowledge), compassionate, and passionate about improving patient outcomes and quality of life. In addition, they must be able to work well with individuals from a variety of backgrounds and function well as a vital team member or leader.

Rewards. Providing holistic care to a population of patients dealing with a complex condition can be very rewarding. Dialysis nurses have the privilege of sharing both the joys and sorrows of the patients they work with on a regular basis, which allows for a strong, family-like bond. In acute-care settings, dialysis nurses have the opportunity to comfort and encourage those struggling to understand and manage a complex illness and a sudden change in health status.

Challenges. Compassion fatigue can be a challenge when working with the chronicity of end-stage renal disease. For dialysis nurses working in acute-care settings, taking call is the greatest challenge.

Education requirements. Nurses with varying levels of nursing education will find exciting and challenging career options within the different dialysis settings (outpatient clinics, hospital dialysis services, chronic kidney care clinics, nursing schools, or kidney-based medical equipment companies).

Professional associations. Three associations are particularly helpful for dialysis nurses: American Nephrology Nursing Association (ANNA), National Kidney Foundation, and Hemodialysis International. ANNA publishes *Nephrology Nursing Journal* and offers education programs, including online options and live events.

Bottom line. “Dialysis nursing is exciting and rewarding, and has many different career paths.”

Barbara Odom is an acute dialysis nurse and a director for the ANNA.



Watch Barbara talk about her role at myamericannurse.com/?p=67465



Laura Grossman
Nissim



Barbara Odom

Nurse practitioner

Kelly Arashin Bouthillet, DNP, APRN, CC-NS, ACNP-BC, ACNPC

Nurse practitioners (NPs), one of the four advanced practice registered nurse roles, focus on the diagnosis and management of acute and chronic health conditions across a variety of care settings. NPs provide patient-centric care and emphasize strategies to prevent disease and promote health.

Characteristics needed. Successful NPs have excellent critical thinking and problem-solving abilities and a commitment to life-long learning.

Rewards. The rewards of being an NP are many and likely very personal to each NP. For me, making connections and building relationships with my patients is the most rewarding. NPs can become a part of patients' lives.

Challenges. Currently the biggest challenge is the lack of full practice authority and standard practice regulations across the nation. Variability exists among states, with some having restrictions that limit NPs' ability to practice to the full extent of their education; others states are less restrictive and allow NPs to practice without physician oversight.

Education requirements. NPs must complete additional education beyond their initial pre-licensure and baccalaureate nurse education. Entry into NP practice requires a master's or doctorate degree and successful completion of a national board certification exam.

Professional associations. Several professional nursing associations support NPs, including the American Nurses Association, American Association of Nurse Practitioners, and American Association of Critical-Care Nurses. In addition, specialty organizations support NPs who work in pediatric and women's health. Many of these associations offer journals and educational opportunities.

Bottom line. "Being an NP is an amazing responsibility; it allows me to serve and be a partner in the health of individuals and the community in which I live."

Kelly Arashin Bouthillet is a nurse practitioner who works at Hilton Head Island Fire/Rescue and as a hospitalist NP at Hilton Head Regional Healthcare in South Carolina. She is also adjunct nursing faculty at the University of South Carolina, Beaufort.



Kelly Arashin
Bouthillet



Susan B. Fowler

Nurse scientist

Susan B. Fowler, PhD, RN, CNRN, FAHA

A nurse scientist is an advocate for the art and science of nursing, committed to creating a culture of clinical inquiry, advocating for the translation of knowledge into practice, and generating new knowledge. Nurse scientists facilitate others' research, provide staff development opportunities related to research and evidence-based practice, conduct their own research, and disseminate findings through publication and presentations. Some nurse scientists are university faculty who commit a designated percentage of work time to a healthcare organization or serve in a per diem role.

Characteristics needed. Nurse scientists must be able to think from A to Z (problem identification to dissemination) to generate new knowledge and incorporate research findings into evidence-based practice. Patience is key to enduring the research process, including ethical approval and dissemination.

Rewards. Watching the learning and enthusiasm of colleagues throughout the research process, especially dissemination of their work, is gratifying.

Challenges. Many nurse scientists have difficulty finding time to conduct their own research, are frustrated by colleagues' limited knowledge and lack of time to engage in research and/or evidence-based practice projects, and encounter insufficient financial support for nursing research.

Education requirements. A terminal degree focusing on research, such as a PhD, provides the nurse scientist with the knowledge and skills of the research process, as well as evidence-based practice. Nurse scientists can become certified clinical research professionals through the Society of Clinical Research Associates.

Professional associations. Many nurse scientists are members of nursing associations dedicated to research, such as the Southern, Western, Midwest, and Eastern Nursing Research Societies. They also may be members of research or scientific committees of organizations.

Bottom line. "Nurse scientists promote, support, and facilitate clinical inquiry through research and evidence-based practice, advancing the art and science of nursing."

Susan B. Fowler is a nurse scientist in the center for nursing research at Orlando Health in Florida.



Watch Kelly talk about her role at
myamericannurse.com/?p=67463



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PhD vs DNP

Find fulfillment by making the right choice.

By Erik P. Southard, DNP, RN, FNP-BC

Nurses have two options for pursuing a terminal degree—doctor of philosophy (PhD) and doctor of nursing practice (DNP). Use the table to compare the two so you can make an informed decision

about which option is best for you.



For detailed descriptions, visit myamericannurse.com/?p=67237

Erik P. Southard is a professor and DNP program director at the School of Nursing, Indiana State University in Terre Haute.

Category	DNP	PhD
Program objective	Clinical practice doctorate that prepares the highest level of nursing practice scholars for administration, clinical practice, and clinical education	Research doctorate that prepares nurse leaders to generate new knowledge via rigorous research and statistical analysis
Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced practice registered nurse Practice manager Quality improvement coordinator Innovation specialist Nurse informaticist Clinical nurse educator Healthcare executive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant-funded nurse researcher Nursing faculty member Nurse scientist Director of clinical trials Data analyst Public health nurse Nursing epidemiologist Healthcare executive
Student entry points	Postbaccalaureate or postmaster's	Postbaccalaureate or postmaster's
Applicant suitability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior evidence of strong scholastic achievement with aspiration to excel in an advanced practice nursing role Leadership skills and experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior evidence of strong scholastic achievement with analysis and problem-solving skills Aspiration to conduct and critique research with a focus on knowledge generation
Program length	2-3 years of full-time study	4-5 years of full-time study
Program faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic/clinical instruction provided by faculty with research or practice doctorates and strong history of clinical practice, quality improvement, and/or project management experience Instructors will have expertise in the program-focused practice role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic instruction provided by faculty with research doctorate in nursing or related field Faculty frequently conduct funded and nonfunded research projects with internal and external partners
Program resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical mentors Clinical lab Diagnostic equipment Simulation lab Clinical practice sites relevant to the program-focused practice role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research lab Computing and software applications for data storage and analysis Dissertation funding Established programs of research
Degree completion requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced coursework 1,000 postbaccalaureate clinical hours DNP project that requires planning, implementation, and evaluation to demonstrate clinical scholarship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced coursework Development and defense of research proposal Final defense of research dissertation
Preparation to conduct research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepared to generate new knowledge via evidence translation, innovative practice change, or implementation of quality improvement processes New knowledge may be transferable but not generalizable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepared to generate new knowledge via rigorous research and statistical analysis Findings may be generalizable



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Money matters: How to fund your nursing education

Don't miss out on the many available resources.

By Debra A. Wolff, DNS, RN, PCNP



That the cost of college is a common concern for nurses who want to advance their education isn't surprising. But everyone has a different financial picture, so you want to estimate the actual costs and gather as much information about available funding before you take the plunge and enroll. This article provides plenty of resources

and examples, but you also may want to seek financial advice from another reputable source such as the financial aid office at the college you plan to attend, a credit union, or a bank. One word of caution if you do seek financial aid advice: Beware of scams. (See *Spotting scams*.)

1 Start here

If it has been some time since you were last in school, you may be a bit rusty on what resources are available to help direct your choices and provide information. Start with these two resources:

- U.S. Department of Education: Federal Student Aid (studentaid.gov)—You'll find much of the financial aid information you need here.
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing (aacnnursing.org)—This is a great resource for scholarship and nursing program information.

2 Gather information

Pull together all of the personal financial information you'll need to complete college applications, scholarship and grant forms, and, most important, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®, fafsa.ed.gov). (To view an information checklist, visit myamericannurse.com/?p=67381.)

To receive any financial aid from federal or state grants, loans, or work-study programs, you must complete a FAFSA application. Many scholarship programs also want that information. You can complete the FAFSA starting January 1 of each year. On the website, create a Federal Student Aid ID and complete all the information; if you can't finish it at one time, you can save your work and come back later.

After you submit the FAFSA application, you'll receive a student aid report (SAR),

Spotting scams

As you investigate sources of financial aid to fund your nursing education, be on the lookout for scams. These sites can help.

- **FinAid: The SmartStudent Guide to Financial Aid**—This group's scholarship page about scams (finaid.org/scholarships/scams.phtml) offers advice and resources for more information.
- **U.S. Department of Education: Federal Student Aid**—You'll find tips for avoiding financial aid fraud and additional resources at studentaid.gov/sites/default/files/dont-get-scammed.pdf.

which will be sent to all the schools you list on the application. The SAR has a section called the estimated family contribution where you can request two estimates—one with loan amounts and one without—to help you determine how much scholarship, grant, tuition reimbursement, or personal finances you need to aim for to cover your education costs. Remember, you must complete a new FAFSA each year you're enrolled in school.

3 Figure out the costs

Estimating how much money you'll need to pay for college will help you compare different school and program costs. Don't get sticker shock the first time you look at the cost of tuition—that number will come down when you subtract available funding or eliminate unnecessary expenses.

So how do you estimate college costs? One way is to use a net price calculator. The federal government, through the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, mandates that each school post a net price calculator on its website. The calculator provides information on direct costs such as tuition and fees as well as indirect costs such as parking and books for specific programs. To find the net price calculator on a school's website, simply type in the phrase "net price calculator" in the site's search box. Another option is to use one of the net price calculators located on the U.S. Department of Education website or the College Board website (collegeboard.org).

Most net price calculators ask you to provide some basic demographic information, such as number of dependents, to help with the calculation. Remember, the net price will be a rough estimate. Review it carefully for any costs you can quickly exclude. For example, if you own your own home and plan to commute to school, you can eliminate housing costs. (See *Calculate the cost*.)

Some college costs—such as tuition—are fixed, but many are optional or negotiable. For example, many colleges offer student health insurance. If you already have insurance through your employer, you may be able to opt out of the student insurance. Other costs that may be optional or negotiable are activity fees, meal plans, and orientation fees. You also might be able to save money on transportation if the school offers a bus pass at a student rate, which will save you parking fees. After you eliminate the optional



Calculate the cost

Using a net price calculator can help you estimate education costs. Access the calculators below or visit the websites of the schools you're interested in and search for their online calculator.

- **U.S. Department of Education: Net Price Calculator Center**—Visit collegecost.ed.gov/net-price to learn more about net price and how to use the calculators. You also can search for specific schools' calculators.
- **College Board: Tools and calculators**—Visit bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/tools-calculators for access to tools to aid your scholarship search, calculate college costs, and apply for nonfederal financial aid.

or negotiable costs, you'll see how much the total cost drops. (See *Common costs*.)

4 Discover the money

Now that you've done your homework and decided where you want to go to school and have a rough estimate of costs, it's time to locate and secure some funding to make your dream come true. Your potential sources of funding include employers, scholarships, grants, loans, veteran's benefits, and personal assets.

Employers

The first place to explore is your current employer. Many organizations offer some type of tuition assistance, but ask these questions:

- **How is the tuition assistance distributed?**
Some employers pay the school directly, while others reimburse you after you've completed a course and received a passing grade.
- **Are there any postgraduation obligations?**
Some employers will want you to sign an agreement to continue working for them for a certain number of years in exchange for assistance; if you don't, you'll have to pay



Common costs

You'll need to consider several common costs—some fixed (such as tuition) and some optional or negotiable (such as transportation and student health insurance)—when calculating how much money you'll need to return to school. They include:

- tuition
- computer/technology
- student health insurance
- fees
- parking
- clinic costs
- books
- transportation
- dissertation costs.

Tuition typically is the largest chunk of your costs. Some schools bill tuition by credit hour, and others by semester. If the school you choose bills by semester, you may pay the same amount for 12 credits as you would for 18, so think about that when you're deciding how many credits to take.

Dissertation costs can quickly add up and, depending on your topic and research methodology, may include costs for surveys, printing, statistical software, travel for data collection, transcription or editing fees, incentives for study participants, and publication expenses. The good news is that special scholarships are available to help defray dissertation costs. For example, Sigma Theta Tau International offers the Mary Anne Rizzolo Doctoral Research Award (bit.ly/2Y49Epc), which provides \$2,500 to support a doctor of philosophy dissertation and doctor of nursing practice final project research related to nursing education. And the Sigma Foundation for Nursing/National League for Nursing Research Award (bit.ly/374WAEu) offers \$5,000 each year to one nurse researcher or doctoral dissertation student.

back their investment in your education.

- **Is there a cap on the amount available?**

Some employers will pay for only one course per semester or may limit the total amount you're eligible for, even if you haven't finished. You don't want to be halfway through a program and learn you're maxed out.

Instead of tuition reimbursement, some employers offer loans, which may be forgivable if you agree to continue working for them for a specified amount of time after graduation. Another option is an employer loan that you pay back through payroll deductions, sometimes with little or no interest.

Another employer benefit might be paid

time off. If you work in academia, ask about taking a paid sabbatical to complete graduate education. Or ask your employer about working 4 days per week but still maintaining full-time benefits. It doesn't hurt to ask.

One last benefit to check out is whether your employer offers discounts. Some schools have a contract with an employer and give students discounts if they sign up for more than the one course covered by tuition reimbursement. Other discounts may be with different vendors. If you need to purchase a computer, other electronic equipment, or software for school, ask your work information technology and human resources departments if they offer employee discounts.

Scholarships

Scholarships can be need-based and require financial information, merit-based and require a transcript or other supporting documentation about your professional goals, or membership-based and require you or someone in your family to be a member of an organization, union, alumni association, or other group. A major advantage of scholarships is that most don't require repayment, but make sure before you apply. If possible, apply to all scholarships where you meet the eligibility criteria.

Before you start your search, grab paper and pencil or create an Excel spreadsheet to organize what you find. Search for both national and local scholarship opportunities, and apply for nursing-specific and adult student scholarships. Then look for other eligibility requirements—graduate student, undergraduate, minority, specific programs (for example nurse educator)—to narrow down your search. Once you establish your eligibility, bookmark the website and record the scholarship name, where and how to apply, application deadline, specific requirements, contact information, scholarship amount, and any specific expectations of award winners (for example, attending an award dinner or presentation, sharing your first-year transcript, or providing academic progress updates). To download a sample spreadsheet, visit myamericannurse.com/?p=67381.

Finding scholarships where you meet the eligibility requirements takes time and detective work. In addition to professional nursing organizations (for example, American Nurses Association, National League for Nursing, American Organization for Nursing Leader-

ship, and Sigma Theta Tau International), check with local nursing organizations and civic clubs (for example, Rotary Club, Kiwanis, and Lions Club), and large corporations or their nonprofit foundations (for example, Pepsi, CVS, and Uniform Advantage). Ask around about local businesses (for example, banks, credit unions, hospitals, and—believe it or not—funeral homes) that might have scholarships that aren't well advertised. Think about where a grateful patient might set up a scholarship fund or family and friends might want to honor a deceased nurse by establishing a scholarship in the nurse's name. Don't forget to check your college for possible scholarships. Ask the financial aid office, alumni association, and student organizations and clubs about any scholarships established by former students or faculty. (See *Know your scholarship options*.)

Grants

Typically, federal and state grants are need-based and don't require repayment. Federal Pell grants, which don't have to be repaid and go to any eligible student, are for undergraduates who don't have a bachelor's degree. Your FAFSA application will determine your eligibility for this grant. The Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) is for undergraduate students with exceptional financial need. Unlike a Pell grant, the FSEOG is given out on a first-come, first-served basis.

The U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) wants to increase the healthcare workforce, so it offers grants for nurses in programs that prepare them as nurse educators, nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, nurse anesthetists, nurse administrators, and other specialties requiring advanced education. States also provide grants for residents. Eligibility, amounts, and deadlines vary, so investigate what your state has to offer. (See *Look into grants*.)

Loans

Most loans must be repaid. However, if you plan to work in a health professional shortage area or critical shortage facility after graduation or for the government or other nonprofit organization, the loan may not have to be repaid. Research the repayment requirements before applying and get written confirmation.

The William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program offers four types of federal loans, but the criteria change frequently. Ensure you have

Know your scholarship options

Your scholarship options include national and local nursing organizations, corporations, and local businesses. Each will have different eligibility requirements, so do your homework.

National scholarships

Many national nursing and specialty organizations offer scholarships, and their state and regional chapters do as well. Some scholarships are set up so you can apply in consecutive years. Many of them don't receive any applicants, so you can be the one who applies.

If you plan to go to graduate school, check out the Nurses Educational Funds (n-e-f.org/about/nef-scholarships.html). This nonprofit's mission is to "promote leadership through scholarship support for professional nurses seeking master's and doctoral degrees in nursing education, practice, service, and research."

If you're flexible and willing to relocate after graduation, consider the Nurse Corps Scholarship Program administered by the U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration (hrsa.gov/loansscholarships/nursecorps/scholarship). Scholarship recipients agree to work in a critical shortage facility or health professional shortage area in exchange for a full scholarship and monthly stipend.

If you're a minority student, several scholarship opportunities are available. Here are some resources:

- Accredited Schools Online offers scholarships for minority students: accreditedschoolsonline.org/resources
- American Assembly for Men in Nursing offers scholarships to male nursing students: aamn.org/scholarships
- *Minority Nurse* posts new scholarships throughout the year: minoritynurse.com/nursing-scholarships

To find more national scholarship opportunities, visit the National Scholarship Providers Association website at scholarshipproviders.org.

Local scholarships

To learn if any local service organizations (such as Rotary Clubs and Lions Clubs) offer scholarships, visit their websites. Check local businesses (such as banks and hospitals) where community members may have established scholarships to honor loved ones.

the most recent information before you apply.

Personal or private loans are available through your bank or credit union and can be in the form of a home equity loan. You might be eligible to loan yourself money via withdrawal from certain retirement accounts. If you're considering a personal or private loan, sit down with a financial advisor to go over your options. (See *Loan options*.)

Veteran's benefits

If you're in the military or have a spouse or a parent who's served, review some of the benefits available to veterans and their dependents. If you're a veteran, find out if your school participates in the Post-9/11 GI Bill Yellow Ribbon Program. You also may be eligible for this funding through a direct or



Look into grants

Grants, which typically don't have to be paid back, are available from a number of sources. Eligibility criteria vary, so review the requirements carefully.

- **Health Resources & Services Administration** offers nursing grants for students who are preparing to be educators, advanced practice nurses, or administrators. bhwhrsa.gov/grants/nursing
- **U.S. Department of Education Federal Pell Grants** are awarded to all eligible undergraduate students who don't have a bachelor's degree. ed.gov/programs/fpg/index.html
- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant** is for undergraduate students with exceptional financial need. These grants are given out on a first-come, first-served basis. studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/fseog
- **State grants** are available to residents. Eligibility varies by state. collegescholarships.org/grants/state.htm

Loan options

A loan is another option for paying school costs. Here are some resources to help you determine what's best for you:

- **The U.S. Department of Education Federal Student Aid Office** (studentaid.gov/sites/default/files/federal-loan-programs.pdf) offers a handout on all federal loan programs.
- **The U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration** (bhwhrsa.gov/loansscholarships/flrp) administers a Faculty Loan Repayment program.
- **The William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program** (ed.gov/programs/wdffd/eligibility.html) offers four types of federal loans:
 - Direct subsidized
 - Direct unsubsidized
 - Direct PLUS loan
 - Direct consolidation
- If you're thinking about a personal or private loan, talk with your financial advisor.

transferred benefit if you're a spouse or child of a veteran or active-duty military personnel.

If you're a reservist, look into the Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve to assess your eligibility. And if you're a survivor or dependent, check out the two funding sources that are available: the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance program and the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship. (To learn more about veteran's education benefits, visit myamericanurse.com/?p=67381.)


Personal assets

Most nurses don't have several thousand dollars sitting in their bank accounts, so how can you come up with some ready cash? One option is to sell unused items—such as a motorcycle, snowmobile, jet ski, camper, boat, antiques, or jewelry—that are taking up space at home. Renting space—in your garage or home—is another creative idea. However, remember that rental payments are considered taxable income.

Other possibilities include using inheritance money or asking if a family member wants to support your educational goals. For tax purposes, investigate the limitations on gifts to an individual.

If you dread the thought of being in debt, you may want to consider saving up for college before applying. Many people don't have the patience or self-control to do this, but it might be the right move for you.

5 On your way

Tackling the cost of college can be a challenge, but with some time and effort, you'll find many resources to help you reach your goals. Spend some time researching the options and soon you'll be on your way to your next degree. 

For additional resources, visit myamericanurse.com/?p=67381.

Debra A. Wolff is president/chief executive officer of Nurses – Ready for the Next Step, author of *Advancing Your Nursing Degree: The Experienced Nurse's Guide to Returning to School*, and an adjunct professor of nursing at SUNY Empire State College in Saratoga Springs, New York.

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The new normal: Nurses as innovators

Nurses are leading the way to healthcare's future.

By Catherine Spader, RN

Did you know that the crash cart, feeding tube, pediatric pain scale, and neonatal phototherapy were all invented by nurses? Nurses always have been innovators, and now is the time for them to formalize and systematize their ideas to help transform healthcare.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is accelerating innovation, and we will see the empowerment of nurses as innovators in this new era," says Ryan J. Shaw, PhD, RN, associate professor and director of the Health Innovation Lab at Duke University School of Nursing in Durham, NC.

Doors are opening for nurses with innovation expertise who can develop, test, and implement new and improved products and processes to promote health and deliver optimal care. This includes spearheading effective new solutions for health inequity, streamlining work processes, and improving the patient experience.

Nurse innovators step up to COVID-19

At Duke University, RNs, nurse practitioners (NPs), and student nurses are making a timely impact in the fight against COVID-19 through the use of the Duke Health Innovation Lab.



When the pandemic accelerated in North Carolina, a group of nurses, nursing students, physicians, and engineers formed the COVID-19 Design Engineering Team. The team identified some of the most pressing pandemic challenges, such as the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), and brainstormed solutions. Then they collaborated to develop and build prototypes of new healthcare products and delivery processes.

In one project, the engineers used a 3D printer to create face shields for healthcare workers. Then 24 RNs, NPs, and physicians with intensive care unit (ICU) training tested them in the lab to produce data that the engineers used to improve the design. “We needed to evaluate the prototype quickly, so we could develop the next version as soon as possible,” Shaw says. “The lab allowed us to accelerate testing and helped to promote a better product.”

The face shields were put into clinical use in April 2020 at Duke University Health System. The team also launched telepresence robots in one of the ICUs at Duke’s hospitals. The robots allow staff to have a virtual audio and

video presence with patients from outside their rooms. Robots consist of iPads on wheels that are operated by staff remotely from a computer.

“It’s a supplement to physically going into a patient’s room and fosters more communication without having to don PPE,” Shaw says. “It also reduces exposure to healthcare workers and minimizes use of critically needed supplies.”

Shaw believes the COVID-19 pandemic has been a big impetus to develop telepresence robots, which have potential in many other settings, such as in primary care practices and home care. “We are moving into a new normal with innovative ways to deliver healthcare, including a new era of providing telehealth, and nursing will be a big part of that innovation,” Shaw says.

Nursing innovation opportunities abound

Doors are opening for innovative nurses to lead as entrepreneurs who want to start their own businesses and as intrapreneurs who want to pioneer change in their workplaces and throughout healthcare, according to Tiffany Kelley, PhD, MBA, RN, DeLuca Foundation Visiting Professor for Innovation and New

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Knowledge at the University of Connecticut School of Nursing in Storrs. “If there was ever a time that we need to think innovatively and share those ideas, that time is now,” she says.

Roles are emerging in healthcare systems and private industry for nursing innovation specialists and officers. Innovation skills are essential for nurses in healthcare leadership roles, and private industry also is looking for nurses with innovation expertise. For example, pharmacies can benefit from adding healthcare innovators to their strategic vision. This includes reimagining how consumers can receive their medications, such as innovative ways to address transportation barriers.

Public and private companies and government agencies also need nurses with innovation and information technology expertise. These include the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC). ONC employs innovative nurses and healthcare professionals to work on key issues related to electronic health information exchange and interoperability in the

evolving nationwide system. Large technology companies also are engaged in healthcare challenges, from cloud-based architecture, such as Amazon Web Services and Microsoft Azure, to Uber Health, which provides rides to healthcare appointments.

“Innovation is about problem solving to address unmet needs and make a positive impact for a large volume of people,” says Kelley, who also is founder/chief executive officer of Nightingale Apps (which is working to provide mobile apps to hospital nurses) and iCare Nursing Solutions (which provides healthcare informatics consulting). “Innovation is fundamental to nurses’ everyday practice, and there is demand for nurses who can expand that fundamental skill from one nurse’s ‘work-around’ idea to large-scale solutions that can effectively address local, national, and even global challenges.”

For information about getting the education you need for a career in nursing innovation, read the education article on page 4. 

Catherine Spader is an author and healthcare writer based in Littleton, Colorado.

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Midcareer nursing advancement

Reflect, be objective, and tap into your network.

By Keith Carlson, BSN, RN, NC-BC



Many career advancement tools and techniques are available, but they need to be used with conscious intention, curiosity, and diligent effort. If you've been a nurse who essentially coasts on the winds of happenstance—or if you've focused on a path suggested by others who think they know what's best for you—now is the time to seize the day (*carpe diem*).

When you take your career reins, you use your powers of critical thinking to dive deeply into your strengths, weaknesses, desires, and opportunities. You may need to rule out career paths that have no appeal (knowing what you don't want is as important as identifying what you do want) and think beyond limitations imposed by others.

As a midcareer nurse, the world is ostensibly your oyster if you have the temerity and ambition to seek your chosen path. And if “*carpe diem*” becomes your rallying cry, the pearl in the oyster will likely reveal itself in time.

1 Reflect on your journey so far

Some people enter nursing with an inkling of what they might want but have doubts about what the best choice is. Many new grads find that what lit their fire during school no longer provides inspiration. Instead, new interests may emerge that supersede what previously seemed a promising path. Take the time to reflect on where you started, the career you've pursued so far, and what you envision for your future. (See *Question yourself*.)

2 Perform a SWOT analysis

Knowing your strengths and weaknesses is crucial to making the most of your career. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis is a simple but useful self-reflection technique. SWOT is most commonly used in business, but it can be applied to any situation requiring critical thinking and a bird's-eye view. The following questions can help you formulate your own SWOT analysis.

Strengths

- What activities do you excel at and enjoy?
- What relevant knowledge, experience, or capability do you bring to your current role or to a role you wish to pursue?
- What are your main strengths, passions, and interests?
- What would trusted colleagues identify as your strengths?
- Which strengths are required for success in the roles you may pursue?

Weaknesses

- In what areas could you improve?
- What are your perceived limitations?
- Which tasks or activities are in apparent conflict with your natural style?
- What would others say are your weaknesses?
- What tasks or responsibilities do you generally dread or avoid, and why?

Opportunities

- How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?
- What new knowledge or experiences could address your weaknesses?
- What resources could increase your capacity to take inspired action?
- How can you leverage your personal and professional networks?
- Who makes up your “brain trust” of friends, colleagues, family members, peers, and mentors?
- Who do you most admire, respect, and hope to emulate?
- What data can you access about projected job growth and opportunities in your areas of interest?

Threats

- What perceived or known trends might hinder you?
- To what threats do your weaknesses expose you?
- Are forces at play that you may not be able to control or overcome?
- What risks might you be taking in the pursuit of your interests, passions, and goals?
- Are the biggest threats external or internal?

You can learn a lot by periodically engaging in this process and tracking the experience. Keep copies of your SWOT analyses so you can compare and contrast them over time. You can download the SWOT analysis online at myamericannurse.com/?p=67514.

Question yourself

Reflecting on what prompted your entry into nursing and how you’ve changed and grown personally and professionally can help you develop plans for the future you want.

- What initially drew me to nursing?
- Have I fulfilled my initial desires and goals?
- What obstacles have I overcome, and what have I learned about myself?
- Is there something I previously wanted that no longer seems alluring?
- Do I have new areas of interest?
- Am I satisfied with what I’ve accomplished?
- What do I really want from my career?
- Have I had an opportunity to discover what my personal mission in life might be?
- How does my workstyle mesh with my desired lifestyle?
- How does this career impact my family or my plans for a family?
- How can I have more of what I want in my life and career?
- How do I proactively make my career happen rather than just letting it happen to me?
- What are key strategies to propel me forward and measure my success?

3 Access your personal brain trust

Your professional and personal networks are your very own brain trust. Focusing on creating and nurturing valuable collegial relationships throughout your career is a smart use of your time and energy. Use some of these strategies to ensure networking success.

- Attend local, regional, and state nursing organization meetings.
- Become an active member of several organizations or associations.
- Attend national and international conferences related to your interests.
- Volunteer and participate in community service.
- Leverage networking tools, especially LinkedIn, to meet like-minded professionals.
- Use social media (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) to connect with thought leaders in your areas of interest.
- Nurture relationships with nurse colleagues in your specialty and other areas that interest you, as well as specialists and thought leaders in the wider nursing community. (See *Building a network*.)



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Building a network

Your network should be deep, well rounded, and include nurses, physicians, educators, allied health professionals, healthcare executives and leaders, researchers, and those outside of healthcare (such as lawyers, writers, journalists, and scientists). A deep network provides you with the wherewithal to dig into it when you need it most in a variety of personal and professional circumstances. Use phone, video chats, email, and in-person meetings when possible. Connections throughout the country and around the world can lead to surprising and satisfying situations (for example, traveling to Europe on vacation and having lunch with a Swiss nurse researcher you met on LinkedIn or seeking a job in another state and tapping your network for introductions, which leads to making a new friend who connects you with her hiring manager).

- Be a giver in your professional relationships. People respond more positively to peers and colleagues who are generous with their time, energy, and attention.
- Be authentic and transparent (to your comfort level) in your professional relationships to build rapport and feel connected. For example, an emergency department nurse who feels burned out reaches out to a colleague who works in an ambulatory care center and shares how her current situation is affecting her personal happiness, making it clear that she's looking for an opportunity to rediscover her joy of nursing. This small amount of transparency can elicit empathy from the listener and lead to a more authentic connection.

Tying it all together

Your career is a moving target. Resting on your laurels and ignoring the potential for growth is a recipe for boredom or burnout, so dedicate yourself to learning and development.

A satisfying career is fed by work-life balance. A nurse who knows how to work hard, play hard, and rest hard understands that a satisfying personal life is crucial to true professional success. To paraphrase John Lennon, life essentially is what happens when you're busy making other plans. Allowing for serendipity and personal and professional evolution is central to your ultimate success.

If you're a midcareer nurse in search of your next chapter, a deep look within is a powerful place to begin, whether or not you use a SWOT analysis or other tool. Socrates is thought to be the first philosopher to have advised his fellow humans to "know thyself." If you're willing to boldly look in the mirror and assess what you see using critical thinking, relative objectivity, and self-compassion, you're already on your way.

You can indeed make bold choices to create an exciting future as a nurse. Evolution can't happen without some risk (and a little trial and error). If you're willing to dive deep, your courage will be rewarded with an abundance of personal and professional treasures.



Keith Carlson is a holistic career coach for nurses, award-winning nurse blogger, writer, podcaster, speaker, and author (nursekeith.com). He also is a Nurse Influencer for *American Nurse Journal*.



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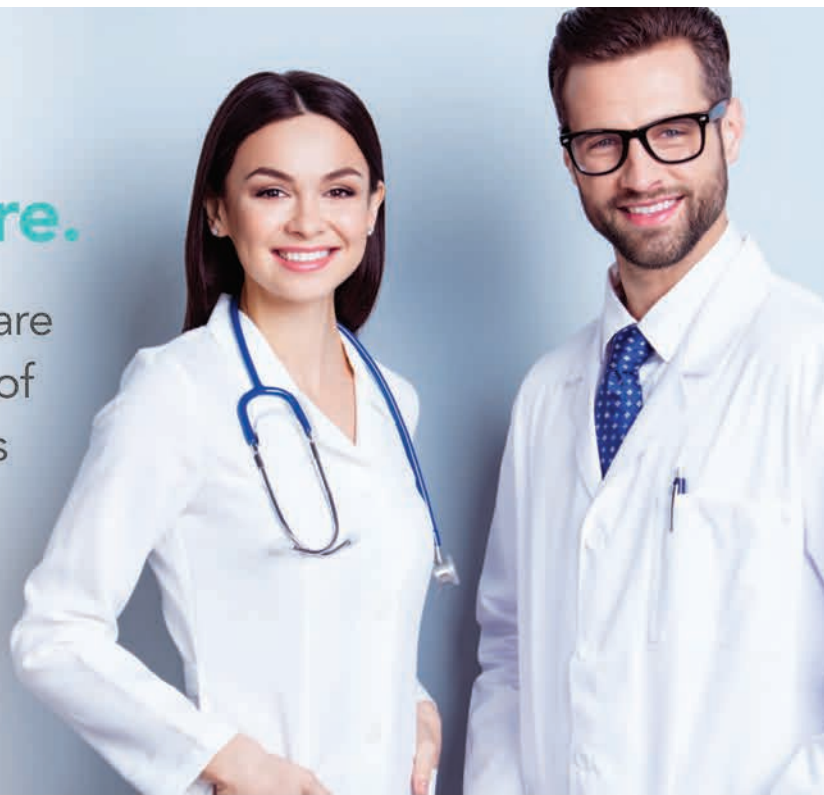
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The places you can go with a BSN

Answering why, what, and where can enhance your chances for success.

By Mary E. Fortier, EdD, RN, CNL

Congratulations, you've passed the NCLEX-RN exam and can proudly include RN after your name. The education you received to earn your associate degree in nursing (ADN) prepared you to practice bedside nursing, but now you want to continue your education and get a bachelor's of science in nursing (BSN). First you need to answer some important questions: Why do you want to obtain a BSN and what will you gain? Where will you go to school?

Why and what

Nurses pursue a BSN for many reasons. What's yours? Do you want to broaden your horizons and opportunities? Are you hoping to seek other employment options?

Whatever your initial motivation, a BSN education will provide you with competencies—critical thinking, communication, and leadership—that will enhance your knowledge base, assessment skills, interdisciplinary perspective, and writing and research skills. It will build on your ADN foundation to broaden your scope of practice, deepen your understanding of issues that affect patient care and the healthcare system, and enrich your professional development.

A BSN also may open doors that currently are closed to you. Nursing administrators prefer nurses with BSNs because research shows that the care these nurses provide leads to better patient outcomes. Employers see a BSN as a stepping stone to leadership positions. Healthcare's focus on primary and preventive care means nurses with a BSN are well prepared to practice in settings outside the hospital (in schools and clinics, case management, and in community, occupational, and public health). These settings require skills—including providing evidence-based patient education and leading interdisciplinary teams—that can be acquired only with at least a BSN education. And as you look to the future, you'll need a BSN to pursue graduate nursing education.

Where

Understanding the benefits of a BSN is only one part of the equation. The other is choosing the right program for you. What do you need to consider before selecting an RN-to-BSN program? Start by finding out the entry requirements for the programs you're interested in. Many require students to have an active, unencumbered RN license, although some programs allow new graduates to take a few courses (usually health assessment or professional development) before they pass the NCLEX-RN.

You'll also want to consider whether you want to be a full-time or part-time student and how you'll balance family, career, and schooling. Depending on your previous academic record and program requirements, the length of study can be anywhere from 1 to 2 years. Many ADN programs have articulation agreements with 4-year nursing schools that provide a seamless transfer into the BSN program.

Online, in-person, or hybrid

RN-to-BSN programs can be offered in an online-only, in-person only, or a combination (hybrid) format. Some online and hybrid program classes are synchronized (they're at the same time each

Employer assistance

Does your employer have a tuition-reimbursement plan? If so, get more details and ask these questions:

- Is reimbursement full or partial?
- Does it include books and fees?
- Will reimbursement be contingent on my grades or grade point average?
- Will I have to sign an employment commitment agreement after graduation in exchange for tuition?



week) and some are asynchronized (you work at your own pace and according to your own schedule). Before choosing a program, consider:

- Are you a self-directed student?
- Do you work well independently?
- Can you navigate a web-based learning platform?
- Are you comfortable with a virtual learning experience?

If you answered yes to these questions, then you should be comfortable with an online or a hybrid program. However, if you answered no to any of them, a fully online program probably isn't for you, and a hybrid program will require additional support in your first semester.

Hybrid programs typically alternate 1 week in on-campus classes and 1 week in online classes. This format allows students to take up to three courses in a semester, so you'll need to commit to approximately 15 hours per week for a three-credit course or 45 hours of study per week for three classes.

Many RN-to-BSN programs use a hybrid format because it provides students with face-to-face interactions with faculty and mentors while allowing the convenience of attending some classes online. In the end, your educational format choice depends on your individual learning needs.

Be methodical

Take a methodical approach to making your education choice. Is the RN-to-BSN program you're interested in accredited? How long has it been in existence? What's its reputation? (Ask your colleagues if they'd recommend the program they attended.) How many of any previous credits you have earned will transfer to the program? What's the tuition? Create a budget that includes the cost of books, student and parking fees, laptop, computer programs, travel, and childcare, as needed. Speak to your employer about any financial help the organization can offer. (See *Employer assistance*.)

The places you'll go

So many questions can leave you feeling overwhelmed and insecure. Creating a pro-and-con list for each program you research can help, but you'll also need to create a support list of family, friends, and colleagues who will understand and encourage your academic adventure. (See *Decision worksheet*.) Throughout it all, keep in mind the places you'll go and the doors you'll open with your BSN. 🏡

Decision worksheet

Use this worksheet to compare RN-to-BSN programs and help you find one that meets your learning goals and preferred learning style. You can complete this online at myamericannurse.com/?p=67430.

Affirmation/goal: I'm going to earn my bachelor of science in nursing (BSN).

My preferred learning style:

- ☐ Traditional classroom/face-to-face
☐ Virtual/online
☐ Hybrid (mix of classroom and virtual)

Universities options:

#1 university name: _____ **Contact information:** _____

Prerequisites:

- ☐ RN license (unencumbered)
☐ Prerequisite courses: _____, _____, _____, _____
☐ Number of transferable credits
☐ Number of credits needed to complete the BSN
☐ Cost per credit
☐ Financial aid available

Program format:

- ☐ Traditional classroom
☐ Online
☐ Hybrid

#2 university name*: _____ **Contact information:** _____

Prerequisites:

- ☐ RN license (unencumbered)
☐ Prerequisite courses: _____, _____, _____, _____
☐ Number of transferable credits
☐ Number of credits needed to complete the BSN
☐ Cost per credit
☐ Financial aid available

Program format:

- ☐ Traditional classroom
☐ Online
☐ Hybrid

Support resources willing to assist while I pursue my BSN:

*Repeat with any additional program options you're considering.

Mary E. Fortier is an assistant professor and the MSN program coordinator in the School of Nursing at Kean University in Union, New Jersey.

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Choosing the right NP education

Prepare to meet your education and career goals.

By Kathleen Ballman, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC, CEN; Dawn Carpenter, DNP, ACNP-BC, CCRN; Christine Colella, DNP, APRN-CNP, FAANP; Donna Lynch-Smith, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC, NE-BC, CNL; Helen Miley, PhD, APRN, AG-ACNP, CCRN; and Marcia Johansson, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC

Have you decided you're ready to pursue becoming a nurse practitioner (NP)? If so, take some time to discuss your career goals and pursuit of graduate education with family members who will be most affected by this decision. You'll want (and need) their support. Next, identify the patient population you're most passionate about and the settings in which you prefer to practice. After that, choose the educational track that will help you meet your goals, find a program that accommodates your individual learning needs, and select the appropriate certification and licensure. Use this article as a guide to help you carve your NP educational path.

What's your preferred patient population and setting?

NP patient population options include family

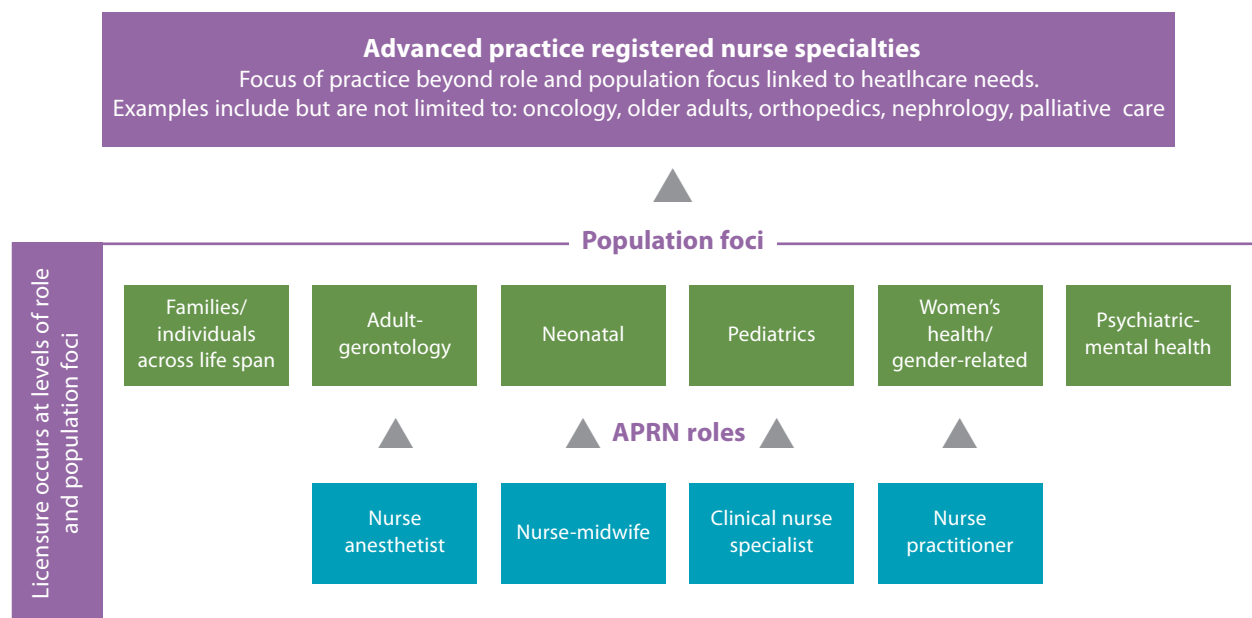
(across the life span), adult-gerontology (acute or primary care), pediatric (acute or primary care), neonatal, women's health, and psychiatric/mental health. One of the most important decisions you'll make as a prospective NP student is deciding which patient population you'll pursue and what setting you prefer. Do you want to care for adults with chronic but stable conditions in a clinic or home setting? Or do you see yourself caring for patients with acute or critical conditions in a hospital setting?

Commonalities and overlap of NP education exist. For example, all NPs receive graduate-level education (either a master's or doctoral degree) and licensure is attained in the state where you'll practice. Scope of practice, which is regulated by state boards of nursing, varies between states and continues to evolve, and



What's in the APRN Consensus Model?

The Consensus Model standardizes licensure, accreditation, certification, and education and defines advanced practice RN (APRN) roles based on population foci. You can learn more about the model by reviewing the frequently asked questions page developed by the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (goo.gl/dupTdD).



APRN Consensus Work Group, National Council of State Boards of Nursing APRN Advisory Committee. The Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification & Education. July 7, 2008. ncsbn.org/Consensus_Model_for_APRN_Regulation_July_2008.pdf

hospitals govern institutional privileging related to practice parameters. (To view details about patient populations, scope of practice, practice settings, and links to websites for more information, visit myamericannurse.com/?p=67269.)

What are your educational options?

Choosing the appropriate NP program requires education and guidance. Speak with a faculty member who practices and teaches in the NP track you've selected or with someone from the state board of nursing in the state where you plan to practice. Program options include:

- bachelor of science in nursing (BSN)-to-master of science in nursing
- BSN-to-doctorate of nursing practice (DNP)
- postmaster's certificate or postgraduate certificate (PMC).

It's important to note that some programs will soon require a DNP as entry into practice. For instance, the Council on Accreditation (COA) for certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA) programs will require a DNP beginning in 2025, and the National Association of Clinical Nurse

Specialists (NACNS) will require a DNP in 2030. Currently, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF) are in discussions about mandating a DNP as entry level for all NPs.

You also might consider a dual program, such as adult-gerontology acute care NP (AG-ACNP)/family NP (FNP), AG-ACNP/pediatric acute care, or psych-mental health/FNP. These programs typically include additional didactic and clinical courses.

PMCs are designed to allow nurses with a graduate degree in nursing to either continue their education to become an NP or for practicing NPs to add to their scope of practice. PMCs vary in length depending on the individual's prior education and focus. A gap analysis will help customize educational plans, including clinical experiences and coursework needed to care for new patient populations. After completing the PMC, you'll then need to apply for additional certification to be licensed for that patient population.

How and where do you want to learn?

Education platforms include traditional (face-to-face), fully online, or hybrid (combination of both) and vary by state. What works best for you may depend on your need for regular interaction with faculty and other students (traditional is probably best) or flexibility because of personal and work obligations (online or hybrid may be better). Other factors to consider include program quality and accreditation, fit with your interests and career goals, cost, time (including program length, time to complete assignments and clinical requirements, and class and travel time), location, and ultimate degree goal.

Clinical placement

Clinical placement is an important consideration when looking at programs. Placements are a collaborative effort between the college and the clinical setting and are based on the clinical program objectives. Clinical placement depends on your scope of practice and population focus. For example, an FNP program may require clinical time in pediatric, women's health, and adult settings. For an AG-ACNP

program, your clinical experiences may be with a hospitalist or intensivist.

Application process

When applying to an NP program, carefully follow all application instructions and timelines. Clearly answer questions and provide requested information. Choose references who can speak to your abilities as a learner (such as previous instructors or an NP with whom you currently work) and your work ethic and skills as an RN (such as your current nurse manager). (To view a list of questions you might be asked and those you may want to ask in a program interview, visit myamericannurse.com/?p=67269.)

What do you know about licensure, accreditation, certification, and education?

The AACN and the NONPF collaborated to design NP curriculum content and standards in the United States. Three documents outline the standards: *The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing*, *The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice*, and *Nurse Practitioner Core Competencies Content*.



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The Advanced Practice Nursing Consensus Work Group developed the “Consensus model for APRN regulation: Licensure, accreditation, certification and education” (Consensus Model) for all NPs. Following the model ensures role standardization, educational preparation, and licensure. (See *What’s in the APRN Consensus Model?*)

After graduating from an accredited NP program, you’ll be eligible to take a certification exam. Several national organizations—including the ANCC, the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners—provide NP certification. When you pass the national exam, you’ll want to obtain a state license.

The consensus model explains that specialization in a particular clinical practice area (such as cardiology, oncology, or orthopedic medicine) is outside of the parameters of national certification. Instead, specialty certifications are provided by specialty professional organizations.

Professional success

Despite national support for the consensus model, NPs and employers struggle to match

education with the correct patient population, so you’ll need to clearly understand the role and scope of practice you want to pursue. If you do your research, consult trusted colleagues, and map out a plan to meet your goals, you’ll be well on your way to professional success. 

View a list of references at americannursetoday.com/?p=67269.

Kathleen Ballman is an associate professor and coordinator of the Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner programs at the University of Cincinnati College of Nursing in Cincinnati, Ohio. **Dawn Carpenter** is a nurse practitioner (NP) in the medical intensive care unit at Penn State Health Milton H. Hershey Medical Center in Hershey, Pennsylvania, and an associate professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester. **Christine Colella** is a professor and executive director of graduate programs at the University of Cincinnati College of Nursing. **Donna Lynch-Smith** is an associate professor, concentration coordinator of the Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner program at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Nursing/Department of Acute and Tertiary Care in Memphis. **Helen Miley** is an NP in the MICU at Robert Wood Johnson University Medical Center and professor emeritus at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. **Marcia Johansson** is an assistant professor and coordinator of the Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner program at the University of South Florida College of Nursing in Tampa.



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Forging your career from the start

Begin to map out your future on the first day of nursing school.

By Susan Rux, PhD, MSN, RN, PHN, ACNS-BC, CHEP, CNE, CPRW, NEA-BC



In nursing school, grades and test scores measure accomplishment. Students are keenly aware of the program's academic expectations, but they also must consider their careers from the very first nursing class by mapping out a career plan with guidance from instructors, mentors, and clinical staff.

Your future starts now

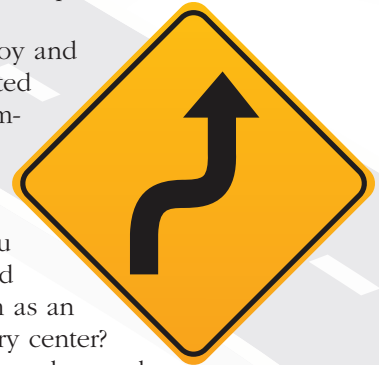
You can never start networking and building relationships too early. Every day on the clinical unit is a job interview. Use these strategies to propel your career forward:

- Journal your clinical rotation activities so you have a personal record of your skills. Reflective journaling can help you learn from past experiences and promote a richer understanding of your thought processes.
- Hone your networking skills. For example, when you meet new professional contacts, request their business card to demonstrate your interest in what they do and create a conduit for future connection and outreach.
- Research and reach out to organizations you might want to work for.
- Consider internship or volunteer opportunities. They can help advance your clinical learning experience and competency.
- Prepare a draft of your résumé and cover letter, and ask your career services specialist or a faculty member to provide feedback.
- Before you graduate, join your school's alumni association so you can connect with other alumni. Connecting with alumni and taking advantage of career support the association may offer can help you
 - find out what hiring managers look for in candidates
 - get tips on the job application process.

Choosing a specialty

Start your specialty search by visiting the association websites of specialties that interest you. Talk to nurses already in the specialty to learn more about training and education, career opportunities, and the work itself. In addition, ask yourself these questions:

1. What work setting do I feel most comfortable in? For example, do you prefer outpatient or inpatient settings?
2. What brings me joy and keeps me motivated at work? For example, do you like to work with chronically ill patients or do you prefer a fast-paced environment such as an ambulatory surgery center?
3. How important are salary and benefits? For example, are you willing to take a slightly lower salary in exchange for greater opportunity for advancement? Are you looking for "must-have" benefits such as tuition reimbursement?
4. Am I willing to relocate? Being willing to relocate will open up greater opportunities, but that may mean being more geographically distant from friends and family.



Job interview: Before, during, and after

Your first nursing job interview is scheduled. Now what?

Before the interview

- Identify your personal and professional

goals. Be able to tell the interviewer why you're a good fit for the organization.

- Research the organization. Be familiar with its mission, vision, and values.
- Schedule a mock interview with your career services specialist, faculty member, and a trusted peer. Include behavioral-based questions in your practice, such as
 - Describe a situation when you were upset while assisting a patient or customer. How did you handle this situation?
 - Give an example of a time you had to make a quick decision. What were the results?
- Prepare questions to demonstrate that you're serious and invested in the process.
- Verify the name of the interviewer(s) and the location and time of the interview. To avoid being late, do a timed test run to the location, factoring in traffic patterns.
- Review your résumé and take extra copies to the interview.

To view an interview tool that can help you prepare, visit bit.ly/3fpmc2s. And the American Association of Colleges of Nursing offers advice at bit.ly/36B3osW.

Interview day

- Arrive at least 10 to 15 minutes early.
- Be confident and display your professionalism via your attire and demeanor.
- Answer interview questions honestly. If you don't know the answer, it's okay to say so. When necessary, ask the interviewer to repeat the question.
- Focus on your unique patient care experiences and educational preparation. For example, be prepared to respond to a question such as, "How has your education prepared you for a nursing career?"
- Highlight special training that might give you an advantage over other applicants. The interview is an important time to showcase your accomplishments and how your skill set positions you more favorably compared to others.

After the interview

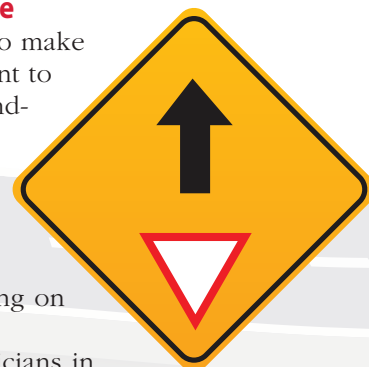
- Send a thank-you email to each of your interviewers within 24 hours.
- If a week goes by and you don't hear about next steps, follow up with the organization's human resources department. You don't want to be a pest, but you do

want to advocate for yourself and make your interest in the position clear.


Positioned to make a difference

Your education has primed you to make a difference, but how do you want to shape your career? These tried-and-true methods can help position you on your journey.

- Lead others to improve healthcare delivery and treatments. You can start building your leadership skills by serving on unit-based committees.
- Work collaboratively with clinicians in other professions.
- Exercise resilience and model teamwork and collaboration to ensure a healthy work environment.
- Persevere—turn setbacks into catalysts and inspiration for achieving your goals.
- Strive for a healthy work-life balance that incorporates self-care. Consider the resources available through Healthy Nurse Healthy Nation™ (healthy.nursehealthynation.org).
- Practice lifelong learning and leverage data to inform healthcare policy and practice. For example, consider joining a quality improvement taskforce to become a practice change agent.
- Be sure you understand the organization's values and how you impact them.



Prepared to participate

Healthcare will continue to present challenges. As you transition from student to a professional practicing nurse, take steps to ensure you're ready to actively participate in facing those challenges and moving the profession forward. 

Dr. Susan Rux is the dean of academic affairs at Chamberlain University in North Brunswick Township, New Jersey.

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School survival skills

How to find success while working full-time and getting your BSN.

By Debra A. Hrelc, PhD, RNC

You've decided to return to school to get your bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) degree, but you're nervous about how you'll manage. Here are a few strategies to help you not just survive but also thrive in school.



Manage your time

Time-management skills are essential for the RN returning to school. Setting priorities, planning, and organizing your daily activities are key to your successful academic journey. Here are a few suggestions.

Balance family needs. As an RN-BSN student, you're probably employed full-time and you may have a family to care for. Childrearing and childcare can be challenging for adults returning to school; you want to carve out time for studies in your busy routine, while not ignoring your children or family. Ideally, another adult caretaker can help with childcare and schedule adjustments, but if that's not possible, a babysitter or other assistant is your next best option. You might also want to have a backup for last-minute sitter cancellations so you don't have to miss class. You may have to study after your children go to bed or during work breaks. Remember, you can't add more hours to the day, but you can find your own rhythm—learn to work with what you have.

Organize study time. You'll have minimal study time, so use it wisely. As soon as you get your course schedule, highlight the important dates for each assignment, quiz, exam, and project on your syllabus. Then develop a system that lets you see dates at a glance so you don't miss any deadlines.

Many RN-BSN students miss due dates, fall behind in reading and assignments, procrastinate, or let life get in the way of their education goals. Best practice is to make school and studying part of your daily routine. You may experience some trial and error as you work to find a time and place that best fit into your schedule and family life, but be persistent. Good study habits include a quiet place with no distractions, a flat surface for writing, good lighting, being rested and well-fed, and a positive attitude.

This is an important journey you're on. With your family's support, plan for your study time, schedule it, and stick with it. You'll be surprised how much it will become a part of your daily routine.



Hone your note-taking and questioning skills

Don't fall behind in your assigned readings. They will help you know what's important to take note of during lectures, presentations, or webinars.

Be an active learner. Make sure you understand everything that's bolded or italicized in the text, as well as anything that's further explained with a picture, diagram, or chart. If the authors have displayed information in a different color or size print, it's important to know. If questions are presented at the end of the chapter, make sure you can verbally explain the answers. Talking through the answers to these questions is a great way to test your knowledge.

Use note cards. Taking notes using index cards (writing questions or terms on one side and the answers or definitions of the other) can be helpful. These cards can easily be carried in your pockets or purse and pulled out whenever you have a few minutes to review; they're an excellent use of time while waiting in line or during a work break.

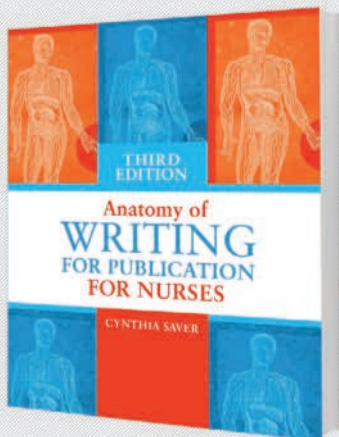
Ask questions. If you're attending a face-to-face class, read class material before attending, write down any questions you have, and ask them in class so the instructor can

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provide answers. If you're an online student, keep up with your readings and don't hesitate to email faculty with your questions.



Leverage your strengths

If you're a student with plenty of real-life nursing practice under your belt, you may find it helpful to put learning in terms of actual patient experiences. For example, when learning about hypercalcemia in a pathophysiology class, a nurse who's cared for a patient with this condition might find it easier to relate that patient's clinical presentation to what's being taught. For example:

- The patient had muscle weakness, decreased muscle tone, and lethargy.
- He had GI upset, was nauseated, had little appetite, and suffered from constipation.
- He had polyuria and cardiac arrhythmias with ECG changes.
- He showed classic signs and symptoms of hypercalcemia.

Reviewing a disease process in terms of a real-life patient can help solidify the information in your mind.



Tap into resources

Your school likely offers a variety of free resources to assist you in achieving your academic goals.

Technology assistance center. The technology assistance center (help desk or computer help desk) can help you with computer issues related to your classes, required programs, and learning management systems needed for taking online classes.

Advisors. Your advisor, who will be assigned to you by the school, can help you plan your schedule and register for classes. Meet with your advisor regularly (in person, on the phone, or via a remote meeting app) to gain invaluable advice and guidance.

Tutoring and study groups. Schools usually have tutoring services available for most if not all liberal arts courses, as well as for many nursing courses. Take advantage of this help if you need it. Frequently, study groups form within individual classes. Studying in a group brings different perspectives and provides support.

Writing assistance. You'll have to complete many writing assignments in nursing school. If writing isn't your strong suit, see if your school has a writing center, where you can take advantage of one-on-one help with your writing skills and learn American Psychological Association writing style, which is preferred in most nursing programs.

Counseling. All colleges offer free counseling and support for students. If you need emotional help, encouragement, or support, seek out these resources.

Faculty and teaching assistants. Don't hesitate to contact faculty with any questions or concerns. Your course syllabus is a "contract" with your instructor. Dates and times, expectations, and assignments typically are non-negotiable. You're responsible for meeting deadlines. If for some reason you can't meet an assignment date or need to miss a class, contact the instructor before the due date, not after. The instructor will appreciate that effort and will be more likely to accommodate a request for extension, if possible.

Faculty post their contact information and office hours and location on the course syllabus. Keep that information in your phone or other easily accessed location. If your class has a teaching assistant, have that person's contact information readily available also. Your instructor and teaching assistant want you to be successful and to help you in any way possible.

Be realistic

Be realistic in your expectations of yourself, your school, your job, and your family. But if you find the right school for you and follow this advice, you'll enjoy a successful experience that helps you grow in your career.



Debra A. Hrelac is the RN-BSN program coordinator at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

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Hrelac DA. How to be a success in nursing school. *Am Nurse Today*. 2018. myamericannurse.com/Digital/EducationGuide18-19/#p=22



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Should you say “yes” to the job?

Three steps to finding your dream job.

By Jessica Rhoades, MSN, MBA, RN, PCCN

Whether you’re a new or an experienced nurse, you may not know where you’ll end your career or even what your next step will be. But with a little guidance, you can find a supportive organization and the opportunities you need to drive your career.

Confirm the culture before you say “yes”

The single most important decision you make in your nursing career is choosing an organization you can trust with your future. Nursing is an incredible career because it meets you where you are in life—as long as you partner with the right organization. Use these three steps to help you make the right choice for your future.

Step 1: Evaluate up-front offerings

In today’s competitive nurse recruitment atmosphere, many distractions may lure you into taking a position with an organization that’s not right for you. For example, an organization might offer you:

- **Sign-on bonuses.** Large sign-on bonuses may be offered for positions that are considered hard to fill; however, they also can

be used in organizations or units with high turnover and less-than-appealing working conditions. Seek to understand the driving force behind the sign-on bonus.

- **Absence of commitment contracts.** Many organizations require a commitment in return for their investment in your education and onboarding, particularly for new graduates completing a residency. An organization that doesn’t require a commitment may not offer much support. Evaluate the value the organization is offering compared to the commitment required.
- **Scheduling promises.** In acute- and subacute-care settings, off-shifts and weekends must be covered. Don’t get hung up on landing the perfect schedule; positioning yourself for a growth opportunity may require that you work a less desirable shift for a while.

Step 2: Evaluate leadership

Your growth and support within an organization will depend on its leaders. Take the time to research the organization’s leadership before you commit.

- **Research the top leaders (chief executive officer, chief nurse executive, chief nursing officer).** Find out what these leaders are passionate about. Do their priorities align with yours?
- **Identify the organization’s mission statement and core values.** How do the organization’s mission and values directly impact its culture?
- **Shadow in the department (if possible).** Shadowing is a great way to show you’re seriously interested in a position, network with future colleagues, and gain insight into the department’s environment.
- **Speak with nurses.** Seek out nurses who work in the department you’re interested in. Shadowing will make this easy.
- **Read reviews.** When reading reviews, look for general themes. For example, one employee’s complaint of leadership on the organization’s social media or an employer review website such as Glassdoor shouldn’t dissuade you if most of the reviews are positive.





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- **During your interview, ask questions that focus on growth opportunities.** Ask about nursing councils, preceptor opportunities, educational conferences, tuition reimbursement, and details of structured clinical advancement. For example, many organizations have a defined clinical ladder.
- **Seek to understand the benefits package.** Become knowledgeable about essential benefits such as health insurance, and check for benefits that fit with your needs, such as fertility benefits if you're planning a family.
- **Learn about educational support options.** Find out if the organization supports further education, certification, conferences, and other professional opportunities.

Step 3: Evaluate workplace environment

Take a deep dive into the clinical components of the organization, unit, and position that will shape your day-to-day work experience.

- **Nurse-to-patient ratios.** How many patients are assigned to a nurse during each shift?
- **Patient acuity.** Does the nurse-to-patient ratio match the standard based on patient population acuity? For example, an intensive care unit's ratio may be 2:1 while a medical unit's may be closer to 5:1.
- **Clinical resources.** Does the organization have nurse support services? For example, does it have vascular access nurses, patient transportation assistance, and 24-hour environmental services support?
- **Employee satisfaction scores.** How do nurses in the organization rank their engagement and satisfaction? Many organizations publish a nursing annual report you can find online. You also may want to ask a few questions about nursing engagement and satisfaction during the interview process.
- **Nurse engagement.** Do frontline nurses sit on systemwide councils? Are they involved

in a peer-review process? How are nurses involved in unit performance improvement?

After you say "yes"

You may have found an organization you trust with your future and started your new job, but your work isn't done. You must now invest time and energy to develop a relationship with your leadership team. Just as care for your patients should be a partnership, forming a partnership with your leaders also is important. Here are a few ways to develop good leadership relationships.

- **Get involved.** Join councils and committees, and find other opportunities to support your unit.
- **Be a role model.** Model good behavior at all times; be reliable, offer support whenever possible, and become known for your positive attitude.
- **Be open to change.** Embrace innovation, including new processes, equipment, and colleagues.
- **Discuss your goals and priorities.** Speak with your manager regularly about your professional goals.
- **Ask for feedback.** Seek feedback from managers and colleagues and make positive adjustments in response to what you learn.

Continued success and satisfaction

The last (and possibly the most important) piece of the puzzle is listening to your own needs. As a nurse, your work options include everything from per diem arrangements to full-time, salaried positions. When you choose the option that best fits your needs, you're more likely to bring your best to work each day, which ensures future opportunities will be open to you.

Take the time to research what's important to you and what an organization has to offer before you say "yes." Your future self will thank you.



Editor's note: Learn about Rhoades' professional journey at myamericannurse.com/?p=67433.

Jessica Rhoades is the director of nursing and advanced practice clinician recruitment at ChristianaCare in Wilmington, Delaware.

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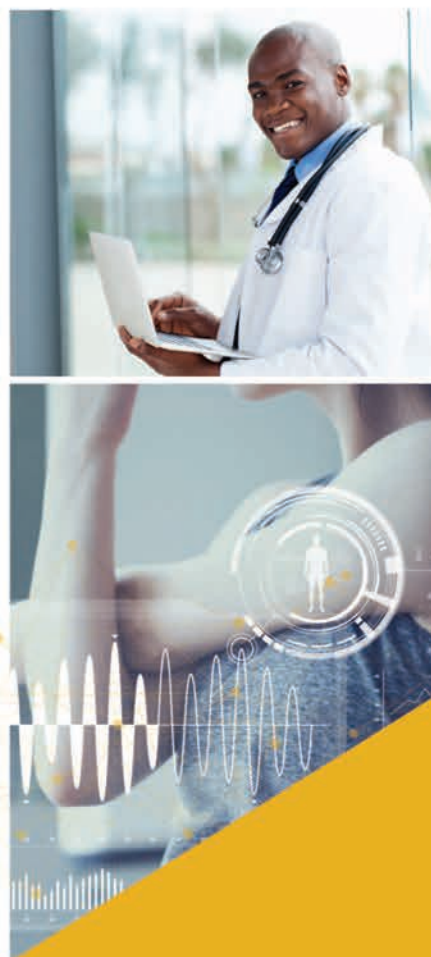
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