

One area where we see our students have difficulty during clinicals is shifting their mindset from an RN to an Advanced Practice Nurse role. Some students feel imposter syndrome because they are moving from carrying out orders to making those care decisions and directing patient management.

#### 10. Know What You're Not Understanding

You'll be taking classes like advanced pharmacology or advanced physical assessment. And you already took those classes at an undergraduate level, so you already understand the material at a more basic level. But you need to self-identify what you're not understanding at a more advanced level and realize, "I don't quite remember this." You'll want to open up old

textbooks and reread your notes to help refresh your brain on that foundational knowledge.

#### 11. Having a Work-Life-School Balance

Working while earning a master's degree varies by your circumstances and program. Working full-time can be very challenging, especially once you start your clinical rotations. It also depends on your employer. They might be flexible, or you might have an agreement with them that allows you to work a certain number of hours per week.

Many students reduce their work hours or transition to part-time, especially when starting their clinical rotations. It takes a lot of planning, so it's important to set expectations between you, your family, and your employer.

#### 12. Think About Your Why

Pursuing a master's degree is a personal decision. You applied for the program, and you're making this commitment, and you'll likely face some challenges. But it's important to remember to keep your eye on the prize and remember your why. Stay focused, knowing you're working toward achieving a graduate degree and the positive impact you'll make with it. ■

**About the author:** Dr. Krista Estes serves as the Assistant Dean of Master's Programs and is an Associate Professor at the University of Colorado Anschutz College of Nursing. She actively practices as a Family Nurse Practitioner and previously held the role of Family Nurse Practitioner Specialty Director for eight years.

## Region 4 Updates

The San Luis Valley in south central Colorado is lucky to have two local nursing programs. Trinidad State College (TSC) in Alamosa, CO offers Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), associate degree Nursing (ADN), the Practice Nurse exit option (allowing a short course and exam after the first year for LPN), and an on-line RN-BSN program. TSC is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. Adams State University (ASU) in Alamosa, CO offers a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program. The ASU BSN program is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. The two programs combined graduate approximately 25 new nurses per year.

At the Colorado Nurses Associations 2025 conference, region 4's CNA team was inspired by Amanda Skenandore's break out

session on "Read, Relax, and Renew". The session discussed the need for nursing self-care and demonstrated how books and reading can be used as a tool to help. The team decided to use the concept and covered gently used books with basic descriptions on them, added homemade bookmarks, stickers, and delivered them to the local nursing faculty to read during their winter breaks. The goal of the project was to give back to other nurses, but it was also a great team-building opportunity! ■

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