

Professional Summary:

Nursing school has been a delightful surprise. From getting married first semester, to finding my dream job before the last semester even fully kicked off, I have been enamored with the whole turbulent process. Nursing is my second career and that has driven me to be a hard worker and a determined student as I chase this next chapter in my professional growth. I use my clinical opportunities to work hard and expose myself to as much as possible while I'm still in this learning environment. I'm always eager to learn, and I'm proud of myself for always volunteering to try new things when the opportunity presents itself even if it's not with my nurse or my patient.

Since I've adopted this type of attitude in the clinical setting, I've had a lot of opportunities to practice skills and test my knowledge throughout the various clinical rotations I've had, seeing our coursework in action. Some of my test preparation in the last few semesters came from discussing our next exam with the nurse educator on a unit I was at for clinical, and the information definitely stuck after that. I've also taken big steps in how forward I am, not being afraid to advocate for patients, or question instructions I've been given that don't add up for me. My biggest goal at this point in my clinical practice is to be absolutely certain in every next step I take, whether that's passing medications or assessing lung sounds, because even as a student, I'm responsible for my patients and the care they trust me to give them.

Some of my accomplishments during this time have been getting experience in new skills. Just this week I inserted a nasogastric tube and that made me so proud of myself. At the beginning of our first few clinical days, I was so afraid to try new things and step outside of my comfort zone and practice on real people instead of mannequins. Now I confidently raise my

hand and ask if I can try new skills regularly in my preceptorship. I've grown confident in my assessments as well and have been exposed to a variety of new patient experiences while precepting in the ICU. I feel confident working with different types of patients feeding needs and medication administration that intimidated me before and feel like I was exposed to a great variety of patients. I also have gotten very familiar with other concepts that before were just things from our Textbook I was trying to commit to memory. Now I can confidently give a neuro exam or complete the NIH stroke scale for instance. I've even got the chance to work with the remote nurses at Sentara who do virtual nursing for things like discharge and consulting. Overall, I feel accomplished that I'm making the connections and the impact of hands-on patient care is creating a genuine new knowledge base of experiences for me to pull from and apply to my clinical practice.

While my confidence grows, I maintain my humility in acknowledging areas of weakness I see for myself in clinical practice. Medication knowledge is somewhere I have a huge deficit, and before I let that hold me back both in the classroom and at clinicals. Now, especially after working with my preceptor, I am recognizing ways to improve this situation and be a better nurse from it. I research the medications before I go to pull them, I make sure to explain each one as I give them to the patient and why I'm giving them. This also helps me stop and justify for myself why I'm giving this patient the medication. Hopefully recognizing this need, and using the previously mentioned strategies to work on it, will improve my clinical skills and help me provide safer, more competent patient care. There are also several skills I haven't encountered or haven't had the chance to practice to familiarity, so I'm aware that's still going to be a big learning curve as I start my first job as a practicing nurse, but I know through this time in school that eventually I will get a chance to try things and I pick up on stuff pretty fast.

I'm looking forward to graduation, as I'm sure we all are, so I can improve upon my work life balance. Getting through school with four kids, living a half hour from campus, and having a husband who deployed during most of nursing school meant I had to manage my time and stress a lot this semester. There were times I struggled greatly but I relied on my family more and I used my resources like a really compassionate psychiatrist, which is personal growth on its own for me as I've never sought that type of support before. I feel I have a great foundation of self-care going into my nursing career.

As I launch into my career, my first goal is to pass my NCLEX the first time. Once I'm a practicing nurse, my long-term goals include going back to school to be a nurse practitioner. I'll start my time as a nurse on an oncology unit, but my interests are broad, including the ICU and wound care. Now that I've become familiar with the ICU from my preceptorship, I'm much less intimidated to work in that environment that sounded so intimidating before. Now I think that there's nothing I can't learn to do, and with the right amount of determination and humility I will accomplish all my goals.