

Tips for Writing Application Essays for the UNM Nursing Program

Getting Started

Preparation is the first step in writing strong answers to the essay questions in your application to the UNM Nursing Program. Begin with some brainstorming on why you want to become a nurse. You may find it helpful to write out some notes and to ask for feedback from people who know you.

Consider the following questions:

- When did you first realize you wanted to be a nurse?
- What personal, professional and educational experiences have contributed to your goal of becoming a nurse?
- What personal, professional and educational experiences are most relevant to your application?
- Why do you want to be a nurse? Take some time to refresh your memory about the unique role of nurses. Consult www.onetonline.org and www.bls.gov/ooh for more information.

Think about your own experiences with medicine as a patient or as a patient's family member, your relevant coursework, and relevant professional experience such as shadowing, volunteer and work experience in a medical setting. Also consider other potentially relevant experience, such as volunteer or work experience in which you interacted with the community, provided service to people from different cultures, and worked as part of a team.

Key Themes

Though the essay questions may change from year to year, prospective nursing students are expected to address the following themes in their essays.

Diversity and Multiculturalism. The UNM Nursing Program is committed to training nurses to serve diverse patient populations. Nurses are required to work respectfully with patients and colleagues from different cultural backgrounds every day. When addressing this theme, you must demonstrate your commitment and ability to provide competent, considerate service to people whose culture, religion, political beliefs, value system, language, ethnicity, ability and other factors are different from your own. What experiences in your past demonstrate your ability to do this? Remember that you are trying to show your ability to do this as a professional, so this is primarily about how you show respect to others, not about times when others have shown respect or disrespect to you.

Persistence and Dedication. Nursing school is extremely demanding. Application committees want to be sure that students who are admitted are both able and willing to put in the work required to be successful. What experiences in your past demonstrate that you are able to reach

high academic standards, achieve challenging goals, prioritize effectively and manage your time? Consider the skills and choices that have helped you be successful. How will you continue to use these strategies going forward?

Why Nursing? One of the most important questions you will be asked is why you wish to become a nurse. You can think of this question as having two components: why do you want to be a healthcare professional, and why do you want to be a nurse specifically? You should demonstrate your interest in healthcare and commitment to caring for patients. You should also demonstrate that you understand the role of a nurse and believe you are well-suited to this particular role. Many students are first drawn to nursing because they like science and want to help people. This immediately raises the question, why nursing instead of other professions like being a physician, physician assistant, physical therapist, social worker or science teacher? The application committee should be able to see why you want to be a nurse specifically. Consult www.onetonline.org and www.bls.gov/ooh for more information.

Tips and Suggestions

- When asked for an example, focus in on one specific story. Consider using the STAR method to ensure you tell a complete story. See STAR method handout.
- Put yourself in the committee's shoes. Why do you think they selected these questions? What are they trying to assess? What qualities are most important in a future nurse?
- Show your experience. Your application is your chance to demonstrate that you are ready to be successful in this program. Take the opportunity to show off your relevant personal, professional and educational experience.
- Demonstrate your awareness of the profession. It is important to show that you have a real-world understanding of the field of nursing. If you get very stuck on this point, consider taking the time to get more experience through shadowing and volunteering before you apply.

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