

# Contra Costa College

# Nursing Student Survival Guide



Contra Costa College  
Nursing Department  
2600 Mission Bell Drive  
San Pablo, CA 94806  
510.215.4103  
[www.contracosta.edu](http://www.contracosta.edu)



Contra Costa College  
Nursing Department

Dear Student,

Welcome to the Contra Costa College Nursing Student Survival Guide. We're glad you are visiting us!

This guide was created especially for new and prospective nursing students. The input we received to create this guide came from faculty, nursing students, and alumni. These are "Pearls of Wisdom" and suggestions that were provided to benefit future students interested in entering our nursing program. Some of the information may also be helpful to students already in the program!

We sincerely hope that you find the information that we have collected to be useful, either in your preparation for or continuation in our program at Contra Costa College.

Our faculty, students, and staff wish you the best of luck in the pursuit of your goal to become an RN.

Sincerely,

The Contra Costa College Nursing Faculty

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# Nursing Student Survival Guide

## I. Getting Ready for the Nursing Program

Prerequisite courses

### **Student recommendations about the sequence of taking prerequisite courses and additional courses to take.**

Many students suggest starting with English and Math first because of the difficulty and foundational value these courses provide for future courses. One 4th semester student suggests not taking more than one “-ology” at a time. Another student suggests taking: 1) Anatomy 2) Physiology 3) Microbiology and taking one science class per semester and adding a few others from other groups. These are the “big lab classes” and students comment that “they are the hardest because you have a one subject class but twice the workload,” both in assignments and amount of time you are required to spend at school. Ultimately it depends on you and your schedule, both at school and outside of school. One student states that she knew many students who attempted to “cram all of the big lab classes in at the end, right when they were applying to the nursing program, and the students were not accepted because their GPA’s were not high enough in Group A.”

Nursing 205 (Drug Dosage Calculation) and Nursing 212 (Pharmacology) are prerequisites that are taken or challenged before acceptance into the nursing program. These classes provide valuable skills and knowledge that is useful throughout the nursing program. Students suggest taking these classes separately, especially if you have concerns about your math skills.

### **How long will it take to complete the prerequisite courses for the nursing program?**

Most students report that if they attend school as a full-time student, prerequisites can be completed in 1 1/2 to 2 years. How many courses you take at a time depends on your lifestyle, and whether you will be a full-time or part-time student. Most of all, you want to be sure to do as well as you can in these courses to build a strong foundation and background for your nursing courses and to meet the GPA requirements for the nursing program (cumulative GPA of 2.75 or higher in Group A courses and 3.0 or higher in Group B courses. Each course must be completed with a grade of “C” or better).

Some students continue to take general education (Group C) courses after they have started the nursing program, although most students and faculty encourage incoming students to complete all of the Group C requirements prior to entering the program.

### **Nursing is a science and requires science and math.**

Now more than ever nurses are called upon to use their science and math skills in nursing practice. There is a reason that nursing courses have science prerequisites.

For example, in courses such as Anatomy and Physiology you will learn normal organ and body system function. When your nursing courses begin, you will learn about what occurs when illness affects what was once considered “normal” in the body, and how to properly intervene as a nursing professional.

Many nursing interventions involve administration of drugs and other therapeutic agents. Nurses must understand their function and be able to properly calculate the correct dosages. Drug dosage calculation requires an understanding of basic algebra, and “solving for x.” If there were one math course in which you should attempt to build a strong foundation, it is algebra. The Drug Dosage Calculation (DDC) course (NURS 205) is a prerequisite course to all nursing program courses.

### **Suggestions to those students who are nervous about math and science.**

Get help! Tutoring is available by your peers or on campus. Ask your instructors questions early on, and make appointments outside of class time to meet with instructors. Go to the computer lab and work on the DDC modules and practice, practice, practice. Again, the more problems you can calculate correctly, the more natural the processes will become to you. “Do something every day, don’t slack off, and keep a positive attitude”, suggests one 2nd semester student. Another student states, “Don’t be scared.” Lastly, be confident. “You’ve come so far to get here. Stay focused and prioritize-Nursing school is your priority,” suggests another student.

Although it may seem overwhelming and impossible at times, try to maintain your interest in the subject and you may find that you love it. One student describes her experience in taking the math and science courses as, “The math is basic algebra and can be related to everyday use. The sciences can seem very overwhelming and scary because science is about everything in our lives. I could always visualize and relate what we were discussing to my own life (i.e. cells, plants, water, DNA, genetics, chemical compounds). You’ll get through it and will be amazed at all of the things you have learned and accomplished, like splicing DNA to make mutant bacteria!”

## The Application Process

### **What students need to do and what they should know**

The first step in the application process to the CCC nursing program is read the **Nursing Program Bulletin** which lists both the entrance requirements and prerequisite courses. The nursing application is available online as well as in the Nursing Department in the Health Sciences (HS) Building (HS 103).

The nursing program application is also available on line, listed on the college website under nursing. Once completed, the nursing application packet must be submitted to

the CCC Admissions & Records Office, located in the Student Services Center (SSC) Building. The application deadlines are posted in the Nursing Program Bulletin. New classes of nursing students begin each fall semester. Submit your application early!

The Nursing Department faculty as well as current nursing students in the program, strongly recommend that prospective students apply to several nursing programs. Nursing admissions are impacted in most nursing programs in the Bay Area, and multiple admission applications will provide applicants a better chance of admission into a nursing program. It is always better to have more than one educational option.

Current students also suggest being prepared by obtaining copies of all your transcripts and starting the application process early. Don't wait until the last minute. Make an appointment in the Admissions & Records Office to review your transcripts. If you have taken college courses at other institutions, these courses need to be evaluated before applying to the nursing program to see whether your previous work can count towards fulfilling some Group A and B or college breadth requirements.

Also, request "official sealed copies" of your transcripts to be sent to Admissions & Records, as these will need to be on file and can sometimes take several weeks to be sent. Nursing students suggest meeting with a CCC Admissions Counselor regarding which specific courses you still need to take and to have your previous coursework evaluated. You can save time and money by not repeating courses you have already taken! Also, don't assume that because you took a prerequisite course of the same name at another college that the course will automatically fulfill the entrance requirements at CCC.

### **The Group A and B GPA requirements. What students should know.**

The prerequisites for the nursing program are divided into two groups: Group A and Group B. The cumulative GPA requirement for the Group A courses is a 2.75 grade point average. The cumulative GPA requirement for the Group B courses is a 3.0 grade point average. Use the Contra Costa College (CCC) catalog and be sure that courses you are planning to complete at other colleges will be accepted as the same courses listed for Group A and B requirements. If you are planning on enrolling in courses outside of CCC, check with an Admissions Department counselor prior to enrolling in the course about whether the course is equivalent. This way, you will avoid unnecessary frustration and will save time and money. Not all courses are created equal!

Nursing students suggest that incoming students to the program "aim high" and try to keep as high a GPA as you can in your prerequisite courses. You may experience a drop in your grades as you transition and get readjusted to the format of the nursing program. In addition, as difficult as you may be finding your prerequisite courses, "Nursing school is 100% harder and requires more than you can imagine," states a nursing alumnus. Developing good study habits while taking prerequisite courses will be beneficial to you once you are in the nursing program.

Students also suggested to focus and complete Group A first, which consists of science courses and English. But remember not to minimize the importance of the Group B courses, which nursing students note as providing foundation and skills

needed later in the nursing program.

**Nursing student advice to the student who has completed ALL Group A and B requirements and is applying to the nursing program:**

A 4th semester student suggests, “Finish all courses needed for the application as well as for the ADN degree prior to starting the nursing program. There will be no time (or little time) to do it during the program.” In addition, several students suggest attending summer school in an effort to complete all of the requirements if you are unable to fit them in during the regular school year. Students report they have “had to find time to complete a Physical education course or a humanities on top of their nursing courses and it was very difficult.”

**Is the program impacted? Will I be on a waiting list?**

When a program is said to be “impacted,” it means there are too many qualified applicants for the number of slots available in the program. When this occurs in the nursing program at Contra Costa College, the program holds a lottery so that all qualified students are given a fair opportunity to be in the program. The lottery system has been necessary for the past several years.

Those students whose names are not selected in the lottery are placed on an alternate list. If any of the students who are accepted in the lottery do not accept admission into the Contra Costa College nursing program, or do not otherwise qualify (TEAS results, background check and drug screen results), students on the alternate list are accepted in the order that their name appears on the alternate list.

Contra Costa College does not maintain a waiting list. After the class list has been finalized, anyone remaining on the alternate list must reapply for admission the following year.

## **II. Costs and fees associated with nursing education**

**The benefits and cost-savings of an ADN Program.**

You may find when researching nursing programs that attending an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program at a community college can save you a lot of money. Currently, community college fees for classes are \$46/unit (fees subject to change). Typically nursing students carry a “full load” of courses, which are approximately 12 units a semester. (\$552/12 units).

Although it may take you a couple of years to complete your prerequisite courses prior to entering the nursing program, some nursing students report that attending an ADN nursing program was “faster”, explaining that if you want to begin work as an RN then an 2 year ADN program may be a better option than a traditional BSN program. Students can become a Registered Nurse and begin work while they continue their education to receive a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN).

**Concurrent Enrollment Program**

Contra Costa College has a concurrent enrollment program with the University of Phoenix. A concurrent enrollment is where students take their BSN coursework during the summer and winter breaks while attending CCC and following graduation after passing NCLEX, students complete the BSN course work to obtain their BSN. Some benefits of the

concurrent enrollment program is coursework is taken at CCC, the cost is similar to other BSN programs, you earn your the BSN sooner and some students have reported that employers are often interested in hiring new graduate nurses who are enrolled in a BSN program. You will receive more information about the concurrent enrollment program once you are accepted into the CCC Nursing program.

### **Nursing Textbooks**

Nursing textbooks are costly but will provide you with a resource library during school and when you begin to practice nursing. "Buy Used textbooks if they are available!" states one 4th semester nursing student. However, most students agree that purchasing the required nursing books is a must, and recommend that students hold on to them for future reference. In addition, the library on the CCC campus has some of the nursing textbooks at the desk on reserve. Books listed as "Required" and "Recommended" in the nursing course syllabi can also be found on library shelves. One student suggests, "If you would like to check something out and cannot buy it right away, the library is a great resource! Bear in mind that reference books (meaning books placed on "Reserve" by nursing instructors) can only be used in the library for a limited amount of time, unlike books on the shelves, which can literally be checked out and taken home again and again. "Just plan that you need to buy those textbooks and do it" states one first semester student.

### **Nursing Book Exchange Program: an opportunity for nursing students to exchange books or purchase them from each other at low cost.**

The Campus Bookstore has informed us that, in their experience, nursing students keep their books, which decreases the number of "Used" nursing textbooks available. In addition, new editions of books also become available every few years. To assist students financially, one nursing student suggested that a Book Exchange Program, especially for students in Semesters 2 and 3 who will be taking NURS 235 and NURS 255 interchangeably. For example, if you are taking NURS 235 (Maternity/Pediatric Nursing) in the Spring Semester and NURS 255 (Psychiatric Nursing) in the Fall Semester, and a friend of yours is currently taking NURS 255 and will be taking NURS 235 in the Fall, you could plan to exchange books for your respective semesters. If you are interested in a book exchange, speak up and organize one! Did you know that the bookstore will purchase "Used" textbooks from students for half the original purchase price? For more information, visit the Campus Bookstore counter and speak with one of the friendly staff. The Campus Bookstore also has a book rental program. Nursing textbooks are bought in a "bundle" which saves the student on cost.

### **Your nursing uniforms: How much do they cost? What do they look like? Why are they required? When and how do you get them?**

Each nursing program has its own uniform that distinguishes one program from another and the students from the nursing staff.

CCC Nursing students wear white uniform tops and navy blue uniform pants for clinical in hospital settings, except during the Pediatric rotations. The uniform tops have pockets to hold supplies. All white leather professional shoes are required.

Some students report that the nursing student uniforms are "expensive and look dorky." However, dressing the same is nice and looks professional in the clinical areas. In other

words, you may feel strange or like you are out of place wearing a uniform, but the uniform looks clean and professional. Uniforms are also reported by students to be comfortable.

If you are an incoming student, you will receive more information by mail during the summer regarding your uniform. Wait until you get this information to purchase any uniforms or shoes. If you want to work on getting some things ready now, you may want to purchase a penlight, two (2) Contra Costa College patches from the CCC Bookstore to sew onto your uniforms, and a wristwatch with a second hand. Digital watches are not considered appropriate for use in the clinical area. Do not buy a stethoscope until the first day of class.

Average costs for uniforms (as reported by students) are \$100-\$200. You will purchase at least 2 sets of uniforms.

### **Financial Aid Applications**

#### Who can apply, when to apply

To qualify for financial aid, students must first complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, which is available online and also through the financial aid office on campus (Student Services Center, SSC Rm. 102). Financial aid deadlines usually fall at the beginning of March, so keep in mind that you will need to have your documents – such as your tax return from the previous tax filing year– available to refer to in order to complete the FAFSA form and other financial aid application documents. Keep track of application deadlines and try to apply as early as possible. Each academic year, you may renew/update your FAFSA forms. Phone number 510.215.6026

### **EOPS/CARE services**

Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) is a state-funded program targeted at serving individuals with low incomes or students from low-income families. These programs help students to pursue and achieve their educational goals. Some services provided to students are grants to assist with purchasing books and fee waivers for parking and student fees.

Services are available through the EOPS/CARE Office located in the Student Services Center, SSC Room 102. To receive EOPS benefits, students need to meet certain qualifications and must also complete and qualify for a Board of Governors (BOG) Grant, which entitles the student to a Fee Waiver. The BOG application is simple to complete.

Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) Program is for students who are single parents, who have at least one child under 14 years of age, and who are eligible for EOPS.

For more information about Financial Aid, including EOPS/CARE and Board of Governors' Fee Waivers, please contact the Financial Aid Office at (510) 215-4508 or at <http://coast.contracosta.edu/student-services/EOPS/Shared%20Documents/default.aspx>

### **Nursing Scholarships and Grants**

Grants and scholarships, unlike loans, are funds that do not have to be re-paid, so students are encouraged to try to access as many of these "no-need-to-repay funds" as possible.

The Scholarship Office on campus frequently sends grant and scholarship opportunities,

some specifically for nursing students, to the nursing department faculty and staff. These announcements are then posted on a bulletin board in the hallway outside the nursing department office. Students comment that while financial aid, scholarship and grant applications may take some time to complete, it is definitely worth it in the end. One student commented that she received \$5,000.00 in scholarships and grants alone.

In the past some hospitals and other health service agencies offered “loan forgiveness” programs to their employees. With a loan forgiveness program, a student’s tuition and related educational expenses (i.e., books and supplies) are covered by the health agency with the understanding that the student, once finished with school, will work for that agency as a paid employee for a specified amount of time.

One student stated that she was funded to attend the nursing program through the State Department of Rehab, as she was in Special Education through her school years. This may be an option for students to pursue, especially if a student has previously received “learning disability” services of any type on an on-going basis in the past.

#### How to apply and when

Although grants and scholarships become available throughout the academic year, a particularly popular time for application deadlines is early in the spring semester, so that the student can use the funds for expenses in the fall and throughout the following academic year. Be aware of application deadlines and try to apply as early as possible.

#### Location of Scholarship office

The Contra Costa College Scholarship Office is located in the Student Services Center. Stop in and have the Scholarship Program Specialist answer your questions.

### **III. What you can expect once you are accepted into the program**

#### **What new students can anticipate**

Be prepared to adjust your schedule frequently during the semester. One alumna compares entering nursing school to boot camp, stating, “Your life is no longer your own.” Another student in the 4th, and final, semester of the nursing program states, “Be prepared to give up your life for 2 years.” The student comments, both past and present, are included not to discourage students from pursuing nursing education, nor to frighten or make a person nervous. These comments are the reality of the time limitations nursing students' experience. Please acknowledge and plan in advance that your nursing school schedule will be demanding. You may be forced to pick and choose your extracurricular activities over the next two years. Most students agree that “the small sacrifice you will make in not spending as much time with family, friends, and working outside of nursing school is worth the sacrifice for a great future and profession.”

### **Changes in time available for work and time with family/friends**

Most nursing students, both past and present, agree you will definitely have less time for work, family, and pretty much anything else other than school. The nursing program is full-time, usually Monday through Friday, though you may have a weekend clinical rotation. In some semesters you may have Thursdays off, but this does not occur until you have completed your first semester of nursing school.

To lessen the blow of the news of your “nonexistence” to family and friends, inform everyone of what to expect the next two years while you are in nursing school, and of the benefits after you graduate! In other words, it might be a drastic change because you will not be around as much to spend time with your family and/or people you are accustomed to seeing regularly. A 4th semester nursing student comments, “The whole family has to support of your going to school. There is little to no time for anything extra”. “Learn to use a schedule organizer.” Many nursing students comment that students need to be supported by their families and friends to be successful in the nursing program.

“Be prepared to eat, breathe, and live nursing school,” states one 4th semester nursing student. Other student suggestions include: if you must continue to work, cut back to part-time or on weekends” Students report that working more than 1-2 days a week is not advisable during the school year. If you need to be “carefree,” usually the weekend following an exam is a good time to do so.

Also, plan ahead – “If you can work more during the summer and take time off or work less during the nursing program, it’s to your advantage,” comments a 2nd semester student. Finally, “if you don’t need to work, then don’t,” states another student. “Nursing school is a full time job, so continuing to work 32-40 hours per week, while enrolled in the nursing program, is nearly impossible.” There are not enough hours in the day to go to nursing school full-time (with lecture and clinical days), study, and work.

### **Nursing Tests: computerized testing and critical thinking**

Many nursing students report that “the most difficult challenge” in nursing school is the change in the test-taking format from what most students are used to. Remember that although the testing may be different from what you are accustomed to, it is not impossible to master.

One immediate difference you will notice between the test taking formats you are accustomed to and the format of testing in the CCC Nursing Program is that the nursing program tests are on computer. That’s right. When you have a nursing exam, you will take the exam in the computer lab. No more scantrons and pencils and paper! In addition, remember the days when you would speed through the test and skip the questions you wanted to come back to and give more thought to? Well, on nursing exams, once you choose and “lock in” your final answer, you move on to the next question and are unable to return to previous questions.

This computerized exam format mimics that of the NCLEX-RN, the national licensing exam. At the end of your computerized exam, you will also receive your score immediately. You will be able to review the exam questions later as a class with the nursing faculty.

Students and researchers suggest that you do not second-guess the answer you have chosen. Many times the first answer that you choose is the correct answer. Also, students and faculty strongly recommend that you review NCLEX-RN review questions to familiarize yourself with the format and style of nursing questions. “The questions and the CD in the NCLEX books frequently mimic the test format used in the nursing program,” states one second semester student.

Students also have Kaplan as a test taking and study resource while attending the CCC nursing program. Kaplan testing occurs each semester and mimics the NCLEX exam, testing the student on content taken during the semester. Kaplan also allows the student to practice questions and to remediate content they are not strong in.

Finally, you may have heard the term “critical thinking” discussed during conversations about nursing exam questions. One nursing student describes the question format as follows, “The tests present a situation. All of the answers may be right, but you must choose which is most right for this situation.” In nursing exam questions, you are not spitting back what you have memorized. “You have to actually break down the questions and give the best answer. There are usually two right answers but you must choose the most correct one.”

#### **“Exams seem harder and I’m not doing well even though I study all the time.”**

A nursing student comments: “Most nursing students are “A” and “B” students in their prerequisites, but after a couple of months [in the nursing program] they are “C” students. It is very overwhelming. Talk to students who are doing well and see if they are doing something that you did not even think of. Remember, you are in this together (as students). Support each other.”

#### **Nursing student advice**

Join a study group. It helps. Complete (answer) the objectives of the lectures and chapters of the reading and split up the lecture objectives with members of your study group. If pretests are available in the course, do them and go to the computer lab and meet with the Tutor. “Study case scenarios instead of memorizing facts (i.e. what do you do if... Why would the doctor prescribe...?)” Lectures can be tape-recorded! Rewrite your notes while listening to the lecture on tape and fill in any gaps you may have. Most of all take a deep breath and relax and realize that you are not alone.

There are resources to assist you! Your instructors are your first stop for content review. Rely on your classmates and visit your nurse mentor to explore and work on additional strategies to improve your performance in the nursing program. Just do not procrastinate and be in denial that you are having difficulty. The longer you wait to address the challenges you are experiencing, the more difficult it may be for you to recover academically.

## **IV. The Realities of Studying Nursing**

#### **Time management and study skills. Nursing Student Suggestions:**

Make study cards or a study sheet, and bring it along to study from when you are places where you may be sitting/waiting for any time. One student suggested bringing note cards to family events. This is a good strategy to maximize your time, unless the family

members at the event are the same ones that complain that they never get to see you because you are studying all of the time!

Second semester nursing students suggest keeping a **study calendar** (purchase a pocket calendar), putting everything on it, and stick with it. Create a routine for your studying! "Plan out day-by-day and when an exam is coming up, plan out hour-by-hour," states one student. Do not procrastinate! Study a few hours each day, not only right before the exam. "You can't leave all of your reading for the weekend before a test. You won't be able to catch up," states another 2nd semester student.

(See: Schedule Planner Worksheet)

Another suggestion from students: listen to the lecture that you tape-recorded for that day while driving home in your car. Also, try to read the night before the lecture to become familiar with the material you will hear about in lecture the next day. The lecture will be like a review to you!

Also, speaking of bedtime- students suggest reading over your notes before you turn off the lights. This is actually a study strategy/skill and a great way to retain information in your memory banks. One student suggests, "Buy an NCLEX review book and review 10 questions before you go to bed, just so that you can start to change the way that you think, and can start critically picking apart the questions and identify why each choice is wrong or right."

## **SCHEDULE PLANNER WORKSHEET**

### What use is a schedule planner?

As simplistic as it may seem, mapping out your weekly schedule allows you to visually allocate time to all the things you have going on in your life. Let's face it; most nursing students aren't only full-time nursing students. Often they are working a few hours a week, have family obligations, and have to have time in class and to study. A Schedule Planner allows you to realistically plan your days and can be used as a guide to manage your time. In addition, a benefit of posting your planned schedule lets the people in your life know what you are doing on certain days of the week. Students have found it helpful to post the Schedule Planner on the fridge for family members or to make a copy of their schedule to give to a childcare provider.

**\*\*Remember, the Schedule Planner is merely "a guide" for you to follow. For example, just because you write down that you are going to have lunch between 11am-12pm on Monday doesn't mean that you are obligated to do so at that time. All it means is that you have set aside an hour out of your Monday schedule to have lunch and that this hour is for eating, whenever that occurs.**

### How to block out time using the Schedule Planner

(Make copies of the Schedule Planner sheet)

In the time blocks listed:

- 1) **BLOCK OUT** all stable activities in your schedule, i.e. lecture times, skills lab times, clinical times, meals, workout schedule, driving family places, etc. All of these activities count towards taking time out of your day.
- 2) With blocks left over, **BLOCK OUT** study time, study group time, and personal time

# SCHEDULE PLANNER FOR \_\_\_\_\_

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
7:00 am							
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
12 noon							
1:00 pm							
2:00 pm							
3:00 pm							
4:00 pm							
5:00 pm							
6:00 pm							
7:00 pm							
8:00 pm							
9:00 pm							

### **Suggestions for test preparation and test-taking strategies**

Study ahead of time. Do not fall behind with the reading! Most students have reported that cramming just increases your stress level. Although it may seem obvious to some, reading the question and figuring out what the question is asking, then reading the answer options is a great strategy. You might even try to cover the answer options with a blank sheet of paper to focus on the “stem” or main point of the questions prior to viewing the answer options. This can be very useful. One student suggests reading each question fully and looking for key words such as “initial intervention” and “first priority”. Another student uses the strategy of “read the question, then all the answers. Re-read the stem and choose your gut-reaction” answer.”

It's quite easy to become flustered during an exam, especially when you are first starting out and concentrating on a new discipline like nursing. Realize that some test anxiety and feeling anxious is normal. Take a deep breath and focus on the task at hand. The sooner you are able to relax, get yourself settled, and focus on the exam, the better your chances of performing well on the exam.

Being anxious toward the end of the exam is also normal, especially with computerized testing, as you will be anticipating receiving your score. Try to remind yourself that thousands of people have done the same thing you are doing and have successfully survived! Think about the chocolate shake, or other treat, you are going to reward yourself with for getting through this exam. Remember that you have studied hard and can do this!

### **Test taking strategies for nursing exams**

“Go with your first response and think long and hard.” “Don't change your answers unless you realize you read the stem wrong,” states another student. Most of all, familiarize yourself with the format of the exams and the computerized testing, so that it becomes second nature. The best way to do this is to practice.

Test-taking strategies are also reviewed early on in your nursing education in the Fundamentals of Nursing (NURS 210) course. Students enrolled in the NURS 210 course may benefit from studying and practicing critical thinking, test taking and NCLEX-type questions. Your instructors create your exam questions will make suggestions for test taking. In addition, the Nurse Mentor is available to meet one-on-one to review test taking and study strategies. Finally, nursing students suggest meeting with the Nurse Tutor and reviewing content and reviewing how to identify what a question is really asking.

### **Should I study more from the lecture notes, the textbook, or both?**

Both. In nursing school you are responsible learning a lot of material from lectures and the text reading. Bear in mind that although you may be studying for one exam at a time, you are building a body of knowledge that you will draw from to pass your nursing board exam and to use in future nursing practice.

"It won't take long to review your notes," states a second semester student. Read the book, use it to clarify and expand upon concepts presented by your instructors in lecture. Students have commented that using the study guides for each lecture to

focus their reading is a good idea because sometimes you may not be able to finish all of the reading in the allotted time. Focus on the objectives listed and discussed in lecture as a priority.

Many students acknowledge feeling overwhelmed with the amount of reading assigned. Try to follow the objectives outlined at the beginning of each chapter, as well as the objectives of each lecture and be sure that you are able to answer those objectives. To save time, some students will actually divide up the reading objectives with members of their study group, write or type out the answers, make copies for the rest of their group, and then study from the completed objectives. Please be advised, that in dividing up the reading objectives in this manner that you are really depending on your study group members, and that everyone needs to be accountable and dependable.

Students also suggest studying the “pop up boxes” and tables in the textbooks, that commonly highlight and condense important concepts.

An additional resource, which should not be overlooked as a comprehensive review of your studying, is the NCLEX Review books and the Kaplan books/program which is mandatory in the CCC nursing program. A few of the NCLEX books suggested by students include Mosby, Lippincott, and Saunders. Students also recommend the "Success" books while getting together during study groups. These "Success" books include focused material for Psychiatric, Pediatrics and Maternity nursing as well as other areas of nursing practice. Students often wonder, “When is the right time, during the nursing program, to get an NCLEX book?” The answer is: Relax; use of the review books will be discussed more in Nursing 210. Please note that some review books are available in the nursing lab and to borrow from the Nurse Mentor.

In practicing NCLEX questions, be sure that when you read the rationales to the answers that you read ALL of the rationales, both the correct and incorrect answers. This way, you will review and reinforce why the chosen answer was the MOST correct option. Using Kaplan books also provide the student with questions and provide the opportunity to remediate and understand the rationale for the material.

Last, practicing NCLEX questions related to topics you are studying in preparation for an exam, is similar to putting candles on a birthday cake-it's the last thing you should do to prepare yourself.

### **Study groups: The benefits of having a group and how to form a successful group**

“I never studied in groups before. Now I depend on them. Study groups help you realize what you know and what you need help on.” comments a 2nd semester nursing student. “Three heads are better than one!” comments another student. “Don't be afraid to start a group yourself. The Nurse mentor has a handout on how to form and have an effective study group. Study groups offer students an opportunity to explain and learn from each other. Another student suggests that you “keep your study group small.” A manageable group of 3-4 who are prepared, having read, done pretests, etc. study groups don't have to be big to be beneficial. Even studying with one other student on a regular basis can be beneficial to you. Most students suggest, “Get into a study group

from day one in the nursing program.”

Early in the first semester it is important to talk to your fellow classmates about forming a study group. Often it is convenient to partner with students who live close by. That way, the majority of your time can be spent studying with your group and not driving to meet your group somewhere! Once groups begin forming, you will need to determine the purpose of the study group, how to be part of a productive group, and what the components of a productive group are.

Some Suggestions:

- Study in a consistent location.
- Studying in a location that is quiet and private to avoid turning your meeting into a social hour.
- Remember to take study breaks. No one can study without some rejuvenation, for 3 or 5 hours straight! Keep your breaks limited to about 15 minutes each, except for a break to eat. A meal break should not exceed an hour. Ordering a pizza, if studying at someone's house, is a good time-saving meal for a study group. You can still study while waiting for the pizza to arrive and no one is stuck with meal prep or clean up.
- Clarify with your group what you intend to do when you get together and what material each member is supposed to focus on. There is no right or clear-cut answer to this question and only your group can truly determine what you all feel you need to review when you get together. Some groups get together and review the notes taken in lecture and from the reading for the content related to the upcoming exam, while other groups create outlines for specific content and then review the outlines. Some groups also review the answers to all of the reading and lecture/syllabus objectives. The above are only listed as suggestions.
- Reviewing material on your own BEFORE you get together with your group. Be sure that you have reviewed your notes at least once before getting together with your group members. You should not be looking at your notes for the first time when participating in group study. Come prepared as a benefit to yourself and your study partner(s).

### **Tutoring and how available it is to nursing students**

Students who feel that they may need additional assistance in the form of tutoring should make an appointment to meet with the Nurse Tutor. You may also make an appointment with the Nurse Mentor to explore your needs. She can connect you with a study group or other resources to assist you.

### **The importance of attending post-exam reviews and meeting with your**

**instructor:** Most instructors hold test reviews shortly after the exam is over (i.e. the next week). Exam reviews are an opportunity for learning and explanation. A fourth semester nursing student suggests to future nursing students, “Don't miss test review-

you learn why your answer was wrong and that's really important in developing critical think ability.”

Attending exam reviews and making appointments to meet with your instructors are important strategies in your learning. Your instructor can assist you to clarify content that you did not completely understand. Meeting with faculty also helps you to familiarize yourself with the way instructors think. This can be helpful when you are studying material and trying to focus on the key points, as well as in thinking about potential test questions.

### **The importance of attending lecture**

Attendance is taken at lectures and attendance and not being late are preparing you for your career. In lecture, “Instructors answer your question and will highlight points that they feel are important, and often reinforce what is in the book.” “Lecture is auditory and visual learning and sometimes there is a hand-on demonstration that solidifies your learning,” states another student.

### **Preparing for the NCLEX-RN. What is the NCLEX anyway?**

NCLEX-RN stands for National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses, and is administered in all 50 United States and five U.S. territories. The one purpose of the NCLEX is to determine if it is safe for you to begin practice as an entry-level nurse. NCLEX is sometimes also referred to as “The Boards” or “State Boards.” Once you pass the NCLEX, you will officially hold the license and title of “Registered Nurse” (R.N.), and may begin signing your name as such.

As one student states, “You are preparing for the NCLEX the whole time you are in nursing school.” The computerized testing and level of difficulty of the exam questions will provide you with the opportunity to become familiar and comfortable with the exam format and style of NCLEX.

## **V. Clinical Rotations**

### **What are clinical rotations? When do they begin? What can I expect and what will be expected of me?**

Clinical rotations are part of your learning experience in nursing school and prepare you with the hands-on skills and exposure to what will be expected when you are a licensed Registered Nurse. During clinical rotations, you will go to different hospitals with different instructors and will have the opportunity to perform on real patients, the skills you have learned in classroom and skills lab.

Clinical rotations will begin about the 4th week of your first semester in the nursing program. Clinical days and times vary. They may be on Tuesdays and Wednesdays of each week or on weekends (on Day or PM shift) Clinical sites also vary each semester but may include (but are not limited to): Alta Bates-Herrick Campus (Berkeley), Contra Costa Regional Medical Center (Martinez), John Muir Medical Center (Concord and Walnut Creek campuses), and Kaiser (Oakland, Richmond, Vacaville and Walnut Creek).

Student clinical placements are randomly assigned.

If you have children, you may need to arrange for them to be taken to school or

cared for during the clinical mornings, as you may be required to report to the hospital for the “day shift”, which typically runs 6:30 am to 3:00 pm. You will need to arrive early for pre-conference with your clinical group.

It is important that you be on time on your clinical days. You will need to make transportation arrangements to your clinical facility. Some students have carpooled to clinical.

It is also important that you come to clinical prepared and looking professional. Your clinical instructor will review with you the expectations for clinical. These might include: having your medication cards for your patient(s) prepared, knowing about your patient(s) health status and conditions and being able to discuss them, arriving to clinical on time and in the proper uniform with your name badge, etc.

A typical clinical day in the hospital will include meeting with your clinical instructor for pre-conference before you go to the clinical unit to which you are assigned. At the pre-conference your instructor will ask you questions about your patient(s) and your plans to care for your patient(s). Then you will report to the clinical unit to provide care to your patient, under the supervision of your instructor and the RN assigned to your patient.

After you have completed your patient care, you will reconvene with your classmates and instructor in post-conference where you may further discuss your experiences in clinical for that day, or have a focused discussion around one particular issue. A nursing alumnus comments, “You will be asked many questions by your instructor. It’s not because the instructor is trying to make you feel inadequate or put you on the spot. It is because by asking questions the instructor gets to know what you know and what your strengths and weaknesses are. It is how your instructor assesses what you’ve learned and where you need extra support in order to succeed.”

Some students in the past have expressed concerns about not doing as well in clinical because they have had no previous clinical experience in hospitals or other medical settings. All students are prepared in the classroom in the same way, prior to entering any clinical area. While this may not soothe the nerves of a student nervous about how s/he will ultimately perform, please be reassured that you will not be alone and that your instructor, other nurses, and your classmates will be there with you to support and guide you. A nursing student suggests, “If you are confused in clinical, tell someone or look it up in a book. Everyone is at least a little bit nervous or apprehensive. Just try to relax and treat the patients like you would want to be treated.”

### **Nursing Skills Lab: What do I do here? Do we really have to give each other shots and give baths to each other?**

The nursing skills lab is designed to assist nursing students to learn, prepare, and practice procedures and processes commonly performed by registered nurses.

Students practice skills on life-size mannequins and/or each other, in a setting similar to a hospital room. One student comments, “This is where you practice skills for the hospital so that you are safe and you are competent and knowledgeable.”

Each semester students are required to purchase a “skills kit” which contains supplies needed for skills lab. Contents of the kit vary according to the clinical skills to be practiced for each semester. Prices vary depending on the kit contents.

Nursing students report that you will practice giving baths to each other (you wear shorts and tank tops) and that you practice giving shots (called “injections” in nursing school) into fake arms and other objects, like oranges and hotdogs.

Ultimately,

these skills will be demonstrated on your patients while in your clinical rotations in the hospitals, but only after you are “checked off” as demonstrating safety and competency with the skill in the lab. In addition to the above skills, students will also learn how to place nasogastric (NG) tubes, to catheterize patients, and how to start IV's and set up the tubing. These are only a few of the skills students will master.

Students comment about the experience of being bathed by classmates. “You can maintain your modesty while being bathed. It's not as bad as it sounds and you learn a lot about respecting another person's privacy.” Another student states, “The bath is just the beginning of the bonding and humiliation we as nursing students will share together.”

### **Do I have to get my own malpractice insurance?**

No. The college provides malpractice insurance to cover students while they are working in clinical areas.

### **Any suggestions or other important information related to clinical?**

“Keep an open mind and be eager to learn,” suggests one 2nd semester student. Students say that trying to relax during clinical and asking your instructor anything will be of most benefit. “No question is a dumb question,” states another student. Look to your instructor as your mentor, from whom you can gain both guidance and insight.

Instructors are there to support you! Make the most of this opportunity to learn and to practice your skills. A student comments, “The hardest part, I think [about clinical], is that you are put into a new environment and you feel like such a rookie. I am used to knowing my job inside and out and it's hard to be the new kid who doesn't know it all.”

Another student suggests keeping on top of your laundry and ironing and to buy more than 2 sets of uniforms, so you always have a fresh, clean uniform. “Be on time, never argue with the nurse assigned to the patient you will be caring for, come prepared, and if you have any problems go to your clinical instructor first”.

“Stay healthy,” states one student, referring to the clinical absence policy, because students are only able to be absent a total of 16 clinical hours per semester. (See Nursing Student Handbook for policies and procedures.)

Suggested supplies to bring to clinical: your student ID in a plastic badge holder on your

uniform, stethoscope, bandage scissors, penlight, a pocket protector to save your

uniform from ink stains, your clinical worksheet (form provided by instructor), and extra pens (a highlighter, black pens, a red pen, a pencil, and a “Sharpie” pen, which is permanent black ink used to label specimens and other items).

## **V. Resources Commonly Used and Needed by Nursing Students**

### **Nursing Student Feedback on the following CCC campus resources:**

#### Counseling Department

Make an appointment to create a “plan of attack” for your prerequisite courses and/or your college breadth requirements, or discuss personal issues with one of the counselors. To discuss particular questions about nursing courses and prerequisites, students suggest speaking with an Admissions Counselor or coming by the Nursing Department. The Counseling Department is located in SSC Room 108, 510.215.3936.

#### English as a Second Language (ESL) resources

If English is not your first language, that's an asset! The nursing profession is in need of nurses who are able to communicate in more than one language. The ESL office on campus can help you if: reading comprehension in English is challenging, understanding “the main point” of a test question is difficult, or getting through test questions and required reading for your courses takes a long time. The ESL office is located in the Applied Arts/Administrative (AA) Building, Room 109, ext. 4416.

#### Disabled Students Program and Services (DSPS)

All courses in the CCC Nursing Program comply with the American Disabilities Act. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, requires CCC to make all programs accessible to qualified individuals with learning, physical, or psychological disabilities. Students who would like to receive accommodations for their learning, physical, or psychological disabilities should contact the DSPS office.

If you think you have a learning disability, or if you think you are too distracted during class, while studying, or during an exam, you may want to visit the DSPS office and schedule an evaluation. The office is located in the SSC Building, Room 109, 510.215.3969 “DSPS can offer unbelievable alternatives and opportunities for those with test anxiety.” If you are evaluated and qualify as needing accommodations (i.e. extra time on exams), this can be arranged by a DSPS counselor with your nursing instructors. DSPS can also be reached at [dspsoffice@contracosta.edu](mailto:dspsoffice@contracosta.edu)

#### **Faculty: Who are they and what can they do for me?**

Nursing faculty is available to students to discuss concerns to nursing students. Faculty advisors are not assigned to specific students, but all faculty are open and willing to speak you. Don't be shy about asking a faculty member for help. They are there to help you be successful. Faculty advisors can assist students with academic advising, referrals to campus services, or just to listen to and support

students.

### **Nurse Mentor**

Available as a special service to nursing students only, the Nurse Mentor is here to support you in your goal to become a Registered Nurse. The Mentor is a Registered Nurse. The Mentor works closely with the nursing faculty to support students by creating individualized plans that address concerns such as test taking strategies; balancing home, work, and school responsibilities and schedules; and time management. The best way to contact the Nurse Mentor is to do so by email: [JWright@contracosta.edu](mailto:JWright@contracosta.edu) You may schedule a meeting in person, or by telephone. (510.215.4016) The Nurse Mentor is located in Health Science Rm. 106 and there is a schedule located by HS 106 and at the Nursing Secretaries office for hours The Nurse Mentor is on campus.

### **Nursing Tutor**

The Nurse Tutor is another service the CCC Nursing program offers to nursing students. The Tutor is a Registered Nurse and is available to meet with students to work on test-taking skills, to review a variety of nursing topics and pathophysiology, to practice drug dosage calculation problems and review NCLEX questions.

Computer Lab: Although owning a computer and printer is convenient, if you do not have these items at your home, computer services are available on campus. There is a computer lab in the nursing department. All you need is a thumb drive on which to save your papers or other documents. Thumb drives are available for purchase, at low-cost, in the CCC Bookstore or at an office supply store.

Students with laptop computers equipped with wireless internet capabilities can log onto the internet within the Health Sciences building and other places on campus.

### **Library and Reserve Desk**

Various library services are available to registered students of the college. Nursing textbooks and reference books are available on the shelves and at the Reference Desk. Nursing students suggest that new and incoming students inquire in the library about the passwords for the online journals, so that “you can access nursing articles online from your home computer.” In addition, ask one of the library staff for assistance to retrieve required reading articles, accessible both online and on reserve, and to copy the articles referenced by your instructors.

### **Early Childhood Learning Center (Childcare and preschool on campus) and Other Childcare Options**

The Early Childhood Education Department operates a convenient childcare facility and school lab on campus. In this setting, CCC students studying Early Childhood Education complete their requirements while also participating as assistant teachers and care providers to center children. Nursing students may use the preschool for their children.

Requirements: Children must be between the ages of 2 years-9 months and

kindergarten and must be toilet-trained. Parents are required to participate at the school on a weekly basis. Given the limitations of their schedules, the Early Childhood Staff is willing to work with nursing students, allowing them to fulfill parent hours in creative ways. These may include taking projects home (i.e. cutting out felt shapes, caring for one of the school's critters over a holiday break, etc). Special arrangements for parent hours must be made in advance.

Hours of operation: Monday through Friday 7am-6:30pm. Please talk with the school staff about your needs and schedule and they can advise you about hours that may work well for you. As a nursing student, the drop-off hours for the lab may not work for you on clinical days. On these days, if your child is participating in the Lab School, you may need to make alternative arrangements to have a friend or family member either care for or drop-off your child at school.

Costs and Fees: Parents are charged a minimal tuition and snack fee based on the session requested (i.e. full-day, half-day, etc) and student status.

Enrollment Contact info: Call the Early Childhood Learning Center at 510.215.4132.

An additional resource for parents to research for childcare/preschool options is to contact the Contra Costa Child Care Council. The Council operates 5 area offices in addition to an administrative office and child health and nutrition program. The Council's offices are staffed by counselors with whom you can discuss your particular childcare needs and who can provide you with listings of providers in your area. Check out their website at [www.cocokids.org](http://www.cocokids.org) or contact one of their offices as follows:

### **Health Insurance options while in school**

The Contra Costa Community College District offers a low-cost student health insurance policy. An informational brochure, outlining coverage options and premiums, is available in the Student Activities Office, this is located at the Student Association Building. Many students often prioritize having health insurance for their children but not for themselves. Believe it or not, there is affordable insurance out there for adults as well!

An additional resource to investigate for health insurance, especially if you are a resident of Contra Costa County, is the Contra Costa County Health Plan, offered through Contra Costa County Health Services (CCCHS). The CCC Health Plan has coverage and premiums based on age. Call 1-800-524-2247 to find out more about a health plan. If you have no insurance coverage and are ill, you may still access CCCHS services on a sliding scale. Call 1-877-661-6230 and ask to speak with a financial counselor. If your children are in need of health services, ask about the Child Health Disability Prevention (CHDP) Program or call CHDP directly at 1-800-696-9644.

Health Centers to Contact in WEST CONTRA COSTA:

Richmond Health Center  
100 38th Street  
(510) 374-3025

North Richmond Center for  
Health 1501 Third Street  
(510) 374-7330

El Cerrito Older Adults  
Clinic 11720 San Pablo,  
Suite C (510) 374-3629

Brookside Community Health Clinic (San  
Pablo) 2023 Vale Road, Suite 107  
(510) 215-9092  
(Walk-in clinic available Mon-Thurs 9am-7pm, Fri 9am-2:30pm. Call first  
to verify hours)

There are also Contra Costa Health Centers in Antioch, Bay Point, Brentwood,  
Concord, Martinez, and Pittsburg. For more information about locations, clinic  
hours, and appointments, please call 1-800-495-8885.

**Parking: How much does it cost? Where do I get a permit?**

All vehicles parked on the campus must have a valid CCC parking permit displayed at  
all times. There are specified parking areas designated for Students and  
Faculty/Staff.

Please pay attention and be sure that you are parking in a Student spot/lot to avoid  
being ticketed!

Nursing students suggest parking in Lot 9, where spaces always seem to be available,  
and which is close to the HS Building, where your nursing classes will be taught.

Student parking permits are \$40.00 per semester and may be purchased from the  
cashier (SSC-115) or from the Bookstore. Daily permits are \$2.00 per day (quarters  
only) and are available to purchase at machines located in Student Lots 1, 2, 7, 9,  
and  
10. Permits should be clearly displayed on the dashboard of your car.

## **VI. Nursing Clubs and Items of Interest**

• **National Student Nurses Association (NSNA) -- Is there a chapter at CCC?**

There is a NSNA Chapter at CCC. You will learn more about this during your first  
semester in the Nursing Program.

• **Class Leadership**

Class leadership is essential to discuss student issues and concerns, advocate for  
students, and to plan graduation-related events.

Each fall semester, faculty will solicit volunteers to attend department meetings as  
student representatives. Volunteering is beneficial to get to know the workings of the  
nursing department and to get to know the nursing faculty outside of the classroom.  
It also looks very good on your resume!

- **Student Issues Committee: What is it?**

Student Issues Committee creates an opportunity for all students to bring forward concerns about anything related to the nursing program. Student Issues representatives speak for other students. Meetings are casual and open to all students. Meetings occur approximately 4 times a semester on pre-arranged dates that are posted on the bulletin board in the main hallway of the nursing department. Your opinion and voice counts!

- **ADN Program Committees**

Students are invited to participate as representatives on four different nursing program committees. Participation is a good opportunity to give student input, learn about the process of running a meeting, work with faculty on a team, and be part of something that may help on your resume! You may also share the role of student representative with another student, and may alternate coming to meetings. This way, neither one of you needs to be concerned about an activity taking too much time!

If you want to volunteer, simply contact a faculty member to express your interest in participating. (See Job Description: "Student Representatives to the Nursing Committees" in the Nursing Student Handbook.)

The current committees seeking student representatives at this time are as follows:

- ADN Faculty Meeting
- Curriculum
- Committee Policy
- Committee Advisory
- Committee

- **The History of the Nursing Pin**

The giving of a pin has had rich symbolism in our history. The concept of a pin originated in the days when each noble family had a coat of arms.

When Florence Nightingale returned from nursing the British soldiers in the Crimean War, Queen Victoria presented her a pin.

In 1880, the first graduates of the Bellevue Hospital School of Nursing in New York City were pinned, and thus began the tradition of pinning as we know it today.

- **Your Nursing Pin**

Contra Costa College's Nursing Program has a distinct nursing pin to distinguish its program and attributes. Actually, no two nursing program's pins are the same!

Nursing pins are purchased at the campus bookstore. The nursing program holds a Pinning Ceremony, separate from the college graduation, where the faculty and staff of the nursing program gather with family and friends of the graduating class, to honor the graduates and to "pin" them. This is a very special occasion and something that can be most memorable to you as you close the chapter of being a student nurse and transition into the role of registered nurse.

Cost: The current price for the nursing pin is \$70.00, with a \$35.00 deposit due

During spring semester before you graduate. Pins are special order items and are only purchased for students who request them. The lowest price pin is 10-karat double gold filled. Pins can also be purchased, again by special order, in a 24-karat version, which is more costly.

• **Nurse Mentor Book Lending Library**

The Nurse Mentor has resources that can be loaned to current students based on the following criteria:

- student must be registered in the nursing program and/or continuing in the next semester
- student history of “good faith return” of previously borrowed materials

The duration of time materials are loaned is individualized, based on student situation and need, in cooperation with the Nurse Mentor.

The following is a list of topics (books and other resources) available for student loan through the Nurse Mentor.

Critical Thinking

Beginning Nurse's Guide to Critical Thinking

Drug Dosage Calculation

Math for Nurses

Drug Guides

Drug Guide CD-ROM

Fundamentals of Nursing

Maternal-Neonatal Nursing

Medical-Surgical Nursing

NCLEX Question Books

NCLEX CD-ROM Review

NCLEX-RN 250 New-Format Questions

Nursing Diagnosis

Pharmacology

Psychiatric Nursing

Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing

Job Search/Career Guide

Nurse's Legal Handbook

Student Nurse Handbooks & Student Success

Tour Guide to Nursing School: A Student's Road Survival Kit

Student Nurse Planner

How to Survive & Maybe Even Love Nursing School: A Guide for Students

Keys to Nursing Success

Student Nurse Handbook: Difficult Concepts Made Easy

Studying and Test Taking

Fundamentals Success: A Course Review Applying Critical Thinking to Test-Taking

Test Success: Test-Taking Techniques for Beginning Nursing Students

Studying a Study and Testing a Test: How to Read the Health Science Literature

Soar to Success: Do Your Best on Nursing Tests!

Studying & Test Taking Made Incredibly Easy

## **VII. Common Questions about Nursing and the CCC Nursing Program**

Q: I'm a guy and am interested in becoming a nurse. Any advice I can get about being in nursing, from a male perspective? I mean, do male nurses only take care of male patients?

A: There is definitely an increase in males attending nursing school and nursing is a great career choice for men. All nurses, whether male or female, care for both male and female patients. One student says, "Do it. Men are highly regarded."

Q: Nursing will be my second career and I am interested in becoming a nurse. Any advice I can get about being in nursing, and will it be more difficult for me since I am older?

A: One student states, "I was 39 when I entered the program. I was concerned about being able to keep up and understand the material, etc. However, I found my age to be an asset rather than a hindrance.

Q: Do nurses always have to deal with blood? I'm not crazy about the risks associated with blood contact and have some concerns.

A: Yes you must be prepared to deal with some blood and other body fluids (i.e. urine, feces, vomit, etc.). In nursing school you will be trained to use "Standard Precautions", which means that you will be using the same standard of protection

with every patient that you care for, regardless of how much knowledge you may have about their disease process. Standard precautions protect both you and your patients. You will also receive education about what to do if you are accidentally exposed to blood or body fluids and the associated risks of such exposures. “Wear your gloves and wash your hands,” states one student.

Q: Will I take the same licensing exam as students who are in Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs?

A: Yes. Attending an ADN program will prepare you to take the same licensing exam as students who attend BSN programs. After you successfully pass the board exam, you will hold the same nursing license.

Q: Where can I get a job after graduation? Will I be prepared to work in a hospital, clinic, or other nursing practice setting?

A: As a graduate of the CCC Nursing Program, you will be prepared for an entry-level RN position in a variety of areas in hospitals and ambulatory care settings. Remember that while you are in nursing school, you will be working in several different hospitals, so this will give you a good idea of the varying environments in these facilities and an opportunity to compare and contrast.

Q: How much money do nurses make and how flexible are work schedules?

A: Registered nurses make good incomes, with new graduate nurses in California reporting to be starting at \$30-\$40 an hour for in-patient settings. Some nurses can make over \$100K a year depending on how many hours per week you work and the time of day and specialty area of nursing. Work schedules are very flexible for nurses, allowing time to spend with family and to pursue personal interests outside of nursing. You may choose to work 8, 10, or 12 hour shifts. If, for example, a nurse works 12-hour shifts, an entire workweek could be completed in 3 days, as opposed to working a typical and more traditional 5-day a week schedule. For some people, a regular 8 hour shift works best, especially if your schedule needs to coincide with the care or school schedules of your children. It's really up to you to decide, but the flexibility and options that are available to you in the nursing profession are endless!

## **VI. Web Resources**

Below are Internet websites to nursing-related information and/or resources commonly used by nursing students:

[www.contracosta.edu](http://www.contracosta.edu)

Follow the link to the Nursing Program web page. Includes:

Program Admission Requirements and a Check-Off List for Nursing Program Admission; Application and acceptance processes for students seeking Basic R.N., Advanced Placement, 30 Unit Provisional Option for Licensed Vocational Nurses, and Transfer applications. Information is also available for students trained in other countries needing to take courses to fulfill Board of Registered Nursing (BRN) requirements, and Nursing Student Handbook

[www.contracosta.edu](http://www.contracosta.edu)

Contra Costa College web site Includes:

Contra Costa College campus policies, procedures, catalog, a detailed listing of campus student activities and support services, and the CCC Student Handbook

[www.cnsa.org](http://www.cnsa.org)

California Nursing Students" Association (CNSA) web site

Includes: Resources and information for nursing students, with links to job sites and local chapters.

[www.choosenursing.com](http://www.choosenursing.com)

Choose Nursing web site

Includes: Information for nursing students as well as students in elementary, middle, and high school who are interested in the nursing profession. Find out about nursing programs, scholarships, tips on how to get started on your education, and read the stories of actual nursing students.

[www.discovernursing.com](http://www.discovernursing.com)

Johnson & Johnson Discover Nursing web site

Includes: Links to nursing programs, national scholarship information, and answers to questions about becoming a registered nurse.

[www.nsna.org](http://www.nsna.org)

National Student Nurses" Association (NSNA) web site

Includes: Resources and information for nursing students, including articles of interest and particulars on State Boards of Nursing and state

chapters. Nurse Week

Website

[www.nurse.com](http://www.nurse.com)

Nurse Week web site

Includes: Information contained in the Nurse Week magazine publication, distributed to actively licensed RN"s, free of charge, throughout the nation. Student subscriptions are also available!

[www.nursinghumor.com](http://www.nursinghumor.com)

Nursing Humor web site

Includes: Tons of nursing jokes for all specialties, plus links to nursing sites supportive of nursing students.

Nurse Friendly Website

[www.nursefriendly.com](http://www.nursefriendly.com)

Nurse Friendly web site

Includes: Support services and information for nurses, including job sites, nursing gifts, medical information and more!

[www.rn.ca.gov](http://www.rn.ca.gov)

State of California Board of Registered Nursing (BRN) web site

Includes: Information about licensure, nursing program NCLEX pass rates, how to contact the BRN, and much more!

You can also follow the Contra Costa Nursing program on Facebook and Twitter.

Special Thanks to the following individuals for their personal contributions to this project:

Contra Costa College Nursing Department Faculty and Staff

Contra Costa College  
Nursing Department  
2600 Mission Bell Drive  
San Pablo, CA 94806  
510.215.4103  
[www.contracosta.edu](http://www.contracosta.edu)