



CREATING MY PLACE IN THE SCHOOL OF NURSING

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Prior to graduation from high school, I scouted out Oakland University. Were my friends going there? Would there be parties on campus? Would it be far enough away from my parents? The answers were a resounding, “yes.” I planned, shopped, and packed all summer till freshman dormitory move-in day arrived. I found myself in Hamlin Hall surrounded by new friends. I barely made it to class and definitely couldn’t fit studying into my social calendar. It wasn’t until my report card made its way home that I realized it was time to actually go to college. I had to re-take classes and get tutors. My grades improved and I was accepted into the nursing program.

My four years of nursing school helped me balance studying with extracurricular activities. I lived in Vandenberg Hall at this point and surrounded myself with other future nurses. We enjoyed lively dinner discussions about priapism, brought our stethoscopes to the bar, and lovingly gave our cadavers names and life stories. At this point in my education, the professors seemed light years away from me. I maintained my distance from them and never did more than what was required. I followed my course of study and put forth the effort to graduate. In retrospect, nursing school at Oakland University provided me a strong foundation and the critical thinking skills required to excel in practice.

My first nursing job was in a trauma emergency center. I

had to set aside the careful sterile techniques I learned in class to adapt to the dirty and fast-paced emergency center. Nursing is always changing and each specialty has medications and techniques unique to the practice. I learned and grew as a nurse quickly while on the job because I was in my chosen specialty. The opportunities for a bachelor's nurse are endless and sign-on bonuses are prevalent. Therefore, I worked when and where I wanted to and that gave me the freedom to enjoy my practice.

My personal life also sped up following graduation from nursing school. I found myself married, a homeowner, and pregnant within months of graduation. I'm still happily married, on my second home, and second child. My nursing school friends remained single and became travel nurses. I looked forward to their emails and photos depicting the wild places they had visited. I also enjoyed their shock when I informed them I had been hired by Oakland University. It seemed like just yesterday that we were making voodoo dolls depicting our professors, and now I was aspiring to become one of them.

For the first year, I taught Health Assessment Lab and Clinical in the hospital for Oakland University. I also enrolled as a Master's of Nursing Education student and am loving the challenges of higher education. I am now employed as a project manager by the Institute for the Advancement of Nursing and Healthcare through the School of Nursing. I am actively involved in creating new opportunities for future nursing students. My goal is to help alleviate some of the nursing shortage, streamline entry level programs, and be a positive role model for nursing education. As I walk the halls with my former and current professors, I am proud to be among them. Oakland University's School of Nursing has been patient with me and allowed me to grow and learn.