**Developing Educational and Professional Goals**

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NURS 401: Professional Development

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“I pledge to support the Honor System of Old Dominion University. I will refrain from any form of academic dishonesty or deception, such as cheating or plagiarism. I am aware that as a member of the academic community, it is my responsibility to turn in all suspected violators of the Honor Code. I will report to a hearing if summoned.”

Throughout my pursuit of a lifelong aspiration to embody selfless and dedicated caregiving, I have been influenced and inspired by various factors. Since my early years, I possessed multiple nurse outfits and toys, donning them whenever a family member or friend fell ill. While attending college, I actively sought employment as a caregiver and obtained certification as a nursing aide to acquire the practical experience essential for excelling in patient care. Simultaneously, I enlisted in the military, where I underwent rigorous training alongside nurses and other healthcare professionals. It was a Captain who profoundly impacted me, exemplifying the true essence of serving and sacrificing for both country and others. Witnessing the array of roles available, leading and training alongside fellow team members, instilled an unparalleled motivation that propelled me to enroll in a flexible and expedited program. By participating in this fast-track initiative, I successfully fulfilled my active-duty obligations and obtained an Associate Degree in May 2020. Initially, I eagerly anticipated securing gainful part-time employment while remaining on active duty as a hospital corpsman. However, the advent of COVID-19 brought about new policies concerning work outside of my contractual obligations, thereby delaying the realization of my dream. Despite this setback, I persevered by shadowing at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital, diligently conducting interviews and extracting valuable insights. During this time, I learned about opportunities to serve in various healthcare settings, such as overseas hospitals, combat zones, ships, and prisons. Envisioning myself excelling in any role assigned by the military, I aspired to stand out and earn volunteer and humanitarian accolades. Consequently, I volunteered on vaccination teams during the epidemic, working tirelessly to distribute pharmaceuticals to veterans, uniformed personnel, and their families through a drive-thru pharmacy. Each volunteer opportunity brought forth additional engagements, including swabbing, deployment with the Comfort, and more. In total, I accumulated thousands of volunteer hours, gaining invaluable experience that contributed to personal and professional growth while honing new skills.

In December 2022, I made the decision to separate from the military in order to prioritize further education and gain the necessary experience for re-enlisting in the Nurse Corps. Over the past 11 months, I have worked in both acute and chronic care settings, each offering unique challenges and opportunities for growth. In the acute setting, particularly on the Med-Surg Unit, I have been exposed to critical thinking, cultivating a sense of urgency, and adapting to ever-changing circumstances. On the other hand, my experience in Dialysis Care within the chronic setting has provided me with continuity of care, deeper patient connections, and extensive room for professional development through collaboration. Both acute and chronic experiences have played an integral role in shaping and advancing my professional calling. During this period, I have identified several educational goals that I aspire to achieve upon completing my Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. The first objective centers around honing my assessment skills. This entails dedicating time to actively learning comprehensive and holistic assessment techniques, while seeking more extensive exposure in clinical settings. The second educational goal pertains to effective documentation, which is not only critical to nursing practice but also carries legal implications. By the time I complete my BSN degree, I aim to possess a refined and meticulous documentation style, along with more specific and comprehensive assessment skills. These educational objectives remain relevant beyond graduation, as they form essential components of the professional nursing framework. Immediately after graduation, I have outlined three professional goals that will shape my career trajectory. Firstly, I plan to pursue certifications and proficiencies in dialysis nursing, further enhancing my expertise in this specialized area. Secondly, I aspire to become commissioned within the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service, aligning with my commitment to public health and healthcare service. Lastly, I intend to register for a master’s program, opening doors to advanced knowledge, leadership opportunities, and a deeper understanding of nursing's broader impact.

Several strengths that I possess greatly contribute to my suitability for the nursing program. These strengths encompass the ability to establish meaningful connections with others, exceptional teamwork skills, a devoted commitment to service, adeptness in research, and resourcefulness. These attributes play a pivotal role in driving me towards achieving both personal and professional goals that I have set for myself. By formulating well-structured plans, conducting thorough research, and actively collaborating with fellow group members while maintaining unwavering dedication, I am propelled towards the timely and efficient completion of these objectives. While acknowledging these strengths, it is essential to address a few weaknesses that may impede my progress in accomplishing these goals. These weaknesses include occasionally procrastinating and waiting until deadlines approach to complete tasks and assignments, as well as feeling overwhelmed when juggling multiple responsibilities. These weaknesses serve as reminders that in the nursing field, last-minute actions can adversely impact care and execution, and a lack of structure can foster an environment of overwhelm. Hence, they constantly remind me that there is always room for improvement. During my time in the service, I have acquired knowledge of self-care activities that promote wellness and resilience, enabling me to sustain continuous progress. Engaging in physical workouts and challenging myself physically not only strengthens my character but also cultivates a resilient mindset. Prioritizing self-care allows me to operate from a place of wellness, discouraging procrastination and overwhelm. Practicing mindfulness and incorporating yoga into my routine also contributes to a sense of calmness, which further aids in maintaining composure and resourcefulness during stressful situations. These practices not only benefit me but also enable me to be a composed and resourceful teammate for those I interact with closely.

In conclusion, through this paper, I have engaged in a comprehensive examination of my nursing career trajectory. This journey commenced at an early stage in life, fostering innate qualities of compassion and empathy that have guided my path. Despite encountering obstacles during my service in the armed forces, my determination to achieve personal and professional goals remained unwavering. This paper has offered a platform for deliberate reflection, enabling me to meticulously chart my course and strategize the means to reach my desired destination. Prior to attaining the envisioned position within this esteemed profession, it is imperative to discern the strengths and weaknesses that propel or impede progressive change. It has become evident that procrastination and a tendency to wait until deadlines approach are not conducive to optimal efficiency. Conversely, strengths such as exceptional interpersonal skills and unwavering commitment prove instrumental in successfully completing the BSN program and seamlessly transitioning into the nursing profession.