



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

1820–2020

Advising Prospective Graduate Nursing Students: A Guide for Students Navigating Their Professional Program Search

Colleen Cleary, PhD
Nikki Benbow, MPA

ABSTRACT

This poster presentation shares a best practice for advising prospective graduate students in their program search, with a particular focus on adult learners attending school part-time while continuing to work in a professional role. There are many factors for prospective students to consider when selecting a graduate/professional program, and the search process can be quite different than at the undergraduate level. Our student guide focuses on five critical areas we cover with prospective students to help them navigate the process:

- 1) information gathering about career pathways and degree programs
- 2) self-reflection regarding their needs and preferences
- 3) researching and selecting programs
- 4) applying to their chosen program(s)
- 5) exploring financial aid options

Our take-away guide includes a checklist for students at each stage of the process and sample questions to ask the program advisor.



RESEARCH PATHWAYS

- Talk to professionals working in the role.
- Review professional organization publications and career exploration materials.
- Research what kind of degree you will need to work in the role you wish to pursue.
- Explore employment outlook projections and the average salary in your region.

IDENTIFY NEEDS & PREFERENCES

- Do you have the option of reducing your work hours, family commitments, etc. in order to accommodate coursework requirements?
- Do you prefer online, in-person, or hybrid classes?
- Will you attend part-time or full-time?

EXPLORE PROGRAMS

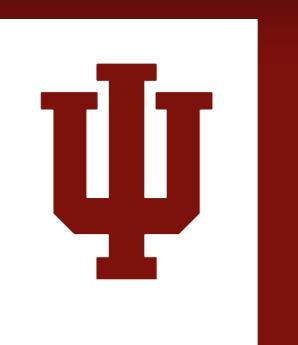
- Carefully review graduate programs' websites.
- Research the program's accreditation, rankings, and reputation with area employers.
- Ask about course delivery and part-time vs. full-time plans of study.
- What are the admission requirements and prerequisites? How competitive is admission?
- Who teaches the courses? What academic support services are offered?

SUBMIT APPLICATIONS

- Start early! Read the application instructions carefully and submit every item in advance of the application deadline.
- Update your resume or CV, ensuring it is accurate, polished, and contains no errors.
- Talk to mentors, prior faculty, and managers to secure references.
- Craft a personal statement that discusses how the graduate program aligns with your career goals.

INVESTIGATE FINANCIAL AID

- Talk with the Human Resources department where you work about potential tuition benefits.
- Apply for scholarships offered by the School, University, and professional organizations.
- Ask about graduate research and teaching assistantships opportunities.
- Connect with a financial aid advisor on your campus.
- Inquire about federal student loan eligibility.



**SCHOOL OF
NURSING**
Indiana University