Nursing School Tips

PLAN AHEAD AND BEGIN TASKS EARLY. Everyone has a slightly different style, but everyone has to keep track of what will seem like millions of quizzes, assignments, check-offs, lectures, and clinical hours. Good organization can help set you up for a successful transition through frontloading and into life as a Sac State Nursing Student. Network with the individuals within your cohort, as well as other semesters; they are often willing to share tips for organization, recommend useful phone apps, or let you look at their Uncalendar pages. (Many of us consider the Uncalendar a lifesaver in terms of scheduling. They are available only online, not in stores, but CNSA has some in stock for a reduced price.)

BUY WHAT YOU NEED. There are many required and other recommended purchases for 1st semester that will be essential to your success in lecture, lab, and clinical. Many students find purchasing the smartphone/iPod/PDA versions of the drug guide, lab book, and medical dictionary helps reduce the size and weight of the stacks of books needed for patient preps and studying. That is personal preference, though; other students find the extra weight to be worth having actual paper books.

STUDY AND WORK TOGETHER. Anyone admitted to this program developed ways of studying that have no doubt worked over the years, but there is a definite difference between a college student in pre-nursing classes and a nursing student in nursing classes. It is not only the amount of new material, but the way of learning, thinking, and testing that goes far beyond what you have experienced in pre-req's. Start forming study groups EARLY. The competition to get in the program has ended. We are a team now. You will have strengths in different areas and can now work together to help each other succeed. Study techniques include creating paper or electronic flashcards, making study sheets on various topics using colored pens, and drawing concept maps on whiteboards. Some students find re-listening to recorded lectures to be helpful, but ALWAYS get permission first; as some faculty have a no-recording policy.

GET CONTACT INFORMATION. The SacCT discussion boards are information-exchange-central for classes/clinical/etc. Planning ahead is important to success but plenty of us have had something out of our control (stomach flu, flat tire, etc.) happen on short notice. Make sure you program your clinical instructor’s cell phone number and your theory professors’ office (or cell) numbers into your phone as soon as you are given that information as you will need to be able to talk with them or leave a message at any time during or before required experiences (clinical/sim lab/exams/etc.) if something’s wrong. Your clinical instructor will compile a list of emails and phone numbers, but it is a great idea to exchange cell phone numbers with a few classmates before that, particularly those within your clinical section. The Meet & Greet event put on by CNSA before frontloading begins is a good opportunity. Previous semesters have found it extremely useful to create a Facebook group page to communicate with each other. Just remember to never discuss private patient information online.

BALANCE, PRIORITIZE, AND BE PROACTIVE. The number of things to finish can be overwhelming. There is a time and place for everything, including taking breaks. Your brain needs rest, too. Prioritize; don’t leave your least favorite assignments until the last minute when you’re most tired.

JOIN CNSA. The Sacramento State Chapter of the California Nursing Students’ Association is a great student resource for networking with students from other semesters and providing opportunities for personal and professional growth. Members get priority for resume-building opportunities when space is limited, as well as price discounts on equipment and apparel. CNSA also helps fund members’ expenses to attend State/National Conventions. CNSA meeting dates/times/room locations will be posted on SacCT before the semester begins. You can even count CNSA meeting/event participation hours for your required Professional Development Points assignment in 1st and 2nd semester! Become a member by visiting www.nsna.org, and clicking on “Join Now!” Remember to save your membership ID number when you receive it because it is difficult to retrieve later.