

An Evolutional Change of Heart

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I first considered the nursing profession in my senior year of high school. It was in the fall, and college applications were in full swing. Everyone was talking about what majors they were going to be, majors that many believed would define their college experiences and likely their careers. I frankly had no idea what to major in. I had considered engineering, the life and physical sciences, and the arts, but none of them interested me enough for me to make a career out of it. When my parents suggested the option of nursing, I saw little more than the option's practicality since I knew next to nothing about nursing. I only knew that it was a respected profession in health care, was much less time intensive than medicine, and would provide me with a health care skill set, a concrete option for employment once I graduated, and opportunities to enter an array of fields if being at the bedside did not work out. With that, I made my initial decision to pursue nursing.

After arriving at the UCLA School of Nursing a few days before the start of instruction, I had several revelations about nursing. I listened to the Dean and several upperclassmen talk about the experiences that lay ahead. I would be faced with challenging situations, responsibilities with life or death consequences, and potentially death itself, and I would need more support than I ever thought I would need in college. They also talked about how I would find the support I needed, discover life-long friends, and develop a deeper understanding of humanity after my time in the School of Nursing. After contemplating what was said, I wanted to be in nursing.

In the spring of my junior year, I entered the clinical setting with my first clinical

rotations in maternity and medical-surgical nursing. In the short ten weeks of the quarter, I experienced nursing. I witnessed and took part in the routine assessments, medications, and procedures and the things that had to be done when unexpected circumstances arose, the perfectly healthy patients to the most seriously ill, the answering of the usual patient questions and the intimacy and communication required when a patient needed empathy, the customary conversation among the health care team and the steadfast, sometimes heated, patient advocacy that arose when a patient's needs were not being met, the tears of joy that welcomed the birth of new life and the tears of compassion that followed an individual's death. During this time of new experiences both delightful and sorrowful, classmates became colleagues, colleagues became friends, and friends became family as we shared our experiences. This summer has been a continuation of the spring with new experiences, new patients, new emotions, and new companions. I understand now what it means to be a nurse, and I realize now that I am a part of nursing and it is part of me. I have entered the nursing profession, and it is where I belong.