

Bigya Nepal

English 111

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### Nursing: My dream career

I am an international student from Nepal holding an F-1 Status in United States. I have a dream of becoming a nurse. I don't remember myself vividly until I was five, but my interest in becoming a nurse started right from my childhood. Nursing is a type of healthcare profession that requires high skill, intelligence, hard work, commitment, passion, and a caring attitude. I am interested in nursing and possess some of the above mentioned qualities. In general, international students like me face the pressure of a new education system, culture shock, home-sickness, economic crisis, and communication problems. International nurses suffer from discriminatory activities in terms of language and skin color but are also able to bring cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity to the American society.

During my visit to hospitals back in Nepal, I always looked at the health care professionals in a curious way, wondering about their white dresses and stethoscopes around their necks. I had a very good impression about beautiful nurses because they used to offer me candies and play with me often. Their impressions have really played a crucial role in drawing my attention towards their profession. When I was little at home back in Nepal, I used to act as a nurse and treat other kids as patients using a plastic stethoscope toy. I used to make an Electro-Cardiogram (ECG) machine of my own using threads and plastic boxes. When my family

members used to fall ill, I used to take care of them by doing simple house-hold works, such as applying glycerin on my late grandma's feet, putting water in hot water bags, reading a thermometer and many more. Whenever people used to ask me about my ambition, I answered, "To be a nurse." I used to attentively watch TV series related to healthcare issues. As I began school, Biology always became my favorite subject, and I was a very good student in that course. Gradually, with the course of time, I developed interest towards the nursing profession.

After graduating from my high school, I tried to get into the nursing program in Nepal but couldn't get into it due to excessive competition. At that point, I was disappointed and frustrated. After some months, through my friends I came to know that the education system in the United States is highly advanced and equipped with new technologies and services. Then, I became interested in studying in the U.S. After thorough research on nursing colleges, I came to know about Lewis Clark State College (LCSC) located at Lewiston, Idaho. Then, I immediately applied for LCSC and applied for the student visa accordingly. Finally, after a year of patience and hard work, I got admitted to LCSC. As the colleges and universities of the U.S. are being renowned for providing higher and quality education, the number of international students is increasing on annual basis. According to Se Jeong Kim, "The Institute of International Education's annual report said that during 2005 and 2006, the number of new students was 142,923, increasing about 7.7 % from 131,945 the previous school year" (1). I have also realized that becoming a U.S. graduate would be widely recognized throughout the world.

For fulfilling my dream career, I came to LCSC. I studied for a semester and took general classes. I lost focus in my first semester because I had home sickness and didn't have friends to share my feelings with. I completed one semester at LCSC and transferred to North Eastern Illinois University (NEIU) in Chicago where I had some of my high school colleagues studying

there. My friends in Chicago taught me about the new education system and culture. I studied for two semesters in NEIU, and by then I learned to live by myself and was good in studies.

Education at NEIU was expensive, and it did not offer any pre-requisite courses required for the nursing program. So, I again transferred to Harry S Truman College and studied there for two semesters. But, Truman College only provides classes for associate nursing program, so I transferred to Winona State University (WSU) in fall of 2007 for getting into the Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN) program. I came to know about WSU from one of my friends that WSU is an excellent place for providing quality nursing program and affordable tuition fees. I applied to WSU and transferred in the fall of 2007.

Today, WSU is the heart of my career where my entire dream lies. I am constantly praying to god so that I could get admission in nursing. I have realized that as an international student, I will have disadvantages as compared to other accompanying students in my class. In general, international students not only face the pressure of studies, but also suffer from various problems, such as home sickness, culture shock, economic crisis, and communication difficulty. Most of the international students in the U.S. need to adopt a totally new environment with different education system and different culture. For example, the education system in Nepal is comparatively different than in the United States. According to my general observation, in my country all assignments, homework, and exams are paper-based whereas in the U.S., it is mostly computer based. In Nepal, students participate less in the class discussions and presentations whereas in the U. S., students actively participate in various discussions and critical thinking issues. Therefore, when an international student comes to continue his or her higher education in America, he or she faces several problems while trying to accommodate to the learning pattern and adapting to the new education system.

In most of the schools, international students have to pay higher tuition fees than the American students. According to my general observation, most of the currency rates of the countries where the international students come from are relatively lower than the U.S. dollar value. Therefore, the international students have to pay higher amount of tuition fees. Besides tuition fees, the international students also have to pay for houses, food, and other expenses. Hence, based on my personal observation, I have experienced that a majority of the international students face critical financial difficulty. Besides the fact of paying higher tuition fees, a majority of the international students are good in their studies because they understand the value of expensive education. In addition, most of the international students who are F-1 holders with a full-time status have an option to work not more than 20 hours on campus. If working on-campus was not restricted to 20 hours, I personally think that it would help international students in using their spare time to collect money for their tuition fees and help their parents.

In addition, international students suffer from culture shock and home-sickness. International students come from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. They are used to different beliefs, thinking patterns, actions, emotions, and behaviors associated with their own culture. When they come to the U.S., the culture and society are completely different than their culture and tradition. In addition, they miss their parents, family members, relatives, foods, festivals, and holidays in their counties and eventually experience culture shock and home-sickness.

Moreover, international students experience communication difficulties as English is their second language. Most of the international students lack fluency in English and have different accents than the native English speakers. Sometimes international students have difficulty conveying their real message to listeners. I can provide myself as an example.

Sometimes I used to restrict myself from speaking up because my accent was different than the native English speakers. This is because I used to think that they wouldn't understand what I was trying to say.

As my ambition is to become a nurse, I was very curious to know about the problems that are experienced by international nurses in terms of language and skin color. After thorough research, I found out that the international nurses are discriminated against on basis of skin color and language by their coworkers, subordinates, doctors, and sometimes by patients. In contrast, international nurses also play a vital role in bringing cultural, religious, traditional, and linguistic diversity into the American community which helps people to develop and share their new ideas.

International nurses come to the U.S in two different ways. The first way is that international students come to America as students and graduate from nursing schools and become international nurses. In the second way, international nurses who receive their nursing degrees from foreign countries come to the U.S. for getting better jobs. Even though health-care sectors in the U.S. are experiencing nursing shortages, a majority of international nurses experience difficulties finding jobs. This is well-supported by the article "Nurse deficit afflicts state" where the author writes, "As nationwide nursing shortages threaten to balloon more than 1 million over the next several years, healthcare organizations are grappling with a range of problems, including how many foreign nurses to import" (Watanabe 1). In addition, a professor from the nursing department at WSU, Linda Smith, says, "International students have more chances of getting jobs as nurses in Florida and California." This is because most of the hospitals in the U.S. don't want to hire international nurses because they have to pay for H1-B visa processing fee, health insurance, and other expenses. According to the California Wellness Foundation, "51 of California's 58 counties are facing shortages of workers in nearly 200 allied

health professions” (qtd. in Watanabe 1). Also, the article “Starting from zero” states that 93 % of Florida hospitals are facing nursing shortages (Rexrode 3). Therefore, hospitals in Florida and California are popular for the international recruitment because they are experiencing maximum number of nursing shortages.

International nurses also bring diversity to the community and health-care settings. They represent themselves from different nations, cultures, traditions, religions, and ethnic backgrounds. Healthcare professionals, along with patients and the general public, get opportunities to learn about the significant aspects about their culture, tradition, and rituals. People share and exchange their ideas and ultimately boost their level of knowledge and wisdom. For example, now-a-days, Indian and Chinese foods have been available and highly demanded in the U.S. food market. Moreover, henna tattooing and nose-piercing that are practiced in Nepal, India, Pakistan, and other parts of the world have also been popular among people, especially among teenage girls in the U.S. Hence, cultural diversity maintained in a mutual way brings happiness and awareness in a community.

There is a relatively high number of international nurses working in the U.S. This is supported by the article “Strangers in Strange Lands” where it’s stated, “Internationally educated nurses made up 3.5 % of the estimated 2.9 million US nurse workforce in 2004...” (Xu 246). Despite international nurses contributing to the majority of the nurses’ population, they are discriminated against on the basis of skin color and language by their coworkers, subordinates, doctors, and patients. Also, according to Yu Xu, “In extreme cases, Asian nurses were target of bullying by prejudicial patients, physicians, peers, supervisors, and even by their subordinates. Furthermore, there was outright harassment Asian nurses were perceived as exotic and sexual objects” (259). In addition, Asian nurses are being given the worst patients and undesirable

work shifts basically on nights and on holidays (Xu 259). When I asked Professor Smith about the patients' reaction to the international nurses, she answered, "Most of the patients don't care about the skin color and accent, but are concerned about caring attitude of nurses." But, sometimes some of the nurses are occasionally discriminated by elderly patients. On the other hand, my other interviewee, Diana Sherpa, who is a senior international nursing student, informed me that she has never been discriminated by patients for being an international student. She said, "I always have good relationship with my patients and professors." Nursing is a profession that requires skill, intelligence, and a caring attitude where skin color and accent shouldn't be taken into consideration. All that matters is a caring and loving heart which we can find in people from any culture and ethnic backgrounds. According to the American Nurses Association (ANA), "While cultural differences abound, the basic goal of providing care to the people of one's country is consistent for nurses throughout the world" (qtd. in Peterson 65). International nurses face various forms of discrimination and try to fight against injustice, but they feel powerless and doubtful about the outcome (Xu 259). As international nurses are also part of this society and are contributing their important roles in the health-care sectors, they should be respected and admired by people.

Language is the basis of communication. Through language, people can converse and can exchange their ideas. Mutual communication is especially important in the health-care areas. However, many international nurses aren't able to converse properly because of English as their second language. Also, both of my interviewees agree with the fact that the main cause of problems for the international nurses is language. Therefore, most of the time, international nurses have problems communicating meaningfully with their patients. Communication problems are due to unfamiliar accent, usage of slang, idioms, jargon, abbreviations, recorded

shift reports, and idiosyncratic physicians' handwriting (Xu 251). To speak or write in English, first international nurses have to think in their own language, and then only they can translate to English. So, it's a bit time consuming. Therefore, they aren't able to speak English fluently as American nurses do. This is also supported by the article "Strangers in Strange lands" where the author writes, "However, because of a variety of factors, Asian nurses encounter an array of difficulties that hinder their ability to communicate... In extreme, patients refused care by Asian nurses merely because of their inability to create mutual understanding" (Xu 251). Ms. Sherpa also tells that she encounters difficulty in expressing her thoughts. She says, "Sometimes, it's difficult for me to explain my main ideas while communicating in English, so I stop talking." I have experienced many scenarios that are similar to Ms. Sherpa. When I was new in the U.S., it was very difficult to converse with people. Therefore, as I am an international student, I couldn't speak English fluently as American students do. As a result, I used to be uncomfortable speaking during class discussions and class presentations. I wanted to avoid myself from speaking out. I used to think that the native English speakers would laugh at me and try to mock me if I made errors while speaking. In addition, English isn't as efficient as my native language while making conversations. It doesn't happen all the time, but sometimes I am unable to convey the real meaning of my message to the listener which acts as a negative feedback and discourages me from speaking.

In contrast, international nurses are valuable assets in the field of nursing. International nurses constitute an increasingly related and important source of diversity on college campus in terms of culture, tradition, attitude, behavior, accent, and body language. The American nurses working with the international nurses have the benefit of increasing their cultural experiences and skills by dealing with the nurses that are from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. If

an international nurse is bilingual, this could be an advantage in the field of nursing where an international nurse is able to communicate with both English and non-English speakers and can provide nursing care in a better way. The U.S. is called a melting pot, and there are variety of people from various countries, races, and ethnic backgrounds. Some people are able to speak English while some lack this ability. In the field of health-care, nurses who are bilingual can help the non-English speaking patients by communicating in their native language.

My interest and commitment in studying nursing have helped me to become hard-working, passionate, and caring. But as an international student, I am prone to difficulties and discrimination based on skin color, language, and accent. International students like me suffer from pressure while studying, culture shock, home-sickness, and economic crisis. International students graduating as nurses aren't fairly treated by the health-care sectors. They aren't equally provided with the jobs opportunities. Most of the health-care centers don't want to pay extra amount for H1-B visa processing fee, health insurance, etc. Moreover, international nurses are discriminated on basis of skin color, accent, and language by patients, coworkers, physicians, and subordinates. Even though international nurses are ignored and dominated, international nurses play crucial role in American society. They are contributing their important role in nursing shortages. In addition, they are bringing diversity and new ideas in the U.S. community. Moreover, if international nurses are bilingual, then they have the ability to care both English and non-English speakers. Like other international students, I also have a strong desire to become a nurse and possess outstanding remarks so far. I am hopeful and have a faith that due to my commitment and hard-working attitude, I could be considered for the nursing program in fall session of 2008 at WSU. By being a nurse, I will not only achieve my goal but also fulfill my parents' dream and help the community by providing quality healthcare services.

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