Nursing Essential Skills

The Skagit Valley College Nursing Program has a responsibility to maintain high professional standards. The faculty reserves the right to determine whether the student has the personal, scholastic, and professional qualifications necessary to meet these expectations.

Skagit Valley College Department of Nursing educates the graduate of our program to sit for NA, LPN, and RN Certification, Licensure, or Registration in the State of Washington and to competently practice nursing in all health care settings.

The education of a nurse requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills and development of judgment through client care experiences in preparation for independent practice, semi-autonomous practice, and/or making appropriate decisions required in practice. The practice of nursing emphasizes collaboration among physicians, nurses, allied health care professionals and the client.

The curriculum leading to the RN, PN, NA requires students to engage in diverse, complex experiences essential to the acquisition and practice of essential nursing skills and functions. Unique combinations of cognitive, affective, psychomotor, physical, and social abilities are required to satisfactorily perform these functions. In addition to being essential to the successful completion of the requirements of the RN, PN, NA these functions are necessary to ensure the health and safety of clients, fellow students, faculty, and other healthcare providers.

The essential abilities necessary to acquire and demonstrate competence in a discipline as complex as nursing and needed for successful admission and continuance in the Skagit Valley College Nursing Program include, but are not limited to, the following abilities:

**Motor Skills**
Students should have sufficient motor function so that they are able to execute movements required to provide general care and treatment to clients in all health care settings. Such motor function includes but is not limited to physical dexterity and full range of motion to master technical and procedural aspects of client care and adequate physical stamina and energy to carry out taxing duties over long hours. (For example: For the safety and protection of the clients, the candidate must be able to perform basic life support, including CPR, and function in an emergency situation, to safely assist a client in moving, for example, from a bed to a chair, or from a wheelchair to a commode.)

**Sensory/Observation**
A student must be able to acquire the information presented through demonstrations and experiences in the basic nursing sciences, gathering information with all senses, especially sight, hearing, smell, and touch. He/she must be able to observe a client accurately, at a distance and close at hand, and observe and appreciate non-verbal communications when performing nursing assessment and intervention. The student must be capable of perceiving the signs of disease and infection as manifested through physical examination. Such information is derived from images of the body surfaces, palpable changes in various organs and tissues, and auditory information. (For example: client voice, heart tones, bowel and lung sounds.)

**Communication**
The student must communicate effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, clients, family, and other professionals, recognizing, acknowledging, and responding to emotions, and exhibiting awareness of social and cultural differences. He/she must express his/her ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrate a willingness and ability to give and receive feedback. A student must be able to: gather information appropriately; listen effectively, convey and exchange information; identify problems presented; explain alternative solutions; and give directions during treatment and post-treatment. The student must be able to communicate effectively in oral and written forms in English. The student must be able to process and communicate information on the client's status with accuracy in a timely manner to members of the health care team. The appropriate communication may also rely on a student's ability to make a correct judgment in seeking supervision and consultation in a timely manner.
Cognitive
A student must be able to measure, calculate reason, analyze, integrate, and synthesize in the context of nursing study. The student must be able to quickly read and comprehend extensive written material. He/she must be able to evaluate and apply information and engage in critical thinking in the classroom and clinical setting, be comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity in clinical situations, and seek the assistance of others when appropriate.

Behavioral / Emotional
A student must possess the emotional health required for the full utilization of his/her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, and the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of clients and families. In addition, he/she must be able to maintain mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with clients, peers, faculty, staff and other professionals under all circumstances including highly stressful situations. The student must have the emotional stability to function effectively under stress and to adapt to an environment that may change rapidly without warning and/or in unpredictable ways. The student must be able to experience empathy for the situations and circumstances of others and effectively communicate that empathy. The student must understand that his/her values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and experiences affect his or her perceptions and relationships with others. The student must be able and willing to examine and change his/her behavior when it interferes with productive individual or team relationships. The student must possess skills and experience necessary for effective and harmonious relationships in diverse academic and working environments.

Professional Conduct
Students must possess the ability to reason morally and to practice nursing in an ethical manner. Students must be willing to learn and to abide by professional standards of practice. He/she must possess attributes that include compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, honesty, responsibility, and tolerance. Students must be able to engage in client care delivery in all settings and be able to deliver care to all client populations including but not limited to children, adolescents, adults, developmentally disabled persons, medically compromised clients, and vulnerable adults.

Occupational Exposure
Students should understand that work in a healthcare-related environment and performing nursing procedures and tasks involves risk of exposure to blood, body fluids, and other bio-hazardous material by direct predictable or unpredictable exposures. Tasks and procedures performed by the healthcare professional involve risks classified by the Center for Disease Control in the following way:

Blood Borne Pathogens:
- Category I: Direct contact with blood or other bodily fluids to which universal precautions apply.
- Category II: Activity performed without blood exposure, but exposure may occur in emergencies.
- Category III: Task/activity does not entail predictable or unpredictable exposure to blood.

Reasonable Accommodation for Disabilities
Upon admission, a candidate who discloses a disability and requests accommodation will be asked to provide documentation of his or her disability for the purpose of determining appropriate accommodations. The Department of Nursing will provide reasonable accommodations, but is not required to make modifications that would alter the nature or requirements of the program or provide auxiliary aids that present an undue burden to Skagit Valley College and its clinical sites. To continue in the program, the candidate must be able to perform all essential functions either with or without accommodation.

Requests for accommodation should be directed to:
Disability Support Services
360-416-7654 (Mount Vernon campus)
360-679-5319 (Whidbey Island campus)

Successful completion of the program, however, does not guarantee eligibility to take the NCLEX licensing examination or the ability to become licensed to practice nursing. Candidates with concerns or questions about specific health conditions, personal histories or disabilities should contact the Washington State Nursing Commission (360-664-2881).