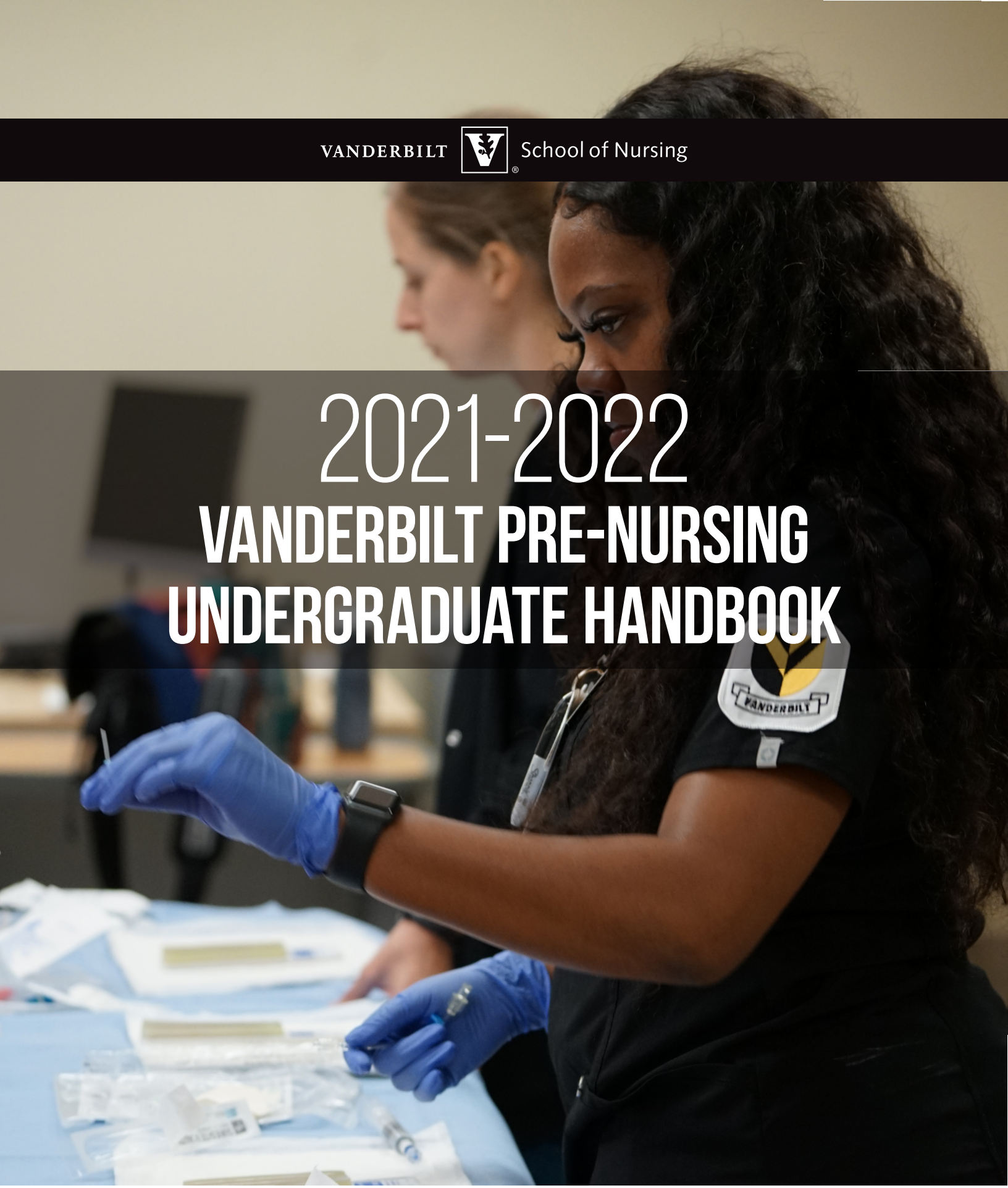
VANDERBILT School of Nursing



2021-2022
VANDERBILT PRE-NURSING UNDERGRADUATE HANDBOOK

BS/MSN PEABODY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
BA/MSN COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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Introduction

This Handbook was created for Vanderbilt undergraduates interested in obtaining a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree offered by Vanderbilt University. Although Vanderbilt University School of Nursing does not offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree, undergraduate students may apply for admission to the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree program at Vanderbilt's School of Nursing.

The first professional degree in nursing at Vanderbilt is the **Master of Science in Nursing.** The increase in knowledge and scope of nursing responsibilities, as well as changes in roles, functions, and practice settings, require a post-baccalaureate nursing education that builds on a rich liberal education base and a baccalaureate in nursing or its equivalent. Vanderbilt's MSN program is based on a variety of cognitive styles, life experiences, and educational backgrounds, and its flexibility allows all students to achieve the same goals through different options.

Students in the MSN program become a registered nurse (RN) during the program and are eligible to take the certification exam in their advanced nursing practice specialty after MSN requirements are completed. The first three semesters in the MSN degree program are generalist-nursing courses and prepares students to become a licensed Registered Nurse (RN). Students take the NCLEX-RN (licensure exam) after completing the generalist nursing courses and become RNs during the MSN program of studies. The generalist nursing courses provide the foundation equivalent to the bachelor's degree in nursing. Upon completion of three semesters of generalist nursing courses, students enter a minimum of an additional three-semester sequence of courses in their declared specialty to earn the MSN degree. After completing the MSN degree, students are eligible to take the advanced practice certification exam in their selected specialty. The MSN program requires a minimum of 6 semesters in a fall-spring-summer, fall-spring-summer calendar. Some specialties take one or two additional semesters.

All students entering with a BA/BS in a field other than nursing are required to live within daily commuting distance of Vanderbilt campus for the first three semesters of the program. In the Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner (AGPCNP), Family Nurse Practitioner, Pediatric Primary Care Nurse Practitioner, Women's Health Nurse Practitioner (WHNP) and the dual WHNP/AGPCNP specialty, students have the option of completing the remaining courses in a Modified Distance Format (https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/msn/distlearn.php). Refer to the +, *, and ◇ notations that follow the specialty list.

Students entering the MSN program with a BA/BS in a field other than nursing are eligible to apply to one of the following specialties:

Vanderbilt's Advanced Practice Nursing Specialties for Vanderbilt Undergraduates

- Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner +
- Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner *
- Family Nurse Practitioner *
- Nurse-Midwifery (hybrid format) ◇
- Nurse-Midwifery/Family Nurse Practitioner Dual Focus (hybrid format similar to Nurse-Midwifery) ◇
- Pediatric Nurse Practitioner – Primary Care *
- Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (Lifespan) +
- Women's Health Nurse Practitioner *
- Women's Health Nurse Practitioner/Adult Gerontology Primary Care * Nurse Practitioner Dual Focus *

+ Required to complete entire six-semester program of studies within daily commuting distance of Vanderbilt campus. Note that specialty year clinical placements sites may be a 150-mile one-way drive from campus.

* Required to complete the pre-specialty component of the MSN within daily commuting distance of Vanderbilt campus. The specialty component may be completed either with clinical placements within a 150-mile radius of Vanderbilt campus or with clinical placements outside of the middle Tennessee area (OMTA). As a rule, there are more spots available for applicants requesting OMTA placement.

◇ Required to complete the pre-specialty year within daily commuting distance of Vanderbilt campus. The specialty year will require blocks of time on Vanderbilt campus but all students will be required to travel to OMTA clinical sites.

Students in the Pre-Nursing Program will be challenged by the exciting and rigorous course of study. The program requires strong commitment and continual dedication to learning. There is much to consider as you explore the option of pre-nursing at Vanderbilt and the following handbook is designed to assist you in this process.

This handbook is updated annually but it is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to the MSN degree program. Pre-nursing students should visit the Vanderbilt School of Nursing website at https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/ for detailed information regarding your specialty of interest and for MSN admission requirements. Pre-nursing students should:

1) complete the online admission information cards so that the School of Nursing Admissions Office is aware of your interest in nursing, https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/admissions/inquiry.php. On the card, indicate that you will enter with a BA/BS degree in a non-nursing field
2) become a member of the Pre-Nursing Society (PNS).
3) meet with one of the VUSN-PNS advisors to discuss program questions and to select nursing prerequisite courses.
4) attend an online information session prior to applying to the program. Registration required https://apply.vanderbilt.edu/portal/nursing_info_session.
5) Pre-nursing students are encouraged to email MSN *admissions* questions to vusn-admissions@vanderbilt.edu.

Vanderbilt Pre-Nursing Society

The Pre-Nursing Society is a Vanderbilt Student Organization that is open to any student that has an interest in nursing and who has or is taking the prerequisite nursing classes. The organization holds monthly meetings usually at the Vanderbilt University School of Nursing.

The major goals of this organization are to explore the field of nursing and increase the understanding of the role of the advance practice nurse. This will be accomplished through:

- Participation in presentations, panel discussions, community service and other pertinent events;
- Exposure to clinical settings via 1-1 interviews with a nurse practitioner or via shadowing. Students are responsible for arranging their shadowing experience in consultation with their Pre-Nursing advisor. Contact the pre-nursing academic advisor, brandee.j.madden@vanderbilt.edu.

Networking opportunities in the nursing community, and; Liaison activities between undergraduate and graduate nursing students.

2021-2022 Officers

President: Molly Sullivan (mary.h.sullivan@vanderbilt.edu)

Vice President: Katie Kim (katherine.h.kim@vanderbilt.edu)

Secretary: Jojo Nacario (joseph.j.nacario@vanderbilt.edu)

Community Service Chair: Bemnet Argaw (bemnet.a.argaw@vanderbilt.edu)

Mentorship Coordinator: Liz Davidson (elizabeth.davidson@vanderbilt.edu)

Shadowing Coordinator: Frances Garrard (cornelia.f.garrard@vanderbilt.edu)

Pre-Nursing Options at Vanderbilt

Any Vanderbilt Undergraduate student interested in nursing at Vanderbilt and meeting admission requirements may apply for admission.

Pre-Nursing Studies at Peabody College

Peabody students interested in nursing typically choose from one of these undergraduate majors:

1. Major Areas

a) **Child Development:** (The Department of Psychology and Human Development). This major is recommended for those students interested in pediatric primary care, family, or psychiatric mental health.
b) **Human and Organizational Development/Health and Human Services Track:** (The Department of Human and Organizational Development HOD.) This major is strongly recommended for students who are interested in nursing from a community (including counseling and working in health/human service organizations), organizational, administrative, or public health perspective or students who are unsure of their specialty area.
c) **Child Studies:** For information contact Dr. Vicki Harris at vicki.s.harris@vanderbilt.edu.

Pre-Nursing Studies in the College of Arts and Science

Students enrolled in the College of A&S and interested in a career in nursing can select any undergraduate major. However, the undergraduate program of studies must include satisfactory completion of human anatomy and physiology I and II, microbiology, nutrition, statistics, and lifespan development. See section of prerequisite courses for details.

Frequently Asked Questions about Pre-Nursing

What should be my major?

There is not a preferred major for applicants to the MSN program. All students need to complete a BA/BS degree and prerequisite courses prior to enrolling.

There are a variety of undergraduate majors that are natural complements to nursing specialty areas. Examples include: **psychology** & psychiatric-mental health, **women's studies,** and either nurse-midwifery or women's health, medicine, health and society, **child development,** or **child studies** & pediatric primary care nurse practitioner, to name a few.

Students interested in the pre-nursing program at **Peabody College usually** major in Human and Organizational Development, Child Development, or Child Studies.

If you are interested in family (FNP), pediatric primary care (PNP), or psychiatric nursing (PMHNP), most students major or minor in Child Development.

Students in Arts and Science may choose any major.

Which specialty area should I apply to?

You are eligible to apply to one of these nursing specialties: Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner (AGACNP), Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner (AGPCNP), Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP), Nurse-Midwifery (NM), Nurse-Midwifery/FNP (dual specialty), Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP), Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Primary Care (PNP-PC), Women's Health Nurse Practitioner (WHNP) or WHNP/AGPCNP (dual specialty). When applying to the School of Nursing, you must apply to a specialty area. It is not possible to apply to the MSN program undecided about your area of nursing specialization.

If you are not sure of what you would like to specialize in, it is important to investigate the various options to make your specialty choice. It is recommended that you interview an advanced practice nurse in the area of your interest as well as spend time volunteering in hospital and clinic settings to learn more about health care delivery and your interest areas.

For information on the specialties, visit the Vanderbilt School of Nursing webpage at https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu and attend one of the Open Houses that are held in the fall and spring each year. It is recommended that you begin attending the Open House in the spring semester of your freshman year to be able to have multiple opportunities to interact with faculty about the possibilities for a major at VUSN. **Several weeks before Open House, information is posted on the School of Nursing admissions website:**
https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/admissions/msn/index.php.

When should I apply?

Undergraduate students should complete their application by ***October 15 of their senior year***.

Students admitted to the MSN degree program complete an additional two academic years (6 semesters) at VUSN (or slightly more depending on the specialty) to obtain an MSN, be licensed to practice as a registered nurse, be eligible to sit for the advanced practice nurse certification exam, and practice as an advanced practice nurse (nurse practitioner or nurse midwife).

How do I Learn More About the Pre-Nursing Options at Vanderbilt?

There are several ways to learn more about the pre-nursing options at Vanderbilt:

1. Visit the Pre-nursing Studies webpage (https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/msn/prenursing/index.php)

2. Join the Vanderbilt Pre-Nursing Society. Contact the PNS President for information: Molly Sullivan (mary.h.sullivan@vanderbilt.edu)

3. Attend an MSN program-information session held on most Tuesdays from 10-11:30 am (central time), Wednesdays from 4-5:30 and Fridays from 10-11:30 am (all central time). Please register now (https://apply.vanderbilt.edu/portal/nursing_info_session) if you are interested in participating in an information session.

4. Set up a meeting with the Pre-nursing Advisor brandee.j.madden@vanderbilt.edu to discuss your interest areas.

5. Attend at least one of the Vanderbilt School of Nursing Open Houses held twice per year; a virtual Open House is scheduled for October 2, 2021 and March 5, 2022. When the RSVP for the Open House is open, you can register to attend on the web site www.nursing.vanderbilt.edu.

6. Review the information about Advanced Practice specialties (https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/academic_programs/index.php#programs) to determine which specialty is the best fit for you career goals. After carefully reviewing the scope of practice information and attending an online information, email the Academic Director with additional questions.

International Applicants Who Need an I-20 or DS-2019 Issued to Study in the United States

Due to federal guidelines, the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), postmaster's certificate (PMC), and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs do not satisfy the requirements for F-1 or J-1 study. The federal regulations restrict the number of courses that can be delivered via an online format within a program of study for F-1 and J-1 students. As these programs have a significant online component, the educational format is not compatible with the structure required by the federal government for F-1 and J-1 students.

Advice for Student by Students

This handbook has been designed to offer you a brief overview of Vanderbilt's School of Nursing and the admission process.

The following are recommendations from our past and current students for consideration as you explore your interest in the health care field:

1. Volunteer, Interview, or Shadow

   Volunteering at the VUMC or Monroe Carroll Junior Children's Hospital is a wonderful way to explore different fields of nursing/medicine and immerse oneself in the patient environment. Volunteering at one of the two Vanderbilt Hospitals is a minimal time commitment, but a unique and rewarding experience. There are opportunities for college students to volunteer in both the school year and summer months. Contact Volunteer services for both hospitals at volunteer.services@vanderbilt.edu or by phone at (615)-322-2379, for more information and an application. ***You will also receive volunteer and community service opportunities through the Vanderbilt***

PNS organization. Additionally, interviewing or shadowing an advanced practice nurse is a valuable experience. If you know a nurse practitioner in your community, request an interview to discuss their advance practice role. Nurse Practitioners in the Nashville area are available for 1-1 interviews with prospective students. Contact a PNS nursing advisor for information. A Shadowing Program for PNS members is available. Contact the PNS shadowing coordinator, Frances Garrard (cornelia.f.garrard@vanderbilt.edu) for more information.

CPR Certification

CPR training is required prior to beginning the first semester of Nursing School. Contact the American Heart Association (615) 256-1818 for information. Remember to ask for the **"health care provider course"** when you sign up, as this is a requirement for VUSN (includes infant, child, and adult CPR).

Required Prerequisite Courses

No matter what your undergraduate major is the following courses are required as prerequisites for matriculating into the MSN degree program. Completion of the pre-requisites is required by the time classes begin but not required at the time you apply:

- 3 hours of Statistics
- **Microbiology: BSCI 3234 (3 credits). Beginning 2023 you must also have completed the one-year Introduction to Biological Sciences series (BSCI 1510/1511) as a prerequisite. Meet with the nursing advisor to discuss your options.
- **Human Anatomy & Physiology: (BSCI 2101 & 3101) (4 credits each) fall/spring; must take BSCI 2101 before BSCI 3101. BSCI 1510 is a prerequisite for BSCI 2101; BSCI 1511 is a prerequisite or corequisite.

- **Nutrition: MHS 1600 Introduction to Nutrition and Health for a Changing World (3 credits). Please consult the Vanderbilt Course Catalog (https://acad.app.vanderbilt.edu/more/SearchCourses!input.action) for course availability.
- Developmental Psychology: HOD 1250 or PSY-PC 1250

All courses taken elsewhere are subject to the provisions of the Transfer Credit policies. If you need to take the pre-requisites off campus, please use this link to assist you getting started with transferring courses to VU:
https://acad.app.vanderbilt.edu/more/SearchTransferCredits.action

Clinical Placement

The VUSN Clinical Placement Office works collaboratively with faculty, program directors, and students to ensure all students have a productive clinical experience. Clinical sites and preceptors are chosen for their ability to provide students with clinical experiences consistent with course and certification requirements and the mission of the school. Due to regulatory requirements or a lack of available and appropriate preceptors, VUSN may not be able to accommodate clinical placements in all areas of the country. See further details at https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/admissions/regulations.php.

Pre-Specialty Year Rotations (MTA)

During the pre-specialty year, all students are required to live within daily commuting distance of Vanderbilt campus. Students during their pre-specialty year will be placed in group clinical experiences in the middle Tennessee area (MTA). These group experiences may be in a hospital or community setting.

Placements within the Greater Middle Tennessee Area–Specialty Year

For students admitted as MTA (Greater Middle Tennessee Area) students, the Clinical Placement Office works with the specialty faculty to secure clinical sites.

Clinical sites located within a 150-mile radius from the School of Nursing are considered to be within this area. As a result, students may have rotations in Kentucky, Alabama, and east or west Tennessee, depending on the appropriateness of the site. Faculty take into consideration a number of factors in assigning students to sites, including home address, specialty needs, and clinical interests. Given the large number of health profession students in the area and the competition for sites, agencies and providers have asked that all Greater Middle Tennessee area VUSN placements be coordinated by a school representative. Students are not to reach out to local sites to arrange their own placements. If you identify a possible local placement, please contact your specialty director or course coordinator first; they will work with the Clinical Placement office staff to see if a placement is possible.

Placements outside the Greater Middle Tennessee Area–Specialty Year

For students admitted as OMTA (outside the Greater Middle Tennessee Area), students, faculty, and the Clinical Placement staff work collaboratively to locate OMTA sites. Students are encouraged to develop a list of possible sites, as they often have a better knowledge of the area and can use personal networks and connections to identify a potential rotation. The Clinical Placement office will research the area and share information on agencies and practices where VUSN either has an existing relationship or where a previous student has precepted. The Clinical Placement office also coordinates with the Alumni Relations office to share information on alumni in the area who might be able to assist.

Application Process

Vanderbilt University School of Nursing seeks to matriculate students with an array of life experiences and the potential to provide significant contributions to the nursing profession. We believe a diverse learning community fosters the development of exceptional leaders, educators, clinicians, informaticists, and researchers. A holistic approach is used to evaluate each candidate based on

academic performance, professional goals, personal characteristics, leadership potential, commitment to service, and support of diversity, inclusion, and equity.

To assist in the application process and to ensure a quality application, it is necessary to become familiar with the MSN Admission Requirements (https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/admissions/msn/index.php) early. Before starting an application, it is strongly recommended that you attend an MSN program information session offered by the School of Nursing admissions office. Whether you are in the process of applying or simply interested in what it entails, this section will not only explain the requirements, but will also provide recommendations and suggestions on how to create a well-rounded application. The MSN program only admits students for a fall start date. The application opens each year on August 15; the fall 2022 priority review date is October 15, 2021. The online application is available on the School of Nursing web page at https://apply.vanderbilt.edu/apply/.

If you are applying to AGPCNP, FNP, PNP-PC, WHNP, or WHNP/AGPCNP specialty, you will be required to indicate whether you want to complete the specialty year portion of the program in the middle Tennessee area (MTA) or outside of the middle Tennessee area (OMTA). Applications are holistically reviewed based on the following factors:

Statement of Purpose
Responses to application questions
Official Transcripts
Three Letters of Recommendation

Statement of Purpose and Responses to Application Questions

Your Statement of Purpose and responses to application questions should address your first choice of specialty. **It is not possible to enter the program without choosing your specialty area.**

You should only **apply to one specialty** on your application. Please make sure that you thoughtfully choose your specialty prior to beginning the admission process. **After admission, it is very difficult to change specialties.**

Statement of Purpose

Submit as part of your online application. The Statement of Purpose (750 words maximum) should reflect your understanding of the role of the advanced practice nurse and your interest in a particular patient population. Before writing your statement of purpose, please carefully review information about the specialty on our web site so that you clearly indicate to the faculty that your career goals are a fit with the specialty. If you are applying to a dual-specialty, be sure to address the scope of practice in each specialty area.

Students are admitted to their selected specialty; it is not possible to enter the program *undecided* about your specialty area. While the online application system will allow you to submit more than one application, the School of Nursing can only consider one application per student per term.

Responses to Application Questions

Responses are submitted as part of the online application. Each question is to be answered in 100-250 words. Both the writing style (grammar, punctuation, spelling, word use, etc.) and the content of your responses will be reviewed as part of the overall application.

Suggestions

The application questions require you to examine yourself and your role as a future professional. It is highly recommended that you ask yourself these questions early and begin to cultivate answers. There is no set length for each response, or right or wrong answers. The key is to write concise, well-reasoned answers that

demonstrate your individuality and your ability to maturely handle the demands of a rigorous graduate program.

Please consider the following points:

- In both the statement of purpose and application question responses, be sure to demonstrate your understanding of the **role of the advanced practice nurse in the specialty you have chosen.** The VUSN faculty wants to be sure that you have a **clear understanding** of the career that you have chosen to undertake.
- The School of Nursing is committed to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Read the VUSN diversity and inclusion position statement https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/about/diversity/index.php and consider how you will contribute to a diverse and inclusive environment at VUSN.
- Do not be afraid to talk about your **achievements, or special talents** that would contribute to your ability to be an effective practitioner including, **experiences** you have had working with underserved or at-risk populations. Provide a comprehensive list of your activities/experience in the Experiences section of the application.
- ***This is a competitive program with limited enrollment so be sure to differentiate yourself from other applicants.***

Official Transcripts

Applicants should request electronic transcripts using the Vanderbilt YES system. Please **do not** have paper copies mailed. **Please note:** Applicants must submit **official** transcripts from all post High School studies. To avoid errors, start your online application at https://apply.vanderbilt.edu/apply/ before submitting transcripts.

Students admitted to this program must have earned an undergraduate grade point average of at least a "B," or a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. **The average GPA for the entering fall 2020 class was 3.5**+.

Letters of Recommendation: Submitted Online

All applicants must provide three letters of academic or professional reference. Your letters should be submitted by faculty members, professional colleagues, or job supervisors who can evaluate your potential for success in a graduate program. It is required that at least one of your recommenders hold a master's or higher degree. Since you are a current VU student, it is strongly recommended that at least two letters come from VU faculty familiar with your academic ability.

Additional letters from professionals will be accepted, but not required. Make sure the people completing your references, have direct knowledge of your abilities and keep in mind, more is not better, quality of the reference is more important as to their knowledge of your academic or work performance.

Titles are not as important as the people who know you well. You will need to provide a valid e-mail address of your recommenders. References from peers, family members, or friends are not appropriate recommendations. The online application system will prompt you how to send the letters electronically.

All MSN Graduates are Eligible for Seamless Transition to Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Degree Program

The Doctor of Nursing Practice program prepares leaders in advanced nursing practice to bring evidence-based knowledge into the practice arena, improve health care outcomes and strengthen the leadership role in guiding complex care delivery and nursing education. Vanderbilt's MSN program provides an opportunity to seamlessly progress from the MSN program to the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program. Following completion of the MSN degree, graduates are eligible to take their specialty-specific certification exam. Seamless progression allows students to work as an advanced practice nurse while completing the DNP program in either five or six semesters. See DNP program details (https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/dnp/index.php).

Faculty Contacts

A&S Students
Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Education
(615) 875-5831
andrea.l.hearn@vanderbilt.edu

Child Development and Child Studies Majors
Professor Vicki Harris
(615) 343-1896
vicki.s.harris@vanderbilt.edu

HOD Majors
Professor Kimberly Bess
(615) 343-7946
kimberly.d.bess@vanderbilt.edu

Medicine, Health & Society
Undergraduate Advisor
courtney.s.peterson@vanderbilt.edu

Vanderbilt School of Nursing
Pre-Nursing Advisor
brandee.j.madden@vanderbilt.edu

VUSN Admissions Office
(615) 322-3800
vusn-admissions@vanderbilt.edu

- Sandy Church, Associate Director
  (615) 343-3051
  sandy.church@vanderbilt.edu
  Contact person for: Adult-Gerontology Acute Care NP, Adult-Gerontology Primary Care NP, Family Nurse Practitioner, and Psychiatric-Mental Health NP

- Cheryl Feldner, Associate Director
  (615) 343-6810
  cheryl.feldner@vanderbilt.edu
  Contact person for: Nurse Midwifery NM/FNP, Pediatric Primary NP, Women's Health NP and WHNP/AGPCNP

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