

The Blueprint to Our Future

Janitza Elena Torres

Lake Forest College
Lake Forest, Illinois 60045

For the most part, we go into college with an idea of what we would like to pursue. Some of us aspire to become lawyers, while others aspire to follow medicine. Everyone thinks big and aims to reach their goals by taking the next big step. Current plans to build one's future at an undergraduate level consist of taking the appropriate courses to better understand the desired field. Curiosity begins to grow while we fill our time with homework, projects, and exams. For the most part, we are just following a systemic routine while confined to the walls of our classroom. Experience outside of the academic classroom is always recommended by professors and fellow colleagues. The freedom to search for an outside learning opportunity, such as internships or jobs, allows us to advocate for our future careers. It's just a matter of taking advantage of those opportunities that surround us.

I aim to pursue a career in healthcare, specifically in nursing. I've always been drawn to helping those around me. I have followed the appropriate curriculum, specifically that offered by the institution's pre-nursing pathway program, to help satisfy the needed nursing prerequisite courses for graduate school. I've taken the appropriate steps to prepare for my future, but I knew I needed to do more to advocate for myself and my future.

For over a year, I've been working at the International Community Clinic at Rosalind Franklin as a medical interpreter. I started as a spring intern. Shortly after, I was offered a paid position at the clinic. The genuine experience of being the voice for and helping the Spanish-speaking community receive healthcare showed me a deeper understanding of what it takes to be an empathetic healthcare worker. As I created that bridge of communication between the patient and primary healthcare provider, I had to put myself in a position where I not only said the words spoken by my patients but also expressed their concerns and emotions. No school course would have taught me the in-depth importance of using all listening skills rather than interjecting right away with the solution. By building that bridge for patients, I learned to perfect my bedside manners and strategized on how to build a rapport with them. Across all my patient encounters, I gained great insight and first-handedly saw the importance of listening and gaining their trust.

Aside from being a medical interpreter, I enrolled in a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course during the summer through Nirvana Institute. The CNA program allowed students to complete the theory class and clinical training within a month! Overall, the program was an amazing experience. The theory class, as one is used to, covers all required subjects for the state board and final exams before certification. Subsequently, everything that was taught was also actively practiced via clinical application. My passion for pursuing a career in nursing had grown the moment I was able to participate in a clinical role. There is a definite difference between learning in a classroom and practicing skills that pertain to your future career. It truly takes a patient and assertive individual to care for a stranger. Patients are not supposed to be the easiest population to deal with. Patients are angry, anxious, and irritable, but they seek guidance from a healthcare worker because they are scared and have no one else to turn to in their time of need. Being truly empathetic while handling the messiest job in bedside patient care creates the stepping stone to a patient's healing journey. All they need is a strong nurse to stand by their side.

Nursing isn't the easiest career path, hence the numerous nursing shortages across the world. The experiences gained outside the classroom have assured me that this is my career choice. The skills obtained from being a medical interpreter made me the most efficient communicator and listener, and the skills as a CNA taught me patience and patient care. As amazing as a syllabus may be during a semester, no lecture would have covered these amazing life skills which brought me closer to completing the blueprint for my future.

Note: Eukaryon is published by students at Lake Forest College, who are solely responsible for its content. The views expressed in Eukaryon do not necessarily reflect those of the College. Articles published within Eukaryon should not be cited in bibliographies. Material contained herein should be treated as personal communication and should be cited as such only with the consent of the author.