



▲ ▲ ▲ SECOND TIME'S THE CHARM ▲ ▲ ▲ ENGINEER EXCELS AT NURSING AS A NEW CAREER

Working in health care was a childhood dream deferred for Nathan Eakins, who began his professional career using his troubleshooting skills and analytical mind as an engineer for a communications equipment company.

But when the recession hit and circumstance dictated a career change, Nathan jumped at the opportunity to realize his childhood dream and earn his associate degree in nursing.

"Everybody has such a high opinion of nursing as a profession, and I thought that my ability to problem-solve would be a good fit for nursing," he said.

As it turned out, his skills and experience translated easily into nursing: Nathan landed a position as a nursing aide even before earning his associate degree in 2009, and then quickly moved up the ranks upon graduation.

Tinkering, Tweaking and Teaching

In his professional experience, Nathan found inefficiencies and processes that he thought

could be done better, so he sought the education that could help him put his problem-solving skills to work. He was drawn to the University of Arizona online Master of Science in Nursing Clinical Systems Leadership because of its focus on administrative and systematic aspects within the field of nursing.

The emphasis on leadership also appealed to Nathan. Aside from career advancement, he hoped to land a job teaching the next generation of nursing professionals, and he knew his MSN would be important in developing that phase of his career.

"When researching the program, I was intrigued because as a nurse you see things that maybe don't run as smooth as you'd like or things you think you could improve," he said. "Other schools wanted me to repeat what I already knew, or required clinical hours, but I was a clinical nurse already. I also wanted a master's that would allow me to start teaching nursing part-time."

NATHAN EAKINS (MSN '15)
STAFF NURSE, ELECTROPHYSIOLOGY AND
CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION LAB

CONVENIENT AND CONNECTED

As a working nurse, Nathan, like many of his classmates, didn't keep regular hours. He found that the MSN program's online flexibility was integral to his success, allowing him to study around his work schedule and family obligations. He was even available to participate in coursework during some downtime while on vacation. During the program, Nathan said he had the opportunity to get to know many of his classmates via chats, projects and other interactions.

"One aspect of the program that surprised me was how connected we were as students, because a lot of the activities involved group learning or group participation," he said. "It was a great way to meet the other students, work with them and become friends with them."

The project that stands out most for Nathan proved emblematic of his focus on real-world application and creating efficiencies. In the Clinical Systems Immersion course, he and his group created a business proposal for a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease clinic that could use the internet to connect physicians, nurses, nutritionists and other staff with patients who may not be capable of traveling to the clinic for consultation. After he and his group presented the project, the other students in the program had a chance to vote on if they would fund the program. Nathan's project was one of only two that were picked.

"It was nice to feel that you put all the time in and your professors and peers thought that you did a good job," Nathan said. "The whole process from how the idea started, how it went in different directions, to the final product was very eye-opening."

Making a Push Toward His Goals

Now, Nathan is a staff nurse at Boca Raton Regional Hospital, where he works in the electrophysiology and cardiac catheterization lab. Equipped with the knowledge and experience he gained while earning his MSN, Nathan feels better positioned for advancement in his career, and has even begun teaching part-time as an adjunct professor at a local college.

"This was something that I would not have been able to do without my master's," he said. "I'm proud and glad that I was able to accomplish it."

