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Transcript

00:00:01 Casey Ellis

Welcome to the Pre-Professional Playbook podcast where preparation and hard work comes together.

00:00:06 Casey Ellis

This podcast will explore pathways in the health and law professions to help you format your future.

00:00:11 Casey Ellis

I'm your host, Casey Ellis, an advisor in the University of Georgia's Pre-Professional Advising Office, and today we're coaching you on the diverse routes you can take to become a nurse.

00:00:20 Casey Ellis

Whether you're just starting out, considering a career shift, or just wanting to know more, this episode is your guide to navigating the various educational and professional options available.

00:00:29 Casey Ellis

From traditional nursing degrees to accelerated programs and beyond, we'll cover it all.

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Let's get started.

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Nursing is a demanding but rewarding profession and is one of the most popular healthcare careers.

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Nurses are critical because they expand access to care, improve the quality and safety of healthcare, and reduce healthcare costs.

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Nurses typically record patients' medical histories and symptoms, give patients medicines and treatments,

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set up plans for patient's care or contribute to existing plans, observe patients and record the observations, consult with doctors and other healthcare professionals, operate and monitor medical equipment, help perform diagnostic tests and analyze results, teach patients and their families how to manage their illnesses or injuries, explain home health management, and more.

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The first thing to know about nursing is that UGA does not have a nursing program however, there are multiple paths to obtaining your nursing degree.

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Once you have decided to pursue a career in nursing, you must then decide whether you wish to transfer to another institution with a formal nursing program or stay at UGA and finish your degree before entering a nursing program.

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You may be wondering what major looks best for nursing school.

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There is no best major or preference for specific majors when applying to nursing schools.

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It is more important to pursue a major that interests you as you are far more likely to succeed in a major you enjoy.

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Pick a major that aligns with your passions.

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It is true that certain science majors require their nursing prerequisites and therefore complete your plan on Degree Works more efficiently, but that does not mean that is the best choice for you.

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Information about courses, majors, minors, and certificates can be found on the UGA Bulletin website at bulletin.uga.edu.

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The profession of nursing offers a wide variety of career opportunities through multiple levels of education and professional practice.

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They work in a wide range of settings, such as acute care facilities, hospitals (including every floor and department), clinics, primary care offices, insurance companies, surgical floors, nursing homes, hospice facilities, and more.

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Nurses can also continue their education in both a broad array of specialties as well as deep into an academic or research doctoral program.

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Let's begin with the traditional route, which is a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

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A Bachelor of Science in Nursing is an undergraduate degree offered at both public and private universities.

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BSN programs are four years long.

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The first two years of the degree are covering your core institutional requirements as well as nursing prerequisites, with the last two years focusing strictly on nursing classes and clinical rotations.

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Another route to becoming a nurse is an accelerated Bachelor's of Nursing.

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This degree is for people who have an undergraduate degree in a different area other than nursing.

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These degrees often take 12 to 15 months to complete and usually don't have a lot of breaks or downtime.

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To apply for an ABSN program, you will want to have all the nursing prerequisites and the program will focus strictly on nursing classes and clinical rotations.

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If you are interested in a graduate level degree, then an entry-level Masters of Nursing program may be the right choice for you.

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This entry-level degree, like the ABSN, is made for people with non-nursing bachelor's degrees and requires you to have your nursing prerequisites complete upon entering.

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While ABSN programs are three semesters long, entry-level master's programs are usually 4 semesters with summer counting as a semester.

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If you are interested in a graduate level nursing degree with the aim of becoming a nurse practitioner and have an idea of what specialty you would like to gain your nurse practitioner degree in, the three-year entry long programs may be for you.

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First two years are your masters and the third year you will focus on your nurse practitioner specialty.

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If you are interested in a graduate level certified registered nurse anesthetist degree, known as a CRNA degree, you first have to gain your RN license.

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One year is the minimum requirement you have to work on a critical care floor, but most CRNA applicants have two to five years of critical care experience.

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You may be wondering how to know which is right for you.

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Let's get into some details and discuss pros and cons to each.

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BSNs require an entrance exam and so do ABSN programs in the state of Georgia.

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This entrance exam is either the TEAS or the HESI.

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The TEAS is $170 in person and $115 online.

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It contains 4 sections consisting of reading, math, science, and English.

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The TEAS is offered on UGA's campus and Clark Howell Hall.

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The HESI can vary in cost depending on where you choose to take it.

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has two main sections, academic and personality.

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The academic section contains math, reading, vocabulary, grammar, biology, physics, anatomy and physiology, and chemistry.

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The personality section contains a learning style assessment and a personality profile.

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While the average on both of these exams are 75%, I advise you to shoot for at least an 80, but don't stop there.

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An 85% or above would increase your competitiveness as an applicant.

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You can always research schools to know what tests they need, but a good rule of thumb is that if a BSN or ABSN program requires General Chemistry 1 and 2, known as Chem 1211 with lab and 1212 with lab at UGA, then you most likely will need to take the HESI.

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At UGA, we have a resource library that students can check books out of our office to study with.

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You'll have to go to our website, ppao.uga.edu, and look under the Resource tab, and then choose the Resource Library to find the instructions on how to check out a book.

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Common prerequisites for nursing are HDFS 2200 at UGA, which is Human Development, and it must be this exact one, not a different level of HDFS.

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Psych 1101, known as General Psychology.

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See Bio 2200 with lab and 2210 with lab, which is your Anatomy and Physiology 1 and 2.

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You have the option between Microbiology 2500 with lab or 3500 with lab, and this is our Microbiology at UGA.

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And then your science sequence will depend on the school and program level you're applying to, but will either be General Bio, which can be Bio 1103 with lab and 1104 with lab, or General Biology 1107 with lab and 1108 with lab, or General Chem,

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which can be Chem 1211 with lab and 1212 with lab.

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Some schools need extra courses in the state of Georgia, such as fundamentals of human nutrition, known as Nutrition 2100 at UGA, medical terminology, known as CLAS 1030 at

UGA, abnormal psychology, known as Psych 3230 at UGA, and then anthropology or sociology, known as ANTH 1102 or sociology 1101 at UGA.

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It is important to consider what you can manage alongside your other responsibilities.

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Nursing school differs from other pre-professional programs in that your grade is based solely on your test score.

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You must meet the school's minimum grade requirements before additional components like quizzes and homework are factored into your overall grade.

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These requirements can vary by school.

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For instance, some may require an average of 80, while others may only require a 76.

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Another unique aspect of nursing school is that it is not pass/fail.

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You need to achieve a specific test average.

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If you fall short in any course, you'll have to repeat that course along with the associated clinical semester.

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If you encounter this issue again in a different course, you would need to reapply to the entire program and start over.

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Therefore, if you're pursuing an Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing, ABSN, it's crucial to ensure you can handle the program's rigorous pace without additional commitments, like a part-time job.

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Consider your long-term goals.

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Are you aiming to become a certified registered nurse anesthetist, CRNA, or nurse practitioner, known as an NP?

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This decision can help you narrow down your program options.

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If your goal is to become an NP, you might prefer a master's program, such as Emory's MN plus MSN program.

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A nurse practitioner who has advanced clinical training and education can provide direct patient care.

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Nurse practitioners can diagnose, treat illnesses, prescribe medications, interpret tests, and perform procedures.

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Nurse practitioners can specialize in a wide range of specialties such as neonatal, pediatric, psychiatric mental health, midwifery, woman's health, emergency, cardiac, orthopedic, family, adult care, geriatric, and aesthetic nurse practitioner.

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Within these you can even get into a more narrow focus.

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For example, some people may become a pediatric trauma nurse practitioner, while others may just focus on primary care pediatrics.

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These specialties will vary depending on the school you apply to.

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Conversely, if you want to pursue a CRNA, you may want to complete a traditional bachelor's degree or an accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing, ABSN, to enter the workforce more quickly and gain experience in an intensive care unit.

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Nurse anesthetists deliver anesthesia and pain management to patients.

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CRNAs may work independently or under the supervision of a physician, such as an anesthesiologist, but this depends on the state's supervision requirements.

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CRNAs are considered advanced practice nurses and have the top salaries in the field of nursing and enjoy a high level of autonomy.

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Per the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, these programs will be doctoral degrees in 2025.

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Like nurse practitioners, CRNAs can specialize in providing pain management and anesthesia for certain types of procedures.

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Common specialties are pediatric, obstetric, cardiovascular, cosmetic, dental, and neurological anesthesia, earning your doctorate degree to become

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a CRNA can take three to four years depending on your prior education.

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The average salary of a CRNA in the state of Georgia is $177K.

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Speaking of pay, that can be an important factor.

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When a nurse first graduates, there may not be a significant difference in salary between those with a BSN or ABSN and those with a master's degree.

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The average nurse salary in the state of Georgia or someone with a BSN is between 71K and 96K.

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Variables are due to location, specialty, and schedule, such as nights and weekends.

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This would be the same for an ABSN as at the end of the day it is the same degree, an RN BSN.

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If you have a master's degree, then the average salary in Georgia starts at the end of the BSN at around 95K.

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However, over time, having a master's degree can open up more career opportunities and lead to leadership positions.

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In Georgia, the salary for nurse practitioners varies by specialty, ranging from $90k to $151k.

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You will have to decide which route is best for you.

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If you decide to transfer out, you will do your freshman and sophomore year at UGA, and you will go to nursing school for your junior and senior year of college.

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You will apply for the fall semester of your sophomore year to transfer out.

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You will not graduate with a UGA degree, but instead a BSN from the school you transfer to.

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If you decide to do all four years at UGA, you will apply in the fall of your senior year and will want to decide whether you are most interested in ABSNs or master's programs, but often students will apply to both to keep their options open.

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Now that you have heard all the information, you might be wondering when to meet with me and what you can do to prepare yourself for nursing school.

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If you plan to transfer out, it is important to meet with me sooner rather than later so we can discuss what your courses will look like over your first two years at UGA.

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You can schedule an appointment with a pre-professional advisor by visiting sage.uga.edu.

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To schedule an appointment in Sage, click My Success Network.

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You can either search for your advisor by name or see a full list of advisors in the office.

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You can click Show Other Services and then Pre-Professional Advising Office.

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and click the appropriate advisor's name and click Schedule Appointment.

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You will find my appointments under Nursing and Allied Health with the semester in parentheses, AK, fall, spring, or summer.

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I have appointments available both in Memorial Hall and via Zoom.

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You will want to prepare yourself to become a successful nursing applicant.

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One way you can do this is to show you care about people.

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I advise my students to volunteer consistently with an underserved community in a face-to-face manner.

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This usually means one to two hours a week during the fall and spring semesters with something they care about.

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I also encourage students to be involved in things they actually enjoy and not just activities to fill up their resume.

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If you like the activities you're involved in, it will be easier to discuss them on an application.

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Shadowing is not required, but it's great for deciding if nursing is right for you.

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I encourage you to shadow different specialties and to shadow at multiple places.

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I also encourage you to shadow full shifts from beginning to end so you can see what nurses do to prepare for patients.

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Of course, you will also want to do well in your courses to show that you can handle the rigor of nursing school.

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I would aim for at least a 3.5 overall and science GPA.

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Regardless of what route you choose, every nurse out there is a key player in the game of healthcare.

00:13:09 Casey Ellis

Don't forget to subscribe, leave a review, and share this episode with your teammates and colleagues.

00:13:13 Casey Ellis

Catch you next time on the Pre-Professional Playbook podcast.