Tips for the BSN Job Search

Please be reminded of the following steps and resources for moving along in your search for a permanent or summer position in clinical nursing.

1) Reflect on and document your experience at clinical rotations.
2) Explore and prioritize opportunities.
3) Build your network.
4) Tweak your resume and cover letter.
5) Attend career fairs and other recruiting events.
6) Compile your recommendation letters or list of references.
7) Prepare for interviews.

1) Reflect on and document your experience at clinical rotations. During your clinical rotations, it is vital that you take time to think about what you have learned and how it impacts your goals for developing as a nurse. Make sure you do this on a regular basis as this will help you to:
   • Elicit helpful feedback from your clinical supervisors and preceptors.
   • Foster self-awareness that will help you to develop as a nurse and prepare more thoroughly for the job search process, especially cover letter writing and interviewing.

2) Explore and prioritize opportunities. Once you identify hospitals and facilities of interest, be sure to check websites and/or contact nurse recruiters to clarify hiring timetables. Take the time to consider what appeals to you about a particular hospital or healthcare facility. Clues may be found by searching the website for the mission statement, core values, research priorities, current/upcoming projects and initiatives. You can also search for news items regarding the hospital/facility.
   • Many resources for this exploration, including our list of nurse residency programs and list of summer externships and internships, are available on our Nursing webpage at: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/careerfields/nursing.php
   • Be sure to update your career interests and check job listings on Handshake as well.

3) Build your network. Connecting with others in your profession can provide insight into what it’s like to work at a particular hospital/facility as well as how to market yourself effectively in the job search. Informational interviewing is a great way to gather advice and build your network, though it’s important to remember that the purpose of this type of meeting is to gather information and advice, not ask for a job or job interview. Here are some resources to get started:
   • Informational Interviewing Tips: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/networking/InfoInterviews.php
   • QuakerNet (Penn’s Alumni Online Community): http://www.myquakernet.com
   • Penn Alumni Linkedin Groups: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/networking/linkedin.php
   • Professional Associations are also a good resource for networking: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/careerfields/nursing.php#associations
4) **Tweak your resume and cover letter.** Career Services can provide critiques during appointments (call 215-898-4381 on weekdays between 9am-5pm to schedule), walk-in hours (Mondays, 12:00-1:00pm) or via e-mail. Keep in mind that the turnaround for e-mail critiques during busy seasons can be up to one week. Therefore, it is best to use the following online resources to tweak your resume format as much as possible before a critique with a counselor.

- The Powerpoint presentation from our Resume/Cover Letter workshop is available at: [http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/files/BSNResumeCL.pdf](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/files/BSNResumeCL.pdf)

5) **Attend career fairs and other recruiting events.** Career fairs allow you to meet a number of recruiters in one place so that you are able to offer resumes to and obtain contact information from employers of interest. Career Services hosts Nursing Career Day in late November or early December for Penn Nursing students and alumni. Other nursing career fairs and events throughout the country are offered via [http://www.nurse.com/events/career-fairs/](http://www.nurse.com/events/career-fairs/) and [http://events.advanceweb.com/](http://events.advanceweb.com/).

Be on the lookout for information sessions or open houses that hospitals or other health care facilities may host. For those interested in non-clinical settings, consider other career fairs that may be relevant to your job search.

For more details on career fairs hosted by Career Services (including Nursing Career Day), go to: [http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/careerfairs/](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/careerfairs/)

6) **Compile your recommendation letters (or list of references).** Request recommendation letters (or other references) from clinical instructors/supervisors and nursing faculty who know you well and can speak to your qualities and strengths in specific ways. Give your recommenders sufficient time to write the letters and make sure you are clear on how each employer wants to receive the letters. Sometimes, employers may only need contact information from recommenders for phone references. When that occurs, be sure to inquire with your potential recommenders before listing them on an application.

7) **Prepare for Interviews.** The key to successful interviewing is thorough and thoughtful presentation. It is crucial that you reflect on your clinical rotations as you prepare answers that reflect concrete examples of your experience.

- desire to work at a particular hospital/facility
- desire and qualifications for a particular area/specialty of nursing
- approach to working with patients under challenging circumstances
- strengths/weaknesses
- highlights from clinical rotations, other health-related work, and extracurricular activities

The Powerpoint presentation from our workshop on Interviewing for BSN positions is available at: [http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/files/BSNInterview.pdf](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/files/BSNInterview.pdf)

It is also extremely useful to practice interviewing. Career Services offers mock interviews as well as other tips and resources that can be found at: [http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/interviewingadvice/](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/interviewingadvice/)