



South Dakota Nursing Network

An initiative of the University of South Dakota School of Health Sciences

Tuition Reimbursement & Support Funds Assistance Impact Survey

BSN to MSN (currently enrolled and recently graduated)

(6/2/25)

1) What motivated you to pursue your MSN degree after already earning your BSN?

I became increasingly interested in improving inefficient workflow systems and addressing the frequent interruptions nurses experience during their shifts. I wanted to enter a field where I could understand the root causes behind these issues and help mitigate them. USD's Nursing Informatics Program offers the foundational tools necessary to begin such a journey. Like Florence Nightingale, one of the first nursing informaticists, I believe that USD's Informatics graduates will contribute in shaping nursing for generations to come.

2) Please share a few examples of how the Department of Labor grant funding has helped make the goal of completing your MSN more attainable?

The Department of Labor grant funding has provided significant relief by allowing me to focus more on academics rather than finances. It has been a breath of fresh air to not worry as much about the financial burden that so heavily influences major life decisions. Working full-time in shift work with rotating schedules, while pursuing an advanced degree, is not easy. This support has made the transition much more manageable.

3) Did receiving the Department of Labor grant funding influence your decision to return to school for your MSN? If so, how?

No, my decision to pursue an MSN was based on a long-term investment in my future. I was already prepared to commit to furthering my education regardless of funding. However, receiving the grant certainly eased the process and allowed me to reallocate funds saved towards my undergraduate degree.

4) What has been the most rewarding or challenging part of your MSN journey, and how has the support system around you helped you manage it?

The most challenging part has been balancing work, school, and personal responsibilities. I understood that sacrifices would need to be made in order to succeed. My dad always says, “If it were easy, everyone would do it.” My support system has been instrumental in helping me manage these demands. Between coworkers, family, peers and the academic staff at USD I have never felt more supported. The staff at USD truly wants to see you succeed. I am amazed at what personalized relationships can be fostered even as an online student over 7 hours away from the main campus. The staff’s encouragement and flexibility has made a significant difference in my ability to stay on track.

5) How do you anticipate that completion of your MSN will shape your future role in nursing?

Completing my MSN will equip me with the advanced knowledge and leadership skills necessary to drive positive change within nursing practice. Informatics is so broad, which is what originally drew me to nursing. In combination, one can truly become a jack of all trades whether in education, administration, or clinical practice.

One of my immediate goals is to utilize my knowledge and advance into a role that would allow me to focus on assisting my facility during the implementation of a new electronic health record (EHR) system. What excites me the most about informatics is the wide range of opportunities it offers. While I do not have a long-term destination or focus in mind yet, that is part of the appeal. I know that with this degree I will have the skills to continue exploring and make a positive impact wherever I go.

6) Other comments:

This journey has been incredibly challenging yet rewarding thus far. I truly appreciate the support I have received along the way. The DOL grant significantly eased my financial burden, allowing me to pursue this degree at a reduced cost while also making progress on paying off my undergraduate loans. I am grateful for programs like this that have allowed me to focus on learning and growing as a nurse and leader. Thank you to everyone who has made this possible. It has truly shaped the course of my life and career.

Sincerely,

Shealyn Bunch