



*Sigma Rho Chapter presents:*  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL  
 INFORMATION SESSION**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2021

**Planning Committee:**

- Heather Jones, DNP, AGNP-C, Rho Vice-President
- Diane Ferguson, MS, RN, AGPCNP-BC, Rho Member Engagement Chair
- Ann Kruszewski, PhD, RN, Rho Publicity Chair



Rho Chapter

**Presenters:**

- Alicia Schuster, BA, MA
- Ellen Smith, Ph.D., MSN, RN, AOCN®, FAAN
- Elizabeth Kuzma, DNP, FNP-BC
- Diane Ferguson, MS, RN, AGPCNP-BC
- Catherine Renner, DNP, FNP-BC
- Ivy Li, BSN, RN

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*Sigma Rho Chapter presents:*  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL  
 INFORMATION SESSION**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2021

**SESSION OVERVIEW**

- APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL
- MAXIMIZING SUCCESS IN PERSONAL GOAL STATEMENTS & INTERVIEWS (PHD AND CLINICAL PROGRAMS)
- FINANCING GRADUATE EDUCATION
- TIMING GRADUATE SCHOOL: WORK EXPERIENCE VS. DIRECT FROM BSN



Rho Chapter

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# PART 1

## GRADUATE PROGRAMS & APPLICATION

University of Michigan School of Nursing  
Alicia Schuster  
Recruiting & Admissions Team

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## Choose your pathway

### MSN

- Allows graduates to sit for certification exam
- Become an advanced practitioner in your specialization

### Postbaccalaureate DNP (BSN-DNP)

- Terminal degree, focused on leadership to allow expert nurse clinicians to rise to the highest levels of their nursing practice
- Prepares graduates to make a significant impact on health care outcomes and initiate meaningful change

### Ph.D.

- Research focused, apprenticeship learning model
- Fully funded for three years with option to fund a fourth year

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## Specialty pathways at U of M



### On-campus MSN and BSN-DNP

- Acute Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner
- Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner
- Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner
- Primary Care Family Nurse Practitioner
- Primary Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner
- Nurse-midwifery and combined programs
  - Primary Care Family Nurse Practitioner
  - Primary Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

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## Specialty pathways at U of M



### Online options

- Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner
  - MSN only
- Primary Care Family Nurse Practitioner
  - MSN only
- Leadership, Analytics and Innovation
  - MSN only
  - Online only

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## MSN, Postbaccalaureate DNP and Post-master's DNP application requirements

- NursingCAS application
- Personal statement
- Resume
- Official transcripts
- Three qualified recommendations
- Official English Proficiency Exam scores (*if applicable*)

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## NursingCAS Application Information

- Application opens on September 3, 2020
  - <https://nursingcas.liaisoncas.org/apply>
- Early deadline for clinically focused and Leadership, Analytics and Innovation is **January 15, 2021**
- Final deadline for clinically focused programs is **April 15, 2021**
- Final deadline for Leadership, Analytics and Innovation MSN is **June 1, 2021**

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## Ph.D. application requirements

- At UM--Rackham Graduate School application
  - rackham.umich.edu
- Statement of purpose
  - Research interest
  - Identify mentor
- Personal statement
- Resume
- Official transcripts
- Three qualified recommendations
- One solely authored paper



GRE no longer a requirement for Fall 2021

### Ph.D. application information

Application opens: Early September  
Deadline: December 1

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## Ways to Connect

- Virtual Graduate Open House (held periodically)
- Virtual Faculty Meet & Greet
  - Faculty will be hosting program webinars during the Winter 2021 term
- Coffee Chats
  - Individual meetings with a Recruitment and Admission specialist

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# Q & A

More details about information sessions  
can be found at  
<https://nursing.umich.edu/about/visit-us>

## Contact Us

Recruiting & Admissions Team

[UMSN-GradAdmissions@med.umich.edu](mailto:UMSN-GradAdmissions@med.umich.edu)

734-763-5985



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## PART 2A

### PREPARING A COMPETITIVE APPLICATION FOR PH.D. PROGRAM IN NURSE SCIENCE

Ellen M. Lavoie Smith, Ph.D., MSN, RN, AOCN®, FAAN  
Professor and Ph.D. Program Director • [ellenls@med.umich.edu](mailto:ellenls@med.umich.edu)

[nursing.umich.edu/academic-programs/doctoral-programs/doctor-philosophy-phd](https://nursing.umich.edu/academic-programs/doctoral-programs/doctor-philosophy-phd)

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What does a Ph.D. prepare you to do?

➡ ***Create new scientific knowledge*** ⬅

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## Application components

- Transcripts
- ★ Curriculum vitae (CV) or Resume
- ★ Personal statement – 500 words
- ★ Academic purpose statement – 1,000 words
- Licensure
- ★ References
- ★ Writing sample – you are the sole author

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## Preparing a competitive purpose statement-PhD

- Address why you want a Ph.D. from this university
- Research and career goals
- Identify potential faculty mentors
- Identify campus-wide specific resources
- Weave in unique aspects of your background
- Address any concerns that may arise from application materials
- Multiple drafts
- Careful editing
- Get feedback from others

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## PART 2B PREPARING A COMPETITIVE APPLICATION & INTERVIEW FOR CLINICAL PROGRAMS

**Beth Kuzma, DNP, FNP-BC**  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
FNP Program Lead  
Coordinator of Graduate Program Leads  
University of Michigan, School of Nursing  
ekuzma@umich.edu

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## Goal Statement and Interview

- Holistic application process
- We are looking for applicants that are the best fit for our programs and our school
  - Patient population
  - Specialty
  - Setting
- We are looking for attributes that demonstrate the ability to be successful in a rigorous academic program
  - Time management
  - Stress management
  - Motivation
  - Commitment
  - Drive
  - Planning
- We are looking to see if applicants have really considered what it will take to be successful in graduate school and have taken steps to prepare themselves and their loved ones for what it will take to succeed.
  - Time commitment
  - Preparation
  - Realistic expectations

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## Goal Statement

### **What is the purpose of the goal statement?**

- For the admissions committee to determine if an applicant is a good fit for the program and has what is needed to be successful in the program.

### **What do we want to see?**

- That you understand the focus of the program
- That you can describe why you want to complete this program
- That you have clear goals for where you see yourself in the next 5 years that align with the program focus
- That you can describe why you chose our school

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## Goal Statement

- Opportunity to sell yourself to the program to which you applied
- Opportunity to share something personal and unique about yourself
- Helps make the other pieces of information in your application (i.e., resume, transcripts, recommendations) stand-out
- Opportunity to describe any challenges you may have faced (that could have impacted your grades) and how you overcame them.

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## Goal Statement

### **How does this information help us make our decision?**

- Shows us that you have clear goals that align with the focus of our program.
  - Patient population
  - Specialty
  - Setting
- Shows us that you know what you want.
- Shows us that you investigated our program and other programs and selected the program that is best for you.

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## Graduate Program Interview

### **Possible Interview Formats:**

- Video-recorded interviews with set questions
- In-person interviews with faculty (not likely during COVID)
- Live Zoom interviews with faculty

### **Process:**

- Standard questions/process for all applicants
- Multiple faculty members review and make recommendations about admission decisions.

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## Graduate Program Interview

### **Key components being assessed in the Interview:**

- Leadership/Team-Work
- Time Management
- Stress Management
- Interest
- Motivation

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## Graduate Program Interview

### **How does this information help us make our decision?**

- Demonstrates that you have leadership skills and can successfully work in and manage teams.
- Demonstrates that you have time-management/stress-management skills that will set you up for success
- Demonstrates that your interest aligns with the focus of our program.
  - Patient population
  - Specialty
  - Setting
- Demonstrates that you know what you want and are motivated to complete this program.
- Demonstrates that you investigated our program and other programs and selected the program that is best for you.
- Demonstrates that you considered what it will take to be successful in graduate school and have taken steps to prepare yourself and your loved ones for what it will take to succeed.

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## Questions?

Contact Information:  
Beth Kuzma, DNP, FNP-BC  
ekuzma@umich.edu  
(734)647-0149

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## PART 3 FINANCING GRADUATE SCHOOL

**Diane Ferguson, MS, RN, AGPCNP-BC**

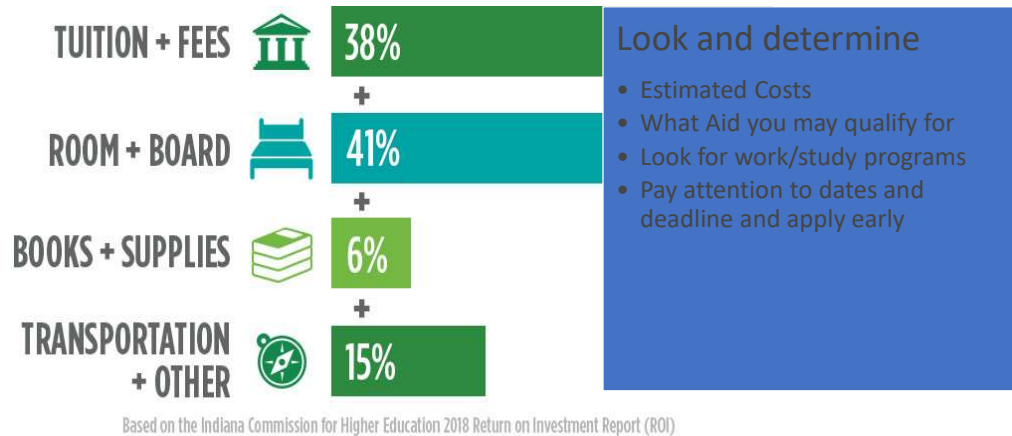
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## Where to start?

Look on the website for the school that you are applying.

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## Where to start?

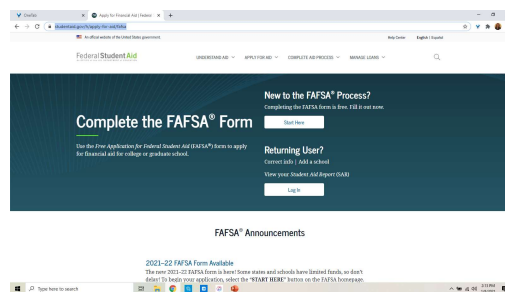


### Look and determine

- Estimated Costs
- What Aid you may qualify for
- Look for work/study programs
- Pay attention to dates and deadline and apply early

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## Complete your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®)



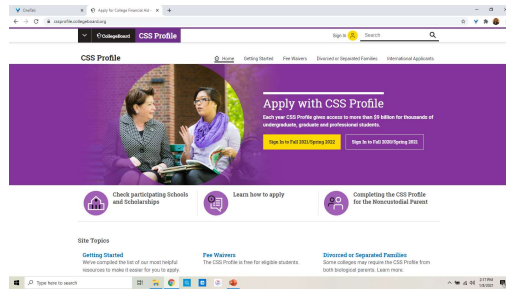
Start with understanding the site and fill out the application on-line

Check the deadline for the state which colleges you are applying

<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

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## Complete your College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile



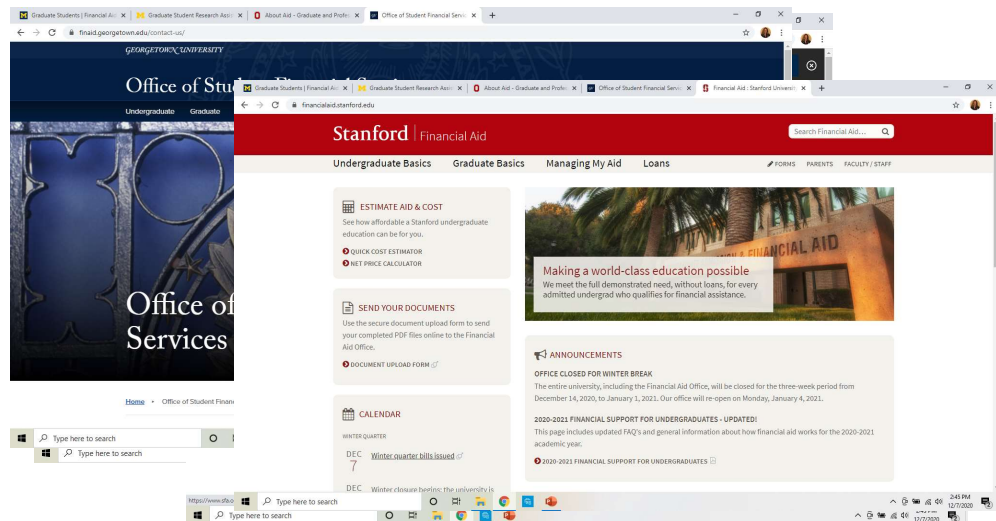
<https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>

Start with understanding the site and fill out the profile on-line

CSS Profile deadline varies by the schools' deadline. They are mostly between Jan. 1 and March 31.

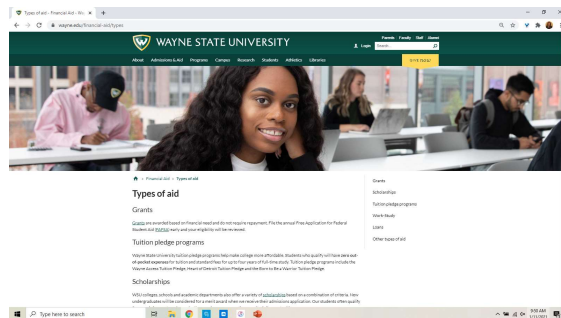
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## Contact the Financial Aid Office of the school that you are applying.



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On the Financial Aid Website review the different types of aid.



Grants, Scholarships, and Fellowships

Loans

Work-Study

Military and veterans assistance

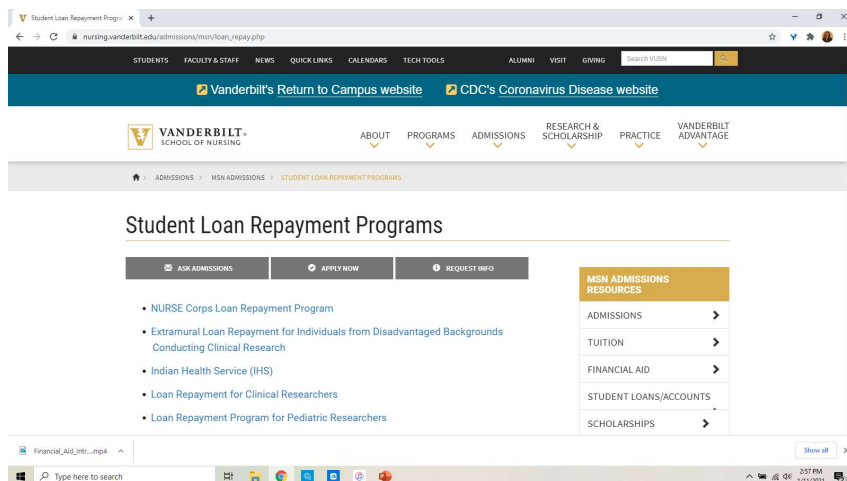
No worker left behind (MI Only)

GSRA/GSI Students

Many others

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There is a plethora of information on the Web if you look for it.



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## The Big One's -



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## Graduate Student Instructor (GSI)

Some students obtain Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) positions teaching undergraduates.

In general, GSI positions are highly competitive and tend to value teaching experience.

Visit Academic Human Resources for the University of the school that you are applying.

There are also opportunities for grader positions that support instructors in some departments.

Union for GSI.



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## Graduate Student Research Assistantship (GSRA)

Graduate Student Research Assistantship (GSRA), is a competitive position awarded by individual faculty who have funded research projects.

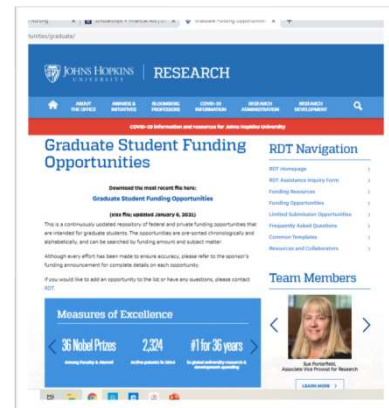
GSRA positions cover tuition and offer students a substantial stipend (\$28,000) and health insurance.

You must pay your own student fees

Must work 20 hrs a week

Must renew each semester

Percentage came from school and additional funds come from research award (NIH)



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## Graduate Research Assistant Duties and Responsibilities

Gather Research Data. The central responsibility of a graduate research assistant is gathering data related to their projects. ...

Analyze Findings. ...

Prepare Reports and Paperwork. ...

Maintain Databases. ...

Verify Data. ...

Direct Undergraduate Research Assistants



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## Graduate Student Service Appointment (GSSA)

GSSA positions are typically housed in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) if the school has one.

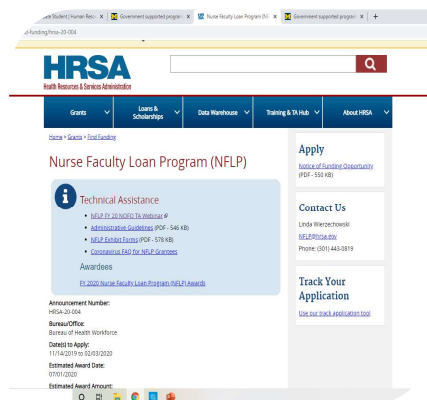
They require high interpersonal communication, research skills, experience designing/planning workshops and interactive programs for students, staff and faculty.

The specific responsibilities of GSSAs vary across schools.



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## Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP)



Federally-sponsored initiative to recruit graduates from advanced nursing education programs into teaching positions across the nation.

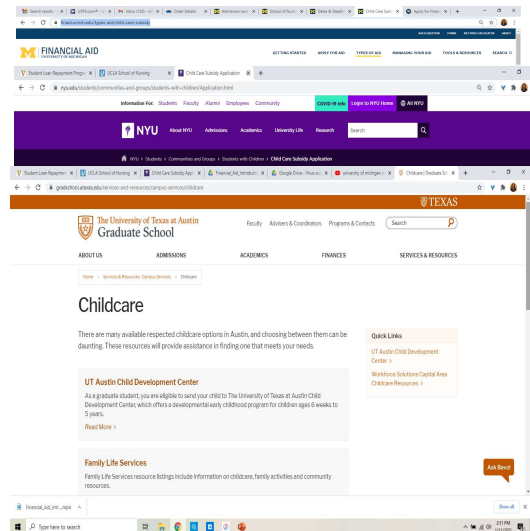
Required to complete education certificate with focus on nursing education in addition to the course load for the student's advanced degree.

Students may be eligible to have up to 85% of this loan forgiven if they serve as a full-time nurse faculty for a consecutive four-year period at a school of nursing following graduation.

<https://www.hrsa.gov/grants/find-funding/hrsa-20-004>

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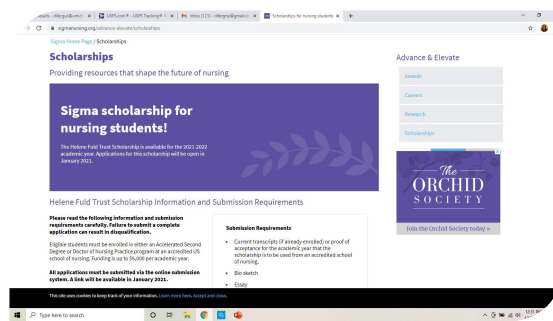
## Child Care Subsidy



- To be eligible for consideration for the child care subsidy, students must:
  - Graduate students some must satisfy the half-time enrollment requirement while others are full-time enrollment.
  - Dependent child(ren) - age requirements change per university some go from 6 weeks to 5 years others go up to 12 years old
  - Most allow for special needs and are under the age of 19.
  - Demonstrate financial

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## Sigma International

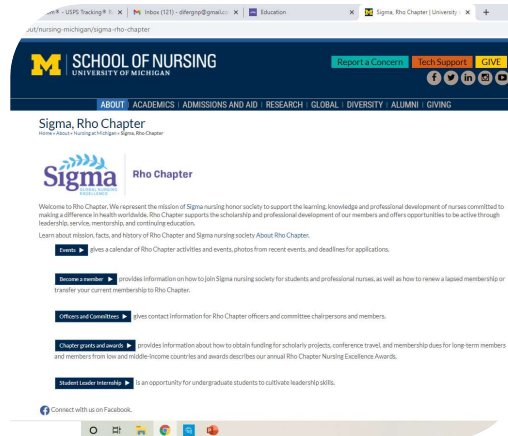


<https://www.sigmanursing.org/advance-elevate/scholarships>

- All applications must be submitted via the online submission system. A link will be available in January 2021.
- **Submission Requirements**
  - Current transcripts (if already enrolled) or proof of acceptance for the academic year that the scholarship is to be used from an accredited school of nursing.
  - Bio sketch
  - Essay
  - At least two letters of support

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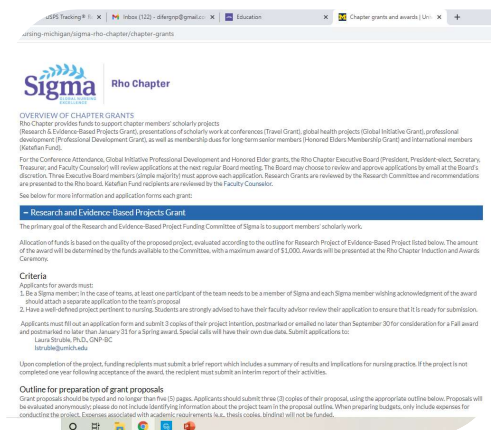
# Sigma Rho Chapter



- <https://nursing.umich.edu/about/nursing-michigan/sigma-rho-chapter>

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# Sigma Rho Chapter



**The primary goal is to support members' scholarly work.**

1. Be a Sigma member
2. Have a well-defined project pertinent to nursing. Students are strongly advised to have their faculty advisor review their application.
3. Postmarked or emailed no later than September 30 for a Fall award and no later than January 31 for a Spring award.

<https://nursing.umich.edu/about/nursing-michigan/sigma-rho-chapter/chapter-grants>

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## Questions

- For more information about U-M School of Nursing funding opportunities, please email [UMSN-Scholarships@med.umich.edu](mailto:UMSN-Scholarships@med.umich.edu) or call 734-764-6690.
- **OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID**  
 515 East Jefferson Street  
 2500 Student Activities Building  
 Ann Arbor, Mi 48109-1316 Us  
 T: [734-763-6600](tel:734-763-6600)  
 F: [734-647-3081](tel:734-647-3081)  
[financial.aid@umich.edu](mailto:financial.aid@umich.edu)  
 FAFSA/Federal School Code: 002325 | CSS Profile Code: 1839

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## Free scholarship search web sites

- American Association of Colleges of Nursing <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Education/financialaid.htm>
- CollegeBoard.com—Paying for college <http://www.collegeboard.com/paying/0,1127,6-0-0-0,00.html>
- Cost effective college <http://www.costeffectivecollege.com/FAIHome.htm>
- FastWeb—free scholarship searches <http://www.fastweb.com/>
- Scholarships.com—free scholarship searches <http://www.scholarships.com/>
- Mach25 database—free scholarship searches <http://www.collegenet.com/mach25/app>

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## Free scholarship search web sites

- Finaid–The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid <http://finaid.org>
- The Debt Free Grad–The student's online source for financial advice <http://www.debtfreegrad.com/>
- Discovering Nursing [www.discovernursing.com](http://www.discovernursing.com)
- SallieMae Scholarships [www.SallieMae.com/scholarships](http://www.SallieMae.com/scholarships)
- School Soup Scholarships [www.SchoolSoup.com](http://www.SchoolSoup.com)
- Scholarship Experts [www.scholarshipexperts.com](http://www.scholarshipexperts.com)

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## PART 4 TIMING GRADUATE SCHOOL WORK EXPERIENCE OR DIRECTLY FROM BSN?

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# Working Before Graduate School

Catherine Renner, DNP, FNP-BC

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## My Story

- 2012: U of M BSN degree and commissioned into Air Force as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt
- 2012-2015: Inpatient Med-Surg in Ohio (Active Duty RN)
- 2015-2017: Outpatient Oncology in Germany (Active Duty RN)
- 2017-2020: U of M graduate school
- 2020: Graduated with FNP DNP degree
- Present day: CVS COVID Response FNP and Adjunct Nursing Faculty at George Mason University

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## Working Before Grad School

- Benefits
  - Clinical experience
    - More advanced clinical knowledge and skills
    - Improved knowledge of health care system
    - For some NP jobs, RN experience is considered during hiring
  - Personal
    - More confidence in yourself
    - Improved communication and organizational skills
    - Determine what you want to do (with certainty)
  - Financial
    - Ability to save money prior to returning to school
    - Potentially graduate with fewer loans

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## Working Before Grad School

- Challenges
  - Personal:
    - Returning to studying, writing, and test-taking
    - May have more outside responsibilities
      - School is a large time commitment; family must be on board
  - Work:
    - May be difficult to navigate work and clinicals
      - This will likely be a challenge either way

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## Things to Consider

- Why am I returning to grad school?
  - Know yourself
- Do I know what program I want to do and why?
  - Shadow and do the research
- Can I afford this?
  - Money and Time Commitment
- Do I feel ready to step into an advanced role in a couple of years?

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## Graduate School Directly from BSN

Ivy Li, BSN, RN

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