

Applied learning

In an interview with Nina Beamon, an MSN graduate of Aspen University, she talks about how Aspen allowed her to move at her preferred pace – full speed ahead – and how her real-life experience facilitated her learning.

#

Nina Beamon graduated from Aspen University with a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN). Nurses with an MSN have intricate knowledge of the healthcare field and are able to use their expertise to treat patients in a variety of medical situations. Nina

gave us an overview of her experience at Aspen University during this interview.

“I can apply my education at my job every day...”

Why did you choose Aspen?

My friend was taking courses at Aspen. I was impressed when she told about the flexibility and speed with which you could get an MSN.

Were you employed at the time you decided to earn your degree at Aspen?

Yes. I’ve been a nurse for several decades. I was interested in teaching and, in order to teach at an accredited nursing school, it’s required to have an MSN. I have several degrees so I’m no stranger to academia. I have two associate degrees, one in nursing and one in business, a bachelor’s in liberal arts and a doctorate in education. Now I have two masters – one in health psychology and now, of course, one in nursing from Aspen. All of my graduate degrees are from online universities.

What is it like to go back to school after spending time in the workforce?

It was great because I had actual life experiences that related to the course materials. Having experience to draw from facilitated my learning process. Now I can apply my education at my job every day. For example, I felt like I knew nothing about nursing informatics. But, on two occasions in the last week, I’ve been in meetings where I knew more than anyone else thanks to Aspen.

How long did it take you to achieve your degree?

I began in October 2010. I enrolled in a bridge program and finished my masters in August 2011. I was able to do it amazingly fast. It’s not the norm to finish that fast but I was driven to do it.

Did you find there was variety in the courses offered?

Yes, plus every course interested me on some level. Either I didn’t know anything about a certain topic which made it a wonderful learning experience or it was a subject I was previously interested and kicked up my knowledge. I’d already worked in community nursing but I really enjoyed doing projects and learning even more about it.

How easy was it to fit your education into your home/work life?

I didn't have any problems. I declared one day a week as my "Aspen Day" – that's when I wrote my papers. I compartmentalized my work plus my Aspen study-and-writing time while working as a program director for Bryant & Straton College. It's certainly doable. I could never have completed a degree at a brick-and-mortar school because of my schedule. The independent study format let me move at my own pace which is faster than a structured, week-to-week format.

Why does Aspen stand out among other universities?

I think Aspen is very student-friendly and student-focused. There're no required classes to go to. The program allows for the needs of adult students to do schoolwork at times convenient to them. I also like that the focus was on reflecting [about the coursework] and writing rather than test taking. I don't think I learn as well when it's just studying for the next test. At Aspen I was challenged to really think about a topic and write a paper. The reflective writing way of completing a master's better prepares you for a doctorate. I appreciate [the fact] that Aspen challenges you to write as a scholar.

What advice would you give to potential students?

Carve out time in your life to do work for your courses. Human nature tends toward procrastination and, in order to make progress, you really have to manage your time.

What kind of relationships did you form with the Aspen professors?

I had professors working very closely with me at my own place. If I had questions, I could reach out to them via email. When I submitted modules, I'd get quick feedback. This afforded me the opportunity to get through modules at my pace.