

This week, I was excused from Clinical as I was selected by Dr. Hwang to visit the state capital for Student Aid Advocacy day. The purpose of the event was for colleges and universities to lobby for more student aid or for an increase in student aid programs already in existence. There were several schools present such as Pace University, and we all were assigned specific times to meet with the Senators and tell our personal stories in hopes they would be willing to vote favorably on matters regarding student aid.

An area of personal growth experienced this week was learning about student aid advocacy, guidelines and recent changes in the laws regarding criteria to receive aid. Going to the state capitol and speaking directly to Senators really opened my understanding on how changes in financial aid occur. Honestly, I never knew or really considered how financial aid programs came to be. I am most familiar with FAFSA, and grants and scholarships offered by our school, but beyond filling out the application, I have no clue regarding the actual process that helps pay for my college. For example, the poverty line was recently lowered which disqualifies a lot of students who originally met the criteria to receive financial aid assistance. There are changes related to student aid being discussed all the time in state and local government, which came as a shock to me. I have only ever really viewed student aid from a student's perspective so this was certainly an area of growth.

Regarding spiritual growth this week, and seems to have been a common theme throughout this semester, is growing in gratitude for God's care and attention to detail. The invitation to visit Albany came around 7 PM the night before, when an unknown number showed up on my phone screen. Turns out, it was Dr Hwang asking me to participate in the advocacy day and I said yes without realizing what the date was, February 14th. This day, commonly referred to as Valentine's Day, was very different for me due to some recent, major life changes. For God to create an opportunity of such magnitude on that day just reminded me once again of how much He loves me, sees me and pays very close attention to detail. I had never been to the state capital, nor been in the presence of senators, and not to mention how gorgeous the building and views were. Seeing so many new sights, meeting so many new people and being surrounded by beauty took my mind off just how different that day really was. Just in case I thought it was a coincidence that I was chosen to be there that day, they were selling chocolate covered strawberries in the capitol cafeteria that day, which happens to be my favorite dessert and only ever received on Valentine's Day. It was just another reminder that God has so many beautiful things in store, and the death of one thing, or the closing of one chapter does not mean death to everything. Instead it just means that room is being made to see the beautiful things that God desires to do for his children, and I am so glad to be one of them.

Professional growth for the week I would say definitely would be in the area of communicating with non-academic and non-medical leadership. I had the ability to converse with a senator directly and she asked me to tell her of my college experience. She wanted to know how I got to where I am and some of the challenges that I faced to get there. After sharing

my story with her specifically regarding some of the financial issues, related to textbooks and medical clearances, she said to me “you need to share your story. They (the senators) need to hear your story. This was a moment of professional growth for me because being able to articulate a personal experience in a way that leads others to make a difference is amazing. When you are living in an experience, how powerful it is may be lost on you. However, when used in the correct platform, positive changes can definitely come from painful places and inspire others to help people.

The scripture reference for the week would be "let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." Galatians 6:9. Nursing school is no joke, and this semester has certainly been no laughing matter. Many opportunities have come to give up, but this scripture comes to mind and encourages me. Even in the most difficult of times, and the most impossible situations, if we do not faint, a harvest does come. Even if that Harvest seems so far off like a graduation or doing well on an exam, if we don't give up and keep trying, even when it feels like there is nothing left, the Harvest will come.