

September 1, 2025

Subject: **Welcome Back Letter from Dean Nickitas - Fall 2025 – Rutgers University–Camden School of Nursing**

Dear Students,

Welcome back! Whether you are beginning your very first semester or returning to continue your journey, I am thrilled to welcome you to a new academic year at the Rutgers University–Camden School of Nursing. You are not just returning to a campus—you are returning to a **community**. One that is committed to your growth, your success, and your future as compassionate, courageous, and capable nurses.

For those of you just joining us—our newest Raptors—know this: **you belong here**. Your presence, your voice, and your perspective are already valued and needed in this community. You step into a school ready to meet you as you are and walk with you as you grow into who you are becoming: a professional nurse.

This year, I am proud to lead with a theme that resonates deeply in our profession and in our lives:

Building Bridges through Inclusivity and Communication

Bridges connect people. They span differences. They are built with care and held up by trust. That's what we strive to build here every day—with you, and alongside you.

Our faculty are the essential architects of the bridges we create. Their scholarship, mentorship, and care form the scaffolding that supports your academic journey. They are committed to delivering knowledge and nurturing your professional growth and personal confidence. Faculty across disciplines guide you with rigor and purpose—illuminating the path ahead with both expertise and grace.

Inclusivity is more than a word in our values—it's how we operate. It means listening with empathy, speaking with honesty, and showing up for each other with kindness and respect. It means making space, sharing space, and holding space for one another. And it means ensuring that every person here feels a sense of belonging—because **belonging is not passive, it is active**. It's something we create together through our actions, our words, and our support for each other.

To our new students: you are entering a school that is proud to call you the **largest and most diverse class** we've ever welcomed. You represent six states, 16 New Jersey counties, and the highest percentage of men in nursing our school has seen—continuing our national recognition as a "Best School for Men in Nursing." You bring rich academic backgrounds, lived experiences, and bold aspirations to a profession that needs every one of you.

To our continuing students: your leadership, resilience, and commitment continue to define this school's spirit. You set the standard for excellence in the classroom, in clinicals, in student government, and in communities near and far.

To our graduate students—those pursuing advanced practice, leadership, education, or policy roles—you are expanding the bridge outward. You amplify the voice of nursing beyond bedside care and into boardrooms, classrooms, and communities. You bring wisdom, depth, and inquiry to our academic landscape, and you demonstrate what lifelong learning truly looks like.

Across both the **Traditional BSN** and **Accelerated BSN (ABS)** tracks, we are proud to have students ranging in age from their late teens to their 30s—students who are first-generation scholars, parents, career changers, and global citizens. This diversity of paths enriches our school and reflects the very communities we serve.

As we move into this new academic year, I want to remind you that **this is more than your education—it is your calling**. Nursing is not just a career. It is a moral commitment to equity, compassion, and justice. It is a promise to care for all people—without exception.

Every nurse is a bridge: Between patient and provider. Between fear and hope. Between illness and healing.

To build those bridges, you will need more than technical skill. You will need empathy. You will need humility. And above all, you will need an unwavering respect for human dignity.

The work ahead of you is not easy—but it is meaningful. You are entering a profession grounded in **ethics, advocacy, and humanity**. You will be asked to lead. To listen. To stand up for those who cannot. And to push for systems that are more just and more inclusive for all. And that work starts now—in how you study, how you show up for your peers, how you communicate, and how you commit to growing as a person and a professional.

This year, I encourage you to think of yourself not just as a student—but as a **bridge builder**. Because every conversation, every collaboration, every patient interaction—you are connecting lives. And you are shaping what healthcare can and should be.

So once again—**welcome back**. Welcome to your next step. Welcome to the community that sees you, supports you, and believes in your ability to make a difference.

Let's begin this year—**together**.

Warmly,



Dean Donna Nickitas, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, CNE, FNAP, FAAN

Dean and Professor
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