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When Alison Bergeron ,29, was in her first semester of nurse practitioner school four years ago, her mother was diagnosed with cancer and passed away shortly after. “Family experiences mold people into what type of career path they should take,” Bergeron said.

A lot of people told Bergeron to quit nursing, but she used her mother’s death as motivation to pursue her career. She said her mom would have been so mad at her had she listened to them and quit. With her mom passing away at such a young age, Bergeron said she realized life is too short. Her daughter was 7 months old when she decided to quit nursing full time and become an instructor at Nicholls because she was missing out on way too much, she said. “I really enjoy this now, and you have to do what makes you happy.”

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Bergeron said she loves teaching students in the nursing program. She enjoys seeing their eagerness and experiencing how they “soak up everything like a sponge.” Since she was in their shoes not too long ago, she is able to easily relate to them. She said she tries to make class a fun learning experience for the students. Rebecca Lyons, the dean of the nursing program and one of Bergeron’s nursing instructors, said Bergeron is vibrant and connects well with her students. “Bergeron is able to bring theory and practice together in a manner in which the students can grasp, retain and apply, “ she said.

At the beginning of college Bergeron didn’t know what she wanted to do, but decided to pursue a career in something that highlighted her strengths in math and science. A lot of her older cousins are nurses, so that made her interested in the nursing field. She said she had always wanted to do something where she could care for people, “even in kindergarten I wrote down that I wanted to be a nurse.” She knew she wanted to be in a field that she would be in her entire life, so she decided to use her knowledge and experience and make a career out of teaching students in the nursing program. She plans to get her doctorate in a year or two and continue teaching at Nicholls until retirement.

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In order to be a nurse practitioner and teach, Bergeron has to keep up her nurse practitioner's license. So she works 6-7 shifts a month in the Emergency Room at Thibodaux Regional Medical Center. As a nurse practitioner at the hospital, she is able to prescribe medicine and diagnose patients. Bergeron said she's lucky because as an NP she still gets to work in the field with patients, as well as teach students. The longevity of working at Nicholls is great, she said, the nursing department is filled with people who make work fun. One of her favorite things about working for the university is being able to have a family life. She said Nicholls is a very family-oriented place, so the people are very supportive of her doing things with her family. Bergeron said she and her husband enjoy attending Nicholls and LSU football games, concerts, and fishing, "We do everything together." Along with being an instructor, wife and mother, she is also a member of the Phi Mu Alumni Association, American Academy of Nurse Practitioners and Sigma Theta Tau, an honor society for nursing.

Bergeron attributes a lot her of success to her parents, because they pushed her to attend college. She said it was never *if* she was going to college, it was always *when* she was going to college. "I never would have imagined that I would have accomplished all that I have." Lyons said, "Bergeron's level of knowledge, skills and values serve the health care needs of our region and beyond, and now, our nursing students. We are lucky to have her here in the nursing department at Nicholls."