

# MIZZOU

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## Around the Columns

### Nurse in training

Science classes scared Katy Disinger away from nursing as a first-time college student in 1999. “I thought it was going to be too hard,” says the Muncie, Ind., native. She majored in history and followed a job path that led from U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin’s Chicago headquarters to U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill’s Columbia office.

Then, in fall 2007, Disinger’s father was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma. With her father’s health and future in jeopardy, Disinger revisited her dream of being a nurse. “I didn’t want to sit in an office and push paper,” she says. “Sometimes that’s how I felt. I wasn’t actively making things happen.”

Two years and seven prerequisite courses later, Disinger applied to MU’s accelerated nursing program, which awards a bachelor of science after 15 months of study. The following January, she received a letter from the Sinclair School of Nursing: “Congratulations! You’ve been wait-listed.”

Associate Dean Roxanne McDaniel estimates 120–150 qualified students apply annually to the program, which can accept only 50. “It’s one of our biggest challenges,” McDaniel says. “You’ve got these great students you’d love to have, but we don’t have enough space and faculty to take more.”

Getting wait-listed was a setback, but Disinger decided to try again. She retook pharmacology, boosting her grade to a B in Pam Evans-Smith’s class. “Pharmacology and pathophysiology are the big building blocks for nursing,” says Evans-Smith, accelerated BSN program coordinator. “We look pretty heavily at how applicants do in their science classes.”



One of 50 accelerated nursing students in 2011–12, Katy Disinger earns clinical experience at University Hospital (above) and MU Women’s and Children’s Hospital. Photo by Nicholas Benner

The second envelope from the nursing school carried good news: Disinger had earned a coveted spot in the 2011 entering class.

As Disinger prepared for fall semester 2011, her father prepared for a stem cell transplant. By mid-October, he was back home, gaining strength and receiving physical therapy twice a week.

Asked where she'd like to work after graduation, Disinger says she's thinking about hospice or palliative care. "I've seen all my grandparents in nursing homes, and it's not fun," she says. "I think if they'd had the means to stay at home, they would have done it."

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