# Alternative Careers and Programs to Registered Nursing

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| **Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA)**       | • Nursing assistants provide basic patient care under direction of nursing staff. Perform duties such as feed, bathe, dress, groom, move patients, or change linens. May transfer or transport patients.  
  • 8 week Certificate program  
  • CNA State Exam to be taken after Program | $22,000-$40,000  
  Median: $31,000 | ENGL/ ESL 50  
  CPR Card  
  TB Test  
  Physical Exam | 2.0 Minimum | No Waitlist | •MiraCosta College  
  • Southwestern College |
| **Licensed Vocational Nurse**              | • Licensed Vocational Nurses care for ill, injured, or convalescing patients or persons with disabilities in hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, private homes, group homes, and similar institutions. May work under the supervision of a registered nurse.  
  • 2 year, Part-time Program (Part-Time depends on Program)  
  • Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS) | $40,000-$65,000  
  Median: $52,000 | Biology  
  Pharmacology  
  CNA License | 2.0 Minimum | Approximately 2 year waitlist  
  (Waitlist Varies by Program) | • MiraCosta College  
  • San Diego City College  
  • Southwestern College |
| **Biotechnology**                          | • Biotechnology is an expanding field devoted to improving human health through the research, development, testing, manufacturing, and marketing of products related to the biomedical and agricultural industries. Biotechnologists set up, operate, and maintain laboratory instruments and equipment, monitor experiments, make observations, and calculate and record results.  
  • Certificate or Associate Degree Program  
  • 1-2 year Program | $45,000-$75,000  
  Median: $60,000 | None | 2.0 Minimum | No Waitlist | • MiraCosta College  
  • San Diego Mesa College  
  • San Diego City College  
  • San Diego Miramar College  
  • Southwestern College |
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| Cardiovascular Technician | • Cardiovascular techs help doctors diagnose and treat patients with heart and blood vessel problems. Working in a medical setting doing EKGs, ultrasounds, and stress tests.  
• 2-year program | $35,000-$60,000  
Median: $48,000 | Chemistry  
Anatomy  
Physiology | 2.0 Minimum | Approximately 1-2 year waitlist  
(Waitlist Varies by Program) | • Grossmont College  
• Orange Coast College  
• City College of San Francisco |
| Cytotechnologist       | • Cytotechnologists examine cell samples under microscopes to look for signs of cancer and other diseases.  
• Certificate or Bachelor’s of Science Degree  
• 4 year program  
• USMLE Licensing Exam | $45,000-$70,000  
Median: $58,000 | Biology  
Anatomy  
Physiology  
Microbiology  
Chemistry  
Nutrition  
College Algebra | 2.75 Minimum | No Waitlist  
• Acceptance is limited to students who have completed the second year and not yet started the third year, without any breaks. | • Loma Linda University |
| Dental Assistant       | • Dental assistants help dentists as they treat patients.  
• 10 months, Full-Time Program  
• RDA Exam | $24,000-$48,000  
Median: $34,000  
Starting salary: $15-$25/ per hour | Dental Terminology  
ENGL 50  
CPR Card  
Physical Exam | 2.0 Minimum | Approximately 1 year waitlist  
(Waitlist Varies by Program)  
• Must attend mandatory orientation in some programs | • Palomar College  
• San Diego Mesa College  
• Orange Coast College  
• Cypress College  
• Chaffey College |
| Dental Hygienist       | • Dental hygienists help maintain the dental health of their patients and educate them about proper oral hygiene.  
• 2 year, Full-Time Program | $47,000-$98,000  
Median: $70,000 | Anatomy  
Physiology  
Microbiology  
Chemistry  
Nutrition  
Communication  
Psychology  
Sociology  
English Composition  
Intermediate Algebra | 2.7 Minimum | Approximately 2-3 year waitlist.  
(Waitlist Varies by Program)  
• Beginning January 2015, waitlist will be eliminated.  
(Southwestern) | • Southwestern College  
• Cypress College  
• Moreno Valley College  
• Riverside City College  
• Cerritos College  
• Loma Linda University |
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| **Diagnostic Medical Sonographer** | • Diagnostic medical sonographers use ultrasound equipment to capture images of patients' internal organs, tissues, and blood flow.  
• 2 year, Full-Time Program | $44,000-$86,000 Median: $63,000 $29.00-$35.00/hour | Anatomy  
Physiology  
Medical Terminology  
Intermediate Algebra  
CPR training | 2.0 Minimum | Approximately 2 year waitlist.  
(Waitlist Varies by Program)  
• Must attend mandatory orientation in some programs. |  
• Orange Coast College  
• Cypress College  
• Santa Barbara City College  
• Mt. San Jacinto College (*Accreditation Pending*) |
| **Dietitian/Nutritionist** | • Dietitians provide individuals, organizations, and companies with information and advice about food and nutrition.  
• Bachelor's Degree Required | $33,000-$75,000 Median: $52,000 | Biology  
Anatomy  
Chemistry  
Microbiology  
Nutrition  
Statistics  
Psychology  
Sociology | 3.0 Minimum | Application process  
No Waitlist |  
• University of Nevada, Las Vegas & Reno (WUE)  
• California State Northridge  
• San Diego State University  
• California State Fresno  
• California State San Bernardino  
• San Jose State University  
• UC Davis |
| **Dietetic Technician** | • Dietetic Technicians assist the Registered Dietitian in providing nutrition care services to patients in health care facilities and nutrition education for clients of community agencies, or provide food/nutrition services for schools.  
• Some programs require that students participate in scheduled course clinical experience concurrent with classroom courses.  
• 2 year, Full-Time Program | $35,000-$45,000 Median: $40,000 | Medical Terminology  
Food Management  
Food Sanitation  
Food Safety  
CPR Card  
Blood borne pathogen training | 2.0 Minimum | Waitlist Varies by Program |  
• San Diego Mesa College  
• Orange Coast College  
• Chaffey College  
• Los Angeles City College  
• Long Beach City College |
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| Electrocardiograph Technician | Electrocardiograph Technicians assess the heart by looking at its electrical activity. With additional training, these Technicians can conduct stress testing and Holter monitoring.  
• 2 semester program                                                                                                                                          | $40,000-$60,000 Median: $50,000 | High School Diploma or GED  
CPR Card  
Physical Exam                                                                                              | 2.0 Minimum           | Waitlist Varies by Program  
• Assessment and orientation required                                                                            | •Grossmont College     |
| (EKG Program)                 |                                                                                                           |                          |                                                                                                           |          |                                                                                                                                                           |                               |
| EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) | The Emergency Medical Technician works to render emergency medical care using proper techniques of care and transportation.  
• 17-18 week Certificate Program and include some evenings and Saturdays.  
• National Registry certification for Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) Exam  
• National Registry and State Certification (NRSC) Exam.  
• EMT training differs from Paramedic training and covers less extensive pre-hospital emergency care.                                                                 | $20,000-$30,000 Median: $25,000 | • 18 years of age  
• Completion of Emergency Medical Responder and Healthcare Provider courses  
• CPR Card  
• College level reading                                                                                     | 2.0 Minimum         | No Waitlist  
• First come, first serve basis in some programs                                                                  | •Palomar College      |
| EMT/Paramedic                 | Paramedics provide immediate medical care in emergency situations, and transport patients to hospitals.  
• NREMT & NRSC Exam  
• Some programs offer Mobile Intensive Care Paramedic (MICP) training.  
• EMT programs differ from EMT/Paramedic programs                                                                        | $25,000-$60,000 Median: $40,000 | • 18 years of age  
• One year FULL TIME EMT-1 (basic) work experience in the PRE-HOSPITAL setting  
• Anatomy  
• Physiology  
• Intermediate Algebra  
• Medical Terminology  
• CPR Card  
• Current EMT- 1 Card                                                                                           | 2.0 Minimum         | No Waitlist  
• First come, first serve basis in some programs  
• In good mental/physical condition  
• Two letters of recommendation from EMS or medical personnel                                                            | •Palomar College  
• Saddleback College  
• San Diego Miramar College  
• Southwestern College                                                                                           |
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| Health Care Administration| • Health care administrators work behind the scenes at hospitals and other medical facilities, making sure they run smoothly.  
  • A bachelor’s degree is acceptable for many entry-level positions.  
  • A master’s degree is needed for most positions. | $50,000-$140,000  
  Median: $82,000 | Accounting  
  Communication  
  Biology  
  College Algebra  
  Psychology  
  Sociology | 2.5 Minimum | Application process  
  Requirements vary per program | • Cypress College  
  • CSU Northridge  
  • CSU Fresno  
  • CSU San Bernardino  
  • CSU Dominguez Hills  
  • CSU San Marcos  
  (Sociology- Health and Mental Health Option)  
  • SDSU (Health Communication) |
| Kinesiology               | • Options in Health Science, Applied Exercise Science, Pre-Physical Therapy, Physical Education, and Fitness Specialist.  
  • Bachelor’s Degree Program | $58,000-$64,000  
  Median: $61,000 | Kinesiology  
  Biology  
  Anatomy  
  Physiology  
  Chemistry  
  CPR training  
  College level Math (depends on option chosen) | 2.5 Minimum | Application process  
  • This program is an impacted program | • CSU San Marcos  
  • San Diego State University |
| Massage Therapist         | • Massage therapists reduce clients’ pain and stress by using their hands to manipulate clients’ muscles and other soft tissues.  
  • 2 year Technical Training | $17,000-$69,000  
  Median: $35,000 | None | 2.0 Minimum | No Waitlist | • MiraCosta College  
  • Fullerton College |
| Medical Insurance Coding  | • Medical coders read medical documentation (i.e. patient charts) then assign the proper code to the completed service or procedure, relying upon their knowledge and classification manuals. Once the proper coding is completed, medical coders key the code into the computer system.  
  • 2-3 Semester Program | $20,000-$40,000  
  Median: $30,000 | None | 2.0 Minimum | No waitlist | • Southwestern College  
  • Cypress College  
  • East Los Angeles College |
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| Medical/Clinical Assistant  | • The Medical Assistant Program is designed to educate the student for immediate employment providing assistance to the physician in caring for patients in the medical office or clinic.  
• 1-Full year program  
• Typing test may be required--National Certified Medical Assistant examination                                                                                                                                  | $22,000-$40,000, Median: $31,000 | Anatomy  
Physiology  
Medical Terminology  
CPR Card  
HIPAA Training                                                                                                           | 2.0 Minimum                      | Application Process  
Orientation may be required                                           | • Palomar College  
• Southwestern College  
• Saddleback College  
• Orange Coast College  
• Long Beach City College                                                                                               |
| Medical Laboratory Technician| • A Medical Laboratory Technician performs routine clinical laboratory testing procedures to provide scientific information needed in diagnosis, prognosis and treatment of disease.  
• CA certified Phlebotomy Technician I or II Certification                                                                                                                                         | $48,000-$55,000, Median: $52,000 | Anatomy  
Physiology  
Microbiology  
Chemistry  
Communication  
Intermediate Algebra  
English Composition  
CPR Card                                                                                                                      | 2.0 Minimum                      | No Waitlist                                                          | • San Diego Miramar  
• Southwestern College  
• El Camino College  
• Mt. San Antonio College                                                                                                  |
| Neurodiagnostic Technology  | • Neurodiagnostic Technologists diagnose patients with neurological disorders such as epilepsy, stroke, coma, multiple sclerosis, and many others. Technicians measure and record electrical activity in patients’ brains and nervous systems.                      | $30,000-$70,000, Median: $50,000 | Medical Terminology  
Anatomy  
Physiology  
Intermediate Algebra  
English Composition                                                                                                       | 2.0 Minimum                      | Waitlist Varies by Program                                               | • Orange Coast College  
• GateWay Community College-Phoenix, AZ                                                                                     |
| Nuclear Medicine Technologist| • Nuclear medicine technologists perform imaging tests using radioactive materials in order to help doctors diagnose diseases.  
• Bachelor’s Degree                                                                                                                                                                                                 | $80,000-$110,000, Median: $95,000 | Biology  
Anatomy  
Physiology  
Microbiology  
Chemistry  
Physics  
Statistics  
Computer Science  
English  
Critical Thinking  
Arts/ Humanities  
Social Science                                                                                                              | Cumulative GPA of 2.75-4.00      | • Until further notice, the Nuclear Medicine Program will admit students only in alternate years.  
• University of Nevada, Las Vegas (WUE)                                                                                    |
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| Occupational Therapy Assistant | • Occupational Therapist Assistants work under the direct supervision of a Occupational Therapist to provide all levels of patient treatment to people who are limited by physical injury or illness, mental health problems, developmental or learning disabilities, or the aging process.  
• OTAs assist OTs in assessing patient needs, determining therapeutic goals, planning and implementing treatment activities, communicating with patients and health care providers and documenting patient progress.  
• 2 year, Full-Time Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | $45,500-$55,500 Median: $50,500 $22-30 an hour for an entry level position | Intermediate Algebra English Composition Anatomy Physiology Communication | 2.0 Minimum | Approximately 1-2 year waitlist. (Waitlist Varies by Program)                                                                                                                                                       | •Grossmont College  
•Santa Ana College |
| Occupational Therapist      | • Occupational Therapists work with clients who have physical, mental, and developmental problems to help them re-learn or develop skills. OTs may help injured clients learn to walk again, or show them new ways to cook or clean. OTs develop treatment plans to help clients function at work, school, or home.  
• Master's Degree  
• GRE Exam. The test must have been taken within the last five 5 years.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | $76,000-$100,000 Median: $87,000 | BA/BS Degree Biology Anatomy Physiology Chemistry Physics Psychology Sociology Human Development | 3.0 Minimum | • Selection is based on recommendation letters, GPA, work/volunteer experience in an occupational therapy department, and interview.                                                                             | •St. Augustine University  
•Loma Linda University |
| Orthopedic Technology       | • Orthopedic Technologists apply, adjust, and remove casts, splints, and braces. They also set up, adjust, and maintain traction configurations, assist with the care of acutely injured patients, and assist the physician in the reduction and/or manipulation of orthopedic injuries.  
• Orthopedic Technologists are employed in hospitals, clinics, and private practice offices.  
• 1 year Program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | $30,000-$45,000 Median: $38,000 | Anatomy Physiology  
• It is recommended that students have experience working as a medical assistant or have completed the Clinical Assistant program requirements as this program builds upon those skills and knowledge base.                                                                                                             | 2.0 Minimum | Waitlist Varies by Program                                                                                                                                                                                             | •Grossmont College  
•West Valley College |
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| Pharmacy Technician   | • Pharmacy technicians work under the supervision of pharmacists to prepare and fill medical prescriptions for patients.  
• Certificate or Associate Degree Program  
• 1-2 year Program                                                                                                                                                    | $35,000-$45,000         | Basic Math  
Basic English  
CPR Card                                        | 2.0       | Waitlist Varies by Program                                                                                                                                  | • Imperial Valley College  
• Santa Ana College  
• Cerritos College  
• San Bernardino Valley  
• West Los Angeles |
| Physical Therapy Assistant | • Physical therapy assistants work under the direction of physical therapists to reduce patients’ pain and help them regain movement.  PTA’s administer treatments such as massages, hot or cold packs, and electrical stimulation.  
• 2 Year, Full-Time Program                                                                                                                                             | $40,000-$70,000         | Biology  
Anatomy  
Physiology                                      | 2.0       | Lottery system for admission – SD Mesa  
(Waitlist Varies by Program)                                                                                 | • San Diego Mesa College  
• Cerritos College |
| Physical Therapist    | • Physical therapists assess and treat patients who have problems with movement due to illness, injury, or physical disabilities. Physical therapist design treatment plans to help patients achieve as much movement as possible.  
• Doctorate (Ph.D) Program                                                                                                                                                    | $60,000-$106,000        | Chemistry  
Physics  
Biology  
Anatomy  
Physiology                                      | 3.0       | Selection is based on recommendation letters, GPA, work/volunteer experience in physical therapy settings, and interview.                                               | • St. Augustine University |
| Physician Assistant   | • Physician Assistants provide health care services in a variety of settings with the direction and supervision of a doctor of medicine or osteopathy. Physician Assistants are formally trained to examine patients, diagnose injuries and illnesses, and provide treatment. They play an integral mid-level role in triaging patients at emergency point of entry. | $60,000-$80,000         | Anatomy  
Physiology  
Microbiology  
Chemistry  
Physics  
Psychology  
Sociology  
English Composition  
Intermediate Algebra | 2.7       | Waitlist Varies by Program  
• A minimum of 2,000 hours of paid "hands-on" patient care experience in the disciplines of medicine, nursing or allied health is required. Volunteer experience will not fulfill the patient care experience requirement and will not be considered. | • Riverside City College  
• Moreno Valley College |
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| Polysomnographic (PSG) Technology   | • Polysomnographic Technologists diagnose treat of disorders of sleep and daytime alertness such as narcolepsy, sleep apnea, insomnias and many others.  
• 2 Year, Full-Time Program        | $40,000-$50,000  
Median: $45,000 | Anatomy  
Physiology  
Intermediate Algebra  
English Composition  
CPR Card          | 2.0 Minimum  
Waitlist varies by Program  
• Health Occupations course required in order to apply to the program. | •Orange Coast College |
| Psychiatric Technician              | • A Psychiatric Technician help people who are emotionally and/or developmentally disabled. They are employed by private and state hospitals and many community facilities. Psychiatric Technicians will also find a variety of jobs available in the fields of correction and human services. These include day care centers, substance abuse programs, special education and many other areas promoting mental health.  
• Certificate or Associate Degree Program  
• 1-2 year Program                   | $42,000-$52,000  
Median: $47,000 | Biology  
Psychology  
English Composition  
Intermediate Algebra  
CPR Card          | 2.0 Minimum  
• 24 are selected for admission each fall and spring semester. The number of applicants usually exceeds available seats.  
• Selection is based on completion of required pre-requisites, GPA, and date of application. | •Cypress College  
•Mt. San Antonio College  
•San Bernardino College |
| Radiologist Technician              | • The Radiologic Technologist prepares demonstrations of human anatomy on an x-ray film or fluoroscopic screen for diagnostic use by a radiologist or other medical specialist. Graduates of the program are eligible for examination by the American Registry of Radiologist Technologists.  
• 2 Year, Full-Time Program         | $65,000-$80,000  
Median: $72,000 | Anatomy  
Medical Terminology  
Physiology  
Physics  
Intermediate Algebra  
English Composition  
Computer Information Systems  
CPR Card          | 2.0 Minimum  
Lottery System (Mesa College)  
Waitlist Varies by Program | •San Diego Mesa College  
•Orange Coast College  
•Long Beach City College  
•Cypress College  
•Mt. San Antonio College |
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| Respiratory Therapist                   | • Respiratory therapists help doctors diagnose and treat patients with breathing problems caused by lung diseases or medical emergencies.  
• 2 Year, Full-Time Program  
• CRT Exam                                     | $39,000-$72,000 Median: $53,000  
$23-$32/ hour entry level wage             | Chemistry  
Anatomy  
Physiology                          | 2.0 Minimum                                      | Waitlist Varies by Program              | • Grossmont College  
• Orange Coast College                |
| Surgical Technologist                   | • Surgical Technologists assist surgeons before, during, and after operations. The surgical technologist works under the supervision of a surgeon to ensure that the operating room environment is safe, the equipment functions properly, and the operative procedure is conducted under conditions that maximize patient safety.  
• Certificate or Associate Degree Program  
• 1-2 Year Program                           | $35,000-$50,000 Median: $42,000             | Biology  
Medical Terminology  
Pharmacology                          | 2.0 Minimum                                      | Approximately 2-3 year waitlist  
(Waitlist varies by Program)                | • MiraCosta College  
• Southwestern College                |
| Speech, Language, Pathology Assistant   | • Speech-Language Pathology Assistants work under the guidelines of the Speech Pathologist in testing and therapeutic application modalities. They provide direct treatment following specific plans and document patient/client progress. They conduct screenings for speech, hearing, and language disorders. Assistants work with children and adults in the clinical, educational, and medical settings.  
• 2 Year, Full-Time Program                             | $30,000-$45,000 Median: $38,000  
$19-$27/ hour entry level wage           | Anatomy  
Physiology  
Human Development  
English Composition  
Intermediate Algebra  
CPR Card                              | 2.0 Minimum                                      | Waitlist Varies by Program              | • Orange Coast College  
• Santa Ana College  
• Cerritos College                   |

- Common prerequisites and admission information depend on the school of choice.
- To search for ANY Community College Career Program, go to the California Chancellor’s Office website at: [www.cccco.edu](http://www.cccco.edu).

→ Click on “Discover Community College’s.” Next, click on “Find A Program,” under Tools for Students to search for your program of interest.