
HISTORY

*"History, by appraising the students of the past,
will enable them to judge the future"*

Thomas Jefferson

History of Clark College Nursing Through the Years

Nursing studies began at Clark College in the 1940's when Phyllis Bettsworth Moore began teaching Nurse's Aide courses utilizing a Red Cross curriculum. At completion of the course students received a certificate from the Red Cross. Nurse's Aide training was imperative during the War years.

The State of Washington Department of Practical Nursing provided impetus for Clark College to initiate Practical Nursing education in 1951, as persons working in hospital settings were being required to obtain licensure by waiver. Classes and clinical experience facilitated preparation for the State Board Examination. The students worked at their hospital jobs, then took evening classes and attended clinical labs in hospitals and nursing homes. In August of 1952 Clark College began the state's fifth Practical Nursing program and educated students who did not necessarily have prior hospital work experiences. Credits cost \$2.50/hr with a \$36 quarterly maximum. Jean Hamilton began her employment with Clark College as the Director of Nursing Program and taught the academic portion of the curriculum. While the instruction occurred on campus, students were not specifically integrated into other college courses. Clark provided prerequisite coursework during these years for students who were planning to transfer to institutions that offered a baccalaureate degree in nursing. Accreditation provided evidence of educational integrity. The Practical Nursing program was accredited by the Washington Board of Practical Nurse examiners and by the National Association for Practical Nursing education.

Professional nursing was about to undergo a dramatic change in the United States. Most Registered Nurses were heretofore educated in Diploma Schools of Nursing sponsored by hospitals. St. Joseph's Hospital (now SWMC) operated a Diploma School in Vancouver. But the school closed in the mid-1950's, leaving Southwest Washington without a professional nursing program. Trends indicated that nursing education would be carried out in a collegiate atmosphere in the future. A new type of collegiate-based program was emerging in eastern states—an Associate Degree program. Jean Hamilton believed in the importance of transferable academic credits. The prospective nurse could attain a baccalaureate degree and enter graduate studies if desired. Students petitioned Clark College, requesting that nursing education become available beyond the Practical Nurse level.

Jean visited several new Associate Degree programs and worked with the state and faculty toward that end. In 1960 Clark College established the first Associate Degree nursing program in the Pacific Northwest and only the fifth in the United States. In 1962 fifteen graduates became the first graduating class at Clark College. The Practical Nursing program continued, separately. Continuing education courses were offered in obstetrics, operating room nursing, and supervision. The program was accredited by the Washington State Board of Nursing and by The National League for Nursing.

The program continued to evolve and grow becoming a “ladder” concept, with Nurse’s Aide material taught the first quarter, Practical Nursing the next two and over the summer, and Associate Degree students continuing for the Second year. Students were then encouraged to further their nursing education in baccalaureate programs, available in Portland at that time.

In 1978 Jean Hamilton retired and Mary Ann Thimmes was appointed Director of Nursing Programs, serving in that capacity until 1987. A conceptual framework was adopted. The curriculum underwent a major change to a tri-level format with quarterly admission and graduation beginning in fall, 1980. This enabled students to return fairly quickly to the program if it became necessary for them to interrupt their studies. It also provided continuity for faculty in clinical settings and afforded increased opportunity for updating coursework. Nursing was rapidly specializing. Personal computers were beginning to play an ever-increasing role to nursing education. In 1998 Mary Ann Thimmes received a distinct honor: induction into the Washington State Nurses’ Association Hall of Fame.

Linda Hein served as the third Director of the Nursing programs from 1987-1998. Personal computers and computer-based equipment abounded on campus and clinical sites. The faculty engaged in continuing education to strength computer skills. Computer-assisted instruction entered the curriculum. Competitive entry to the nursing program began in 1991. A management and advanced concepts course was added to the curriculum. In addition the department began a community link to high school students via the Skills Center. The U.S. Army utilized the Clark curriculum and facilities for a weekend Army STAR program from 1987-1994. Dot Nichols and Rosemary Sievila served as Interim Directors of the Program.

From 2001-2007 Shelly Quint held the administrative position of Director of Nursing. In May, 2002 the department celebrated the 40th anniversary of its first Associate Degree Program graduation. As a component of this celebration the nursing skills lab was given Jean Hamilton’s name in her honor. During fall 2002, faculty member Randy Givens was awarded the college Exceptional Faculty award. During this time the program established computerized testing and opened one of the first testing centers in the nation.

Washington State University Vancouver established a branch campus in 1989. This institution provided a long-awaited locally-based articulation agreement for an RN to BSN program. Many of Clark's nursing graduates benefited by advancing their education in this program. WSU-V also established a master's nurse educator track in response to the growing need to educate more nursing faculty in the region. During 2001 to 2003 partnerships were developed with local health care agencies. Nurses who were interested in teaching were able to teach part time in the nursing program and work part time in the hospital while attending WSU-V's masters program.

Admission was expanded to 40 students per quarter beginning Fall Quarter, 2005, and the new curriculum began to debut, as well. Students were required to complete a Nursing Assistant Certification program prior to entry. Distinct features of the new curriculum included an assessment course, early skills education, a service learning component and full quarter of mentored clinical experience. Additional administrative support and full-time faculty were hired in response to program expansion and state mandates.

A Clark College building, the Clark Building, was built on the WSU-V's campus during the year 2005 and it opened in January 2006. The Director and nursing faculty participated in the architectural design of the new nursing program space.

The nursing department was awarded a state high demand grant in 2002 allowing the program to purchase high fidelity simulators and to educate faculty about the use of the equipment. This grant allowed Clark's nursing program to become forefront pioneers in the use of this new method of education. During 2005 Shelly Quint was appointed chair of a Washington nursing simulation education task force to facilitate statewide simulation education.

In Fall Quarter of 2007 the program began admitting 48 students. The major theory courses were split into two sections of 24 students. Some sections were taught in the early evening hours. Judy Alleman served as Interim Director.

The nursing program is highly respected locally, statewide and nationally. Our successful program was built up over the years by dedicated faculty and staff in response to the community's continual need for caring, competent and compassionate nurses.

With the graduation of Class #98 in March 2008, the Clark College Nursing Program has graduated 2679 nursing students.