

## **A Brief History of the Department of Nursing at UNH**

**Written by Ann Kelley - February 1990**

In 1964, Mary Louise Fernald came to the University of New Hampshire, supported by a grant from the Spaulding Potter Trust, to administratively establish a nursing program and select prerequisite courses to form the foundation for the nursing curriculum. The newly formed department was established in the College of Liberal Arts and housed in one room in Hood House.

In September 1965 the first class of 25 students entered the program and the Nursing Department was moved into three rooms on the second floor of Batchelder House to accommodate the Department Chairperson, a faculty member and a secretary. During the freshman year the students were enrolled in prerequisite/ liberal arts courses and one nursing course. The students became actively involved in the decision-making process, related to uniform selection and cap design. The uniform was a dark blue/gray pinstripe which was worn from 1966 to 1973. Due to constant cost increases in the custom-made dress, it was changed to a light blue and white pinstripe, which could be purchased at most uniform stores and gave students a choice of dress style or pantsuit. This uniform was worn from 1973 to 1989, when an all-white uniform was adopted because of difficulty in obtaining the pinstripe. The cap was designed in the shape of the shield on the University emblem and was worn from 1976 to 1983.

During the early years of the program (1966-68), faculty drove their own cars or university vehicles to transport students to area hospitals for clinical experiences. In 1967 students were transported in an old army bus owned by the University. One bitter cold winter day it overheated, leaving students and one faculty stranded on the Spaulding Turnpike until other vehicles could be sent to the rescue. Since then, students have been responsible for their own transportation to clinical agencies.

By 1967 the faculty had increased to a total of six. Since this meant the department had outgrown its facilities, it was moved to the second floor of Elizabeth DeMeritt House. By the early 1970's the department had expanded to include both floors of the DeMeritt House.

From 1965 to 1973 there was no nursing resource laboratory. Students learned nursing techniques by observing a faculty member demonstrate in a hospital classroom or at the bedside of a client, followed by their performing the skills under supervision of the faculty. Then in the summer of 1973, the basement of the DeMeritt House was renovated to house the first nursing laboratory. It contained four patient care units, equipment for practicing basic skills, and a small audiovisual area. While this was a beginning, the lab was outgrown almost as soon as it started. In 1980 the Department received a grant to develop a new lab. Space in Hewitt Hall was renovated for the Nursing Resource Laboratory of today, which opened its doors in the fall of 1981. The faculty remained in DeMeritt House until the spring/summer of 1987, when they moved to newly renovated offices in Hewitt Hall.

The curriculum has changed and is continuously being fine-tuned between major changes. The first curriculum was developed around the medical model and continued from 1965 to 1973. Among the clinical facilities used were local hospitals, nursing homes, Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital in Hanover (acute adult care and mental health facilities), and the Visiting Nurse Agency in Concord. One of the highlights for students was the expanding family experience. Each student followed a family who was expecting a new baby during that semester, assisting both mother and family through the experience.

In 1971 the Department received a federal grant for major curriculum revision. From this, the integrated curriculum was developed and implemented between 1973 to 1979. Nursing courses were all at the upper division (junior and senior years). One semester was devoted to wellness assessments. In addition to the expanding family, students also assessed a well family and monitored their health care.

Another major program change took place in 1979 when the nursing process curriculum, utilizing a core and modular course approach, was introduced. Nursing courses were then started in the sophomore year. This curriculum model remains in place today. Over the years a variety of agencies and resources have been utilized for clinical experience in an ever widening area.

In 1975 another federal grant was received by the Department to establish an RN track for nurses who wanted to obtain the baccalaureate degree. This was the first non-traditional outreach program in the country. RN's could live at home, maintain their job and attend classes on a part-time basis within a 50-mile radius of their home. Students could obtain credits and placement in the program through exams. In 1987 a satellite track was opened in Keene. Today this track is still popular on both campuses for RN's in New Hampshire and along the borders of our neighboring states.

The Department was proud to receive national accreditation from the National League for Nursing in 1971. Periodic program evaluation by the faculty and review by the national accrediting board have continually maintained this prestigious position.

For many years people throughout the state, as well as on campus, had been discussing the need for a Master's program in Nursing. In 1984 a federal grant was received to establish such a program. The first students were admitted in September 1985 into one of two tracks - Adult Health or Nursing Administration. The program was supported by grant money from 1984 to 1989.

During the past 25 years the Nursing Department has been fortunate to be under the direction of the following chairpersons: Mary Louise Fernald (1965-72), Carol Gray (1972- 74), Marguerite Fogg (1974-77), Andrea Lindell (1977-81), Juliette Petillo (1981-87), and Karen Johnson (1987-present).

The Department has graduated 1,122 students, including 259 in the RN track. To date 19 students have graduated from the master's program

Although the Department started in the College of Liberal Arts in 1965, it became one of seven departments that formed the School of Health studies in 1968. The school was renamed the School of Health and Human Services in the summer of 1989.