

VI: Bishop Clarkson College of Nursing

Bishop Clarkson Memorial Hospital School of Nursing was established in 1888 when the institution was adjacent to Trinity Cathedral. Nurses' quarters were in the building and later in a small cottage next door. The hospital building had been completed and consecrated in 1883. It was the first nurses training program in Nebraska and the 35th in the United States.

Attention was on practical bedside nursing procedures over two years during which dedication to patient care and comfort was emphasized. As did all nurses, students worked 12-hour days from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. For the convenience of the volunteer lecturer, classes were held in the evenings.

There was no tuition. There was no school year. Individual students were admitted whenever a vacancy arose.²⁶

Practical bedside nursing was provided by senior nurses who demonstrated bathing patients, bed making, application of dressings, catheterization and personal details which made the patient's hospital stay more comfortable, even the preparation of appropriate food.

Nursing education broadened as years went by. The course became two years in 1911. The seven-member class that year was the first to take and pass the Nebraska licensure examinations. Fifteen graduated in May 1912.²⁷

All facets of medical care flourished and improved during the ensuing years, including nursing and nursing education. The number of graduates of the school increased. For example, there were 40 graduates in 1962 and 105 in 1976, 104 in 1977. Better facilities were required and could not always be provided within the

hospital walls. When the hospital was located on 21st and Howard streets, the former residence of long-time trustee F.H. Davis, at 628 S. 20th St., was used as a nurses home for some years. With the move to 26th Street, housing was obtained in nearby apartments which was scarcely satisfactory, but in 1945 a modern building for residence, education and recreational facilities was built to accommodate 104 students. It was appreciated by all concerned and remained in use until the hospital moved to 44th Street and Dewey Avenue in December 1955, requiring suspension of the program from 1953 until 1960 when Kiewit Hall was completed, largely through the generosity of Elizabeth and Peter Kiewit. The next graduating class of 1963 consisted of 35 students.

A major advance in nursing education was the establishment of the Bishop Clarkson College of Nursing in 1981, which bestows a baccalaureate degree in the form of bachelor of science in nursing. The seven-story Kiewit Hall provides excellent facilities for a teaching center. It is not primarily a dormitory although dwelling space is available. Students reside where they please, spending a portion of the time at Bellevue College in general education electives.

Students are assigned for clinical experience at Clarkson Hospital and several acute care hospitals in the community, including the Veterans Administration facility and Richard Young Memorial Hospital (neuropsychiatry). They may spend time in a variety of local health agencies which have been approved for such purpose. Elective courses allow the student to explore areas of special interest to them, such as critical care or gastroenterology.

The students are urged to obtain the bachelor of science in nursing degree. There are 540 students enrolled in the 1985-1986 academic year, of which 300 attend classes on the Clarkson campus at a time, the others dispersed to the various activities mentioned above.

Since the inception of the program in 1888 there have been 4,500 graduates.

Many recent graduates take positions in Clarkson Hospital, particularly in the demanding environment of the intensive care centers.

The faculty, headed by Dean Patricia B. Perry, R.N., Ph.D., consists of nine academic staff personnel and 41 teachers of various academic titles.²⁸