



University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire College of Nursing

Nursing Alumni Newsletter



Greetings from Dean Kristen Abbott-Anderson



Greetings to Alumni, Students, Faculty, Staff, and Friends of the College.

I am honored, once again, to be sending my greetings to you as Dean of the College of Nursing. This year, we celebrate 60 years since the founding of our College of Nursing. As we reflect on our first 60 years, I am grateful. Grateful to you, our alumni, current students, faculty, staff, and our many community partners. I am also grateful to those who came before us in the College of Nursing, who were dedicated to building such a strong foundation of commitment to education, practice, and research. I am humbled to stand firmly on that foundation, recognizing that without that foundation, we would not be able to envision an exciting future for the college.

This newsletter is packed with news about the college: happenings this past year that include some fare-

wells and several welcomes; faculty and staff recognitions; and exciting events such as the Inaugural Mary C. & Fred Bliss Contemporary Nursing Seminar, just to name a few. I hope you enjoy reading about all these events. My heartfelt appreciation goes to Associate Dean Debra Jansen for her dedication to creating such a wonderful newsletter each year—and for this year in particular. Dr. Jansen has worked tirelessly to include relevant and meaningful content in this, our 60th year.

Some updates from my perspective as a dean in my third year:

As a college, we faced the challenges of the closure of HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital announced in January 2024 by facing changes head on. Our Chairs worked diligently to create new and expanded clinical experiences for our students, both in our traditional and in our graduate programs. Our faculty demonstrated great flexibility in shifting teaching and clinical assignments based on these new demands—and our students met these changes with a level of maturity and engagement that made me proud.

We have weathered some setbacks, persistently changing healthcare landscapes, and the uncertainty that is ‘the new normal’ in our world. We continue to strive for learning opportunities that support our students’ success, and we continue to do so with an attitude of seeing the possibilities. This means that we need to continue

to be open to change, to exploring possibilities beyond the traditional ways of doing our work—and to learning from these experiences.

June 2025 brought the official conclusion of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation grant that included significant work in the College of Nursing. In reflection, this grant was instrumental in encouraging our college to think in new and creative ways to expand program development and enrollment. In this newsletter you will find specific information about the impact of this grant, and the two Principal Investigators: (now) Interim Chancellor Mike Carney and Dean Carmen Manning. I hope you find the updates to our Clinical Learning Center as exciting as I, and our faculty do!

In addition to expanding admission numbers and clinical experiences in our traditional baccalaureate program (TBSN), we have two new tracks in our Doctor of Nursing Practice program: Nursing Education Leadership and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. We look forward to the launch of these tracks in Fall 2025. These specialty areas were identified as key areas for nursing and the needs of our community.

Last summer, Chancellor Jim Schmidt established teams to envision our next strategic plan as a university. One of the pillars identified and developed focuses on enhancing existing health-related programs and look-

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Save the Dates

October 2, 2025, 3:00-5:00 p.m. via Zoom: Clinical Partnership Day--Strong Partnerships, Intelligent Solutions. Event to express our gratitude, provide program updates, and learn from clinical partners about essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support education to practice transitions. Clinical partners will be sent RSVP requests in August with the agenda to follow in September.

October 4, 2025: Nursing Alumni Homecoming Breakfast. Nursing Alumni welcome to this event, with 7:30 a.m. Check-in; 8:00 a.m. Breakfast; 8:40 a.m. Updates from the Dean; 9:00 a.m. Door Prizes; and 9:15 a.m. Building Tours. Room 119, Nursing Building. Free to UWEC Nursing Alumni but must RSVP by September 14, 2025, using this link <https://blugolds.uwec.edu/2025Nursing>.

October 23-24, 2025: Mary C. and Fred Bliss Contemporary Nursing Seminar. Dr. Maxim Topaz, PhD, MA, RN, FAAN, FACMI, FIAHSI, Elizabeth Standish Gill Associate Professor of Nursing at Columbia University Irving Medical Center School of Nursing in New York, will be presenting, *Charting the Future: How Nurses are Driving the AI Transformation in Healthcare* on Thursday October 23rd. More information will be forthcoming.

Advancing our Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

Through Workforce Innovation Grant funding via the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), we are continuing to enhance our undergraduate and graduate programs. In concert with augmenting our programs, we are striving to strengthen our existing clinical partnerships while also forging new relationships.

As reported in previous newsletters, at the undergraduate level as part of the grant, we were committed to increasing enrollment in the traditional Bachelor of Science in Nursing (TBSN) program in Eau Claire by 24 students (3 clinical groups) each semester (48 additional students per year). We had been admitting 40-43 students every semester and had reached the goal of accepting 64 students for each admission cycle.

The WEDC funding has launched us forward and upward to even loftier goals envisioned by the University. The University recently created a Strategic Plan/Vision for 2030 that includes three pillars. The second pillar is *National Leadership in Healthcare Education*. Within that pillar, we are charged with doubling our TBSN enrollment by the year 2030. In other words, over the next 5 years we are to reach a goal of admitting 128 students per semester (256 students per year). To that point, we are incrementally increasing our admission numbers (78 students were accepted in June 2025).

To accommodate the increases, we are adapting our ways of teaching and

scheduling courses and elevating our use of simulations. Plus, we are working with our community and healthcare agency partners on new and innovative clinical opportunities.



To manage the significantly larger class sizes we are holding some classes in the Centennial Building. We are also finding additional and more creative clinical experiences and locations for students. This necessitates more flexibility in student class schedules so they can participate in clinical opportunities not occurring during our usual times. To that end, if not already online or hybrid, starting in 2024, any remaining TBSN courses were transformed from fully face-to-face classes to hybrid. As hybrid courses, most of the class time is spent in the classroom with a portion of the remaining time converted to asynchronous online learning. The online portion can be devoted to students reviewing content with the class time dedicated to active learning activities, such as working in groups on case studies or projects (see photo). The asynchronous hours free up time

that can be used for clinical hours.

Lately we have been partnering with Mayo Clinic Health System to create Dedicated Education Units (DEUs) or modified versions of them as clinical opportunities for students. A DEU is a floor or unit of a health facility devoted to nursing students from a single program, typically from one level within the program. It is staffed by clinical nurse teachers (CNTs) who are staff nurses at the facility who receive professional development to support their teaching roles. The students sign up for shifts with the CNTs—these shifts could include days, nights, and weekends. UW-Eau Claire nursing faculty are responsible for being on call for consultation and concerns, making site visits, and evaluating the students. Strong collaborations between the CNTs and nursing faculty are vitally important for the success of this clinical education model.

Our first DEU was with Mayo Clinic Health System – Chippewa Valley in Bloomer, a critical access hospital. We



Advancing our Undergraduate and Graduate Programs (continued)

have since expanded our use of DEUs (or modified versions of them) to Mayo Clinic Health System – Northland in Barron and in ambulatory care at Mayo Clinic Health System – Eau Claire.

Additionally, as a result of the increased class sizes, we are making more use of clinical simulations. Students now encounter simulations nearly every semester of the nursing program. We have high fidelity simulation manikins, including for childbirth (see photo), that enable students to experience patient situations in a safe environment, with debriefing sessions to facilitate critical thinking and learning. The simulations expose students to clinical situations not always consistently available in the practice settings. Furthermore, given the high acuity level on many hospital units, some settings cannot accommodate full clinical groups of 8-9 students. Scheduling each student for a simulation during the semester reduces the numbers of student learners at a clinical site for a given day.

For Spring 2025, an open house was held for our new immersive virtual reality room which was recently completed. It was created in the space that formerly housed a student computer lab that was no longer needed in the Nursing Building (students now purchase their own laptops). The room enables students to interact with images projected onto the walls, thereby immersing them in simulations. A few faculty piloted the room with students this past spring, but more plan to use the space in fall.

Besides our collaboration with Mayo Clinic Health System, we also are grateful for the clinical opportunities provided by Marshfield Clinic Health System, Essentia Health, Gillette Children's Hospital, and numerous community and public health agencies. As Marshfield Clinic Health System phases down our distance education site in Marshfield (last three students will graduate in May 2026), we are having more clinical groups from Eau Claire participate in clinicals at the Marshfield Medical Center in Marshfield, in addition to the one in Eau Claire.

Beginning in 2023, some senior nursing

students have had an immersive clinical experience at Essentia Health St. Mary's Hospital in Superior, a 25-bed critical access hospital. Students also now have the option of a pediatric or obstetric experience with Essentia Health in Duluth. Additionally, besides traveling to Marshfield and Duluth for acute care pediatric clinicals, students have the choice of traveling to Gillette Children's Hospital in St. Paul.



Students further benefit from clinical experiences with, for instance, Dove Healthcare in Eau Claire, Grace Lutheran Communities in Altoona, the Eau Claire City-County Health Department, the Chippewa County Health Department, Clark County Health Department, and the Wellness Shack, among others. Our geographic footprint for clinical placements has dramatically expanded as we intentionally include more school districts and community agencies throughout northwestern Wisconsin, especially those in rural areas. To double our enrollment, we need to develop even more clinical opportunities for students. We greatly appreciate the relationships we have established over the years.

Besides the TBSN program, through WEDC funding, we are advancing our Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs forward, as well. Courses for the MSN program's nursing education and leadership and management options were transitioned to a hybrid format, only requiring one on-campus day per semester, with the other class content being delivered remote synchronously (live) via Zoom or asynchronously online. The DNP courses were likewise transitioned to a hybrid format if not already done. These changes better accommodate working students

with family or other obligations, thereby making our graduate programs more accessible.

The WEDC funding also provided tuition loan support for up to ten MSN students with the requirement that they must teach at UW-Eau Claire or another accredited nursing program in Wisconsin following completion of the degree. Their loans are forgiven after teaching the equivalent of at least 12 semester credits.

Additionally, through the Workforce Innovation Grant, we created an online psychopharmacology course available for free through Continuing Education. The content was developed and is being offered in collaboration with Mayo Clinic Health System. Given the shortage of mental health providers, the course is intended to make psychopharmacotherapeutic knowledge accessible to primary care providers and others in health care. The course is available online at the following website: <https://ce.uwec.edu/programs/psychopharmacology-for-special-populations-basics-pediatric-geriatric/> and is being co-taught by a UW-Eau Claire Nursing faculty member and a chief resident in the Psychiatry Department at Mayo Clinic Health System in Rochester.

To further address the shortage of mental health and substance use disorder providers in Wisconsin, WEDC funding was used to develop a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) post-baccalaureate DNP option. The new degree emphasis is available starting this Fall 2025. The grant funding enabled the Department of Nursing to hire a PMHNP to work with existing nursing curricular and content experts to create the new emphasis. Recurring WEDC funds will be used to support the program indefinitely.

In addition, the grant funding enabled the Department of Nursing to develop a new Nursing Education Leadership post-master's DNP option. This new degree emphasis is available for nurses with master's degrees in nursing, starting this Fall 2025. It will be attractive to those interested in nursing education who are needing a terminal degree, thereby helping to address the nursing faculty shortage.

Transitions and New Opportunities

The 2024-2025 academic year greeted us with a few individuals leaving or retiring. We miss them and encourage them to stay connected with us.

Dr. Lorraine M. Smith, Associate Professor, retired from our college following the Spring 2025 semester. In January 2025 she became the Nursing



Program (RN to BSN) Director for the Health and Human Performance Department at the University of Wisconsin-Superior where she is leading the development of the

BSN Completion program. She stayed on half-time with our college during the spring to assist with a senior-level immersion clinical at the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota and to help with orienting a new BSN Completion Program Director.

Over the years, Dr. Smith held a number of positions with us since she initially began as the Assistant to the Associate Dean-Student Services Coordinator from 1993-2009. From 2008-2012, she had a part-time Senior Student Services Coordinator role with the College while being the BSN@Home Statewide Program Director for the University of Wisconsin System. From 2024-2025 she was the BSN Completion Program Director for our college. During the intervening years, she worked in clinical practice, includ-

ing being a jail nurse from 2001-2011 and a prison charge nurse from 2015-2020. She taught with us from 2016-2025, beginning as a clinical instructor prior to becoming an assistant professor and then an associate professor with tenure in 2024.

Dr. Smith earned numerous accolades while at the College, including a Suzanne Van Ort Award for Faculty Creativity and Scholarliness, the Sue Peck Holism and Integrative Therapies Award, and two Ihle Family Awards for Caring. Moreover, she co-chaired a team that received a Marshfield Clinic Health System Outstanding Partner in Community Health Award in 2024; this award was in recognition of their work on the Eau Claire Health Alliance Substance Misuse Action Team. Most recently she was given a quilt from the Rosebud Indian Health Service (see photo with her standing on the far left) in honor of her commitment to the relationship with the Rosebud Indian Reservation.



Having earned BSN, MSN, and DNP degrees at UW-Eau Claire, not surprisingly, she is passionate about the University and its students. To that point, she has readily cheered on numerous nursing students over the years as they played on UW-Eau Claire sports teams,

and even received appreciation recognitions by, for instance, the Blugold Women's Basketball Staff.

Dr. Smith's research has focused on vaping and electronic nicotine delivery systems, moral resilience, and moral distress, including moral distress in prison nurses. She mentored several undergraduate students through related faculty-student collaborative research projects at the University.

She plans to continue working with indigenous communities in the Twin Ports area as the UW-Superior Nursing Program Director. We will greatly miss Dr. Smith and wish her much success with the position. We hope to see her back for alumni events.

Ms. Christina Thomas, Clinical Instructor at the Marshfield Site, accepted a position at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in Green Bay, following the Spring 2025 semester. She recently married earlier in the year and



will now be joining her husband in Appleton. Ms. Thomas began with us in January 2023 and has taught wellness and junior level nursing

courses and a senior level clinical, in addition to serving on committees. We will miss her and wish her the very best!

Remembrance



Ms. Barbara A. Mueller, Clinical Instructor, passed away on March 28, 2025 at the age of 66. She taught with us for several years at the Marshfield Site, from 2012 until her retirement in August 2017. During those years, she had been very active in the Delta Phi Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, the International Honor Society of Nursing, recruiting and supporting the student members. She also was a regular presence at the Nursing Pinning Ceremony, frequently pinning the graduates from the Marshfield Site. Ms. Mueller was an alum of our master's degree program. Previously, she had been a master barber, a diabetes educator, and a nurse manager, but greatly treasured and was passionate about being a nurse educator with the College. We extend our deepest sympathies to her family and friends. She is truly missed.

Welcomes and New Appointments

This past 2024-2025 academic year brought us many new faces. **Dr. Kate-Lyn Leggio**, Assistant Professor, started in August, having earned a PhD degree in 2023 from the University of Texas at Austin, along with a certificate in Teaching in Nursing. She has a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree with a Nurse Executive focus from the Nebraska Methodist College in Omaha, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree from the University of Ottawa in Ontario, Canada. Dr. Leggio has prior experience as an ICU nurse and most recently as an assistant chief nursing officer at PAM Rehab in Round Rock, Texas.

In Fall, we were also joined by **Dr. Joanie Murphy**, Clinical Assistant Professor; **Dr. Amanda Seeley**, Clinical Assistant Professor (who previously had been with us); and **Dr. Rachel Zimmer**, Clinical Assistant Professor.

Ms. Kerie Olson started in September 2024 as our Simulation Specialist for the Clinical Learning Center (CLC) in Eau Claire. She has many years of nursing experience, including in critical/intensive care and most recently in travel nursing.

For the Spring 2025 semester, we welcomed **Ms. Megan Olson**, Clinical Instructor, and **Ms. Katherine (Katie) Williams**, Clinical Assistant Professor (holds a joint appointment through Mayo Clinic Health System). In Janu-

ary, it was announced that **Dr. Gail Hanson Brenner**, Assistant Professor, agreed to serve as Interim BSN Completion Program Director for the Spring semester. She was named the Director following the term.

Ms. Julie Miller started on March 31, 2025 as the Clinical Agency Coordinator for Post-Licensure Programs. She previously was a staff nurse at an area hospital and had been a medical assistant on campus at Student Health Service. **Ms. Rose Raleigh** began part-time as the Clinical Learning Center Associate Director on May 19, 2025 and will be full-time in Fall 2025. She has over 18 years of experience in nursing education, teaching undergraduate nursing students, and has been working with simulation since 2008.

Dr. Miriam Sward, Clinical Assistant Professor, will be transitioning to a tenure track position this Fall 2025 and will be working with the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) post-baccalaureate Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) option in our graduate program. She earned a DNP degree from Frontier Nursing University in Kentucky, a Master's degree in Health Informatics and Information Management from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, a Post-master's Certificate in Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, an MSN degree from Ball State University in

Indiana, a BSN degree from UW-Eau Claire, and an Associate Degree in Nursing from Florida Community College in Jacksonville, Florida. Most recently she played a key role in helping to develop the curriculum for our PMHNP program. Dr. Sward currently works as a PMHNP.

Dr. Rachel Zimmer, Clinical Assistant Professor, also will be transitioning to a tenure track position this Fall 2025. She earned a DNP degree and a BSN degree through the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. She has an Associate Degree in Nursing from the Chippewa Valley Technical College. Additionally, Dr. Zimmer has several years of practice experience as a Registered Nurse at an area hospital.

Dr. Mary McMahon Bullis accepted a tenure track position for Fall 2025. She earned a PhD in Nursing from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and a Master of Arts degree with a dual concentration in Nursing Education and Healthcare Leadership and a BSN degree from Bethel University in St. Paul. She received an Associate of Science in Nursing degree from Southern University in Collegedale, Tennessee. Dr. McMahon Bullis has held a number of practice positions, including as an RN care coordinator in cardiology, an electrophysiology nurse clinician, and a critical care nurse, in addition to serving in the Navy.

Nursing Department Co-Chair and Director Transitions

Following the Spring 2025 semester, we are moving forward with some transitions with our department co-chairs and directors and their responsibilities. For this past academic year, we were functioning with three department co-chairs as well as directors for our various programs and our Clinical Learning Center.

During the course of the spring semester, requests were made to step out of some of the roles, resulting in a redistribution of certain responsibilities and the welcoming of new individuals to leadership positions. We are proceeding ahead with a model of two department co-chairs and maintain-

ing directors for our programs, as indicated below.

Dr. Arin VanWormer, Professor, had been the Department Co-Chair and Director for the traditional pre-licensure Bachelor of Science in Nursing (TBSN) program. She requested to no longer serve in the department co-chair role but will continue with her responsibilities as the TBSN Program Director, starting this summer.

Dr. Rachel Merkel, Professor, had been the Department Co-Chair and Director for the Marshfield Site. She will now have

department co-chair responsibilities for the TBSN and BSN Completion programs, while continuing as Director of the Marshfield Site.

Dr. Lisa Schiller, Associate Professor, had been the Department Co-Chair for the graduate and BSN Completion programs and Director of the Nursing Graduate Programs. She will continue as Department Co-Chair and Director of the Nursing Graduate Programs.

Dr. Lorraine Smith, Associate Professor, retired from the College at the end of the Spring 2025 semester and had been

Nursing Department Co-Chair and Director Transitions (continued)

the BSN Completion Program Director. **Dr. Gail Hanson Brenner**, Assistant Professor, is now the BSN Completion Program Director.

Dr. Jeanette Olson, Associate Professor,

has been the Director of Assessment and Evaluation for the College. She requested stepping out of the role to pursue other opportunities in our college. **Dr. Beth Evans**, Assistant Professor, is transitioning to the Director of Assessment and

Evaluation role.

Dr. Meg Lagunas, Associate Professor and Director of the Clinical Learning Center, will continue as the Director.

Honors, Recognitions, Awards, and Notable News



We are proud to share the excellence demonstrated by the students, faculty, and staff of the College of Nursing and by our alums (see photo of the College faculty and staff taken at the August 21, 2024 College opening meeting held at the Florian Gardens in Eau Claire). Highlights of many who were recognized this past year include:

Three promotions were announced at the August 2024 College meeting, including **Dr. Theresa Dachel** and **Dr. Lorraine Smith** to Associate Professor and tenured and **Dr. Stephanie Hill** to Clinical Assistant Professor at the Marshfield Site.

In December 2024, Dean Kristen Abbott-Anderson announced two recipients for the inaugural Nursing Faculty Development Fund for Professional Service Awards. They were **Dr. Melissa Skoff** and **Dr. Mohammad Alasagheirin**. The fund from an anonymous donor provides grants to faculty to attend and actively participate in professional meetings, conferences, and activities where they serve on committees,

task forces, and boards.

Two student-faculty teams received Gritzmacher Science Education Fellowships in October from the UW-Eau Claire Foundation for their science outreach projects. **Dr. Der-Fa Lu**, Professor, along with undergraduate student **Keith Fuhrmeister**, received a fellowship for their project, *Mindfulness Interventions for Vaping in Junior High Students*. **Dr. Melissa Skoff**, Assistant Professor, along with undergraduate student **Aaron Shue**, received a fellowship for their project, *Advance Care Planning Facilitation among Prelicensure Nursing Students*. The students and the faculty were awarded small stipends for the 2024-2025 academic year that enabled them to carry out their work.

It was announced to the College in January 2025 that **Dr. Mohammad Alasagheirin**, Associate Profes-

sor, was one of ten individuals selected for an inaugural Nursing Science Incubator for Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) and Health Inequities (N-SISS) Fellowship through the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing. It is a 12-month fellowship during which time he will have mentors through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Johns Hopkins to assist with writing an NIH grant proposal. Dr. Vincent Guilamo-Ramos, Executive Director for Policy Solutions at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, is one of the founders of the program. Dr. Guilamo-Ramos was our inaugural speaker at the Mary C. and Fred Bliss Contemporary Nursing Seminar held last October 2024 at which time he made connections with faculty.



It also was announced to the College in January that **Dr. Charlotte Sortedahl**, Professor, and Dr. Min DeGruson, Associate Professor from the University of Wisconsin-Stout, were awarded a \$175,000 UW Innovation Grant for their project, *Driving Innovation and Value in Education through Collaboration of Nursing and Packag-*

Honors, Recognitions, Awards, and Notable News (continued)



ing Students and Professionals: *DRIVE Initiative*. It was one of only three grants being given out. For the project, UW-Eau Claire nursing stu-

dents and UW-Stout packaging students have been working together to create sustainable packaging for sterilized medical kits that is recyclable and avoids waste. Nursing students at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh will utilize the kits in their programs and provide feedback.

Several faculty and instructional and professional academic staff members were honored with awards from the College at the May 15, 2025 College meeting. **Dr. Lorraine Smith** received the Ihle Family Award for Caring; **Dr. Jeanette Olsen** the Suzanne Van Ort Award for Faculty Creativity and Scholarliness; **Ms. Nancy Ferrara-France** the Patricia M. Ostmo Award for Faculty and Academic Staff Excellence in Clinical Instruction; **Dr. Norah Airth-Kindree** the Rita Kisting Sparks Faculty Service Award; **Ms. Kirsten Dieckman** the CeCelia Zorn Exemplary Teaching Award; **Ms. Kaylan Petrie** the Dean's Award for Administrative Professional Excellence; **Mr. Andrew Prevenas** the Nursing Staff Innovation Award; **Dr. Debra Jansen** the Faculty Development Fund for Professional Service Award; and **Dr. Rachel Pierce** the Colleen and Tom Nevins College of Nursing Faculty Development and Scholarship Award.

Ms. Marnie Britton, who graduated with a BSN degree from UW-Eau Claire on December 21, 2024, received a Wisconsin Nurses Association (WNA) Future Nursing Leader Award at our Nursing Convocation (pinning) ceremony held on December 20th. **Mr. Aaron Shue** graduated with a BSN degree on May 17, 2025 and likewise received a WNA Future Nursing Leader Award at our Nursing Convocation ceremony held on May 16th.



Ms. Britton is a graduate of the BSN Completion program, having initially earned an Associate Degree in Nursing from Chippewa Valley Technical College. As evidence of her leadership ability, she is work-

ing with the Eau Claire City-County Board of Health to create a plan to address the lack of late-night transportation for patients being discharged from hospitals in the Eau Claire area. Through building off a course assignment, she was able to connect with the Board of Health.

Ms. Britton already is involved with nursing organizations, including the Wisconsin Nurses Association and the Emergency Nurses Association. Besides being an emergency room nurse at an area hospital, she also is a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. With her nursing experience, one of her goals is to become a flight nurse.

Mr. Shue is a graduate of the traditional BSN (TBSN) program and demonstrated considerable leadership while a



student. For instance, he was an officer for the local student chapter of the Men in Nursing organization, participated in student-faculty research, was an undergraduate student representative for the Nursing Assessment and Evaluation Committee, was a peer mentor for nursing students, and was an Academic Skills Center tutor, among other activi-

ties. Additionally, he was even a member of the Blugold Marching Band for a time. Mr. Shue has accepted a position in Rochester, Minnesota on a trauma intensive care unit.

The WNA award includes a complimentary year of membership in the Wisconsin Nurses Association and an appointment to a WNA council or committee of their choice. The awards were presented by Dr. Gail Hanson Brenner, the WNA President.

Dr. Kathleen (Welle) Clark, BSN Class of 2002, was appointed Chair of the Nursing Department at Augsburg University in February 2024. She has been teaching at the University since



2009 when she also started as the coordinator of the Augsburg Central Health Commons. In 2020, she was promoted to the Executive Director position of

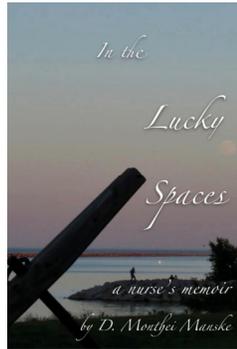
Augsburg Health Commons, which is comprised of drop-in centers led by nurses that focus on "radical hospitality and building trusting relationships with people in marginalized communities."

Dr. Clark earned a Master of Arts in Nursing degree with a Transcultural Nursing Emphasis and a DNP degree in Transcultural Leadership from Augsburg University. She previously worked in oncology hematology and a medical ICU. As an associate professor, she primarily teaches nursing graduate courses, with a focus on social justice, health inequities, and civic engagement. She credits her passion for caring for marginalized populations to a pediatric clinical rotation she had in Milwaukee and a semester study abroad experience while an undergraduate nursing student at UW-Eau Claire.

Honors, Recognitions, Awards, and Notable News (continued)

Ms. Debra Monthei Manske, a 1988 BSN Completion alumna, reported on the publication of her book, *In the Lucky Spaces: A Nurse's Memoir*. The book is available via Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Lucky-Spaces-Nurses-Memoir/dp/1983570729/ref=cm_cr_ar_p_d_product_top?ie=UTF8

Ms. Monthei Manske completed parish nurse training through Marquette Uni-



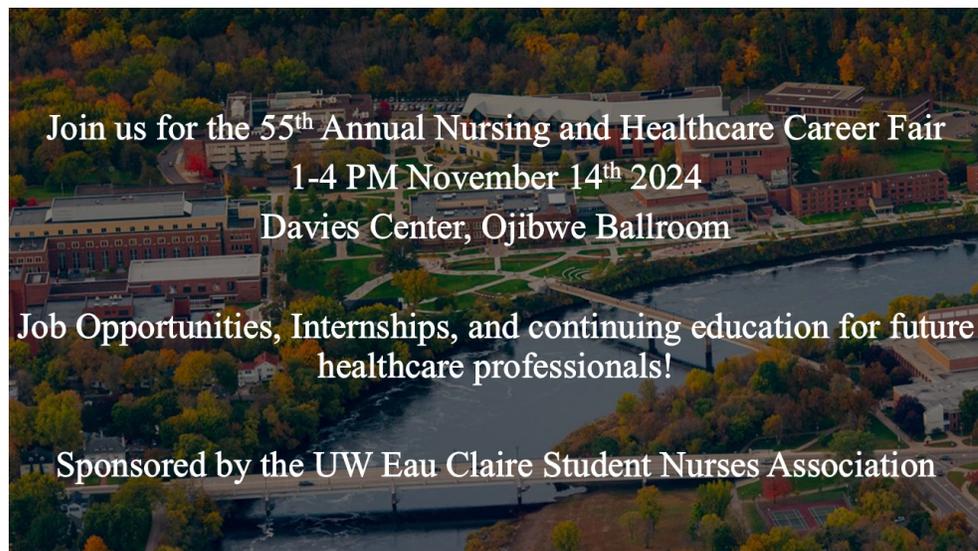
versity in 1997 and retired from nursing in 2013 to devote time to being a grandmother and poet.



Eau Claire Student Nurses Association

Once again, the Eau Claire Student Nurses Associations (ECSNAs) in Eau Claire and in Marshfield were actively engaged in assisting their fellow students and communities during the 2024-2025 academic year. Dr. Gail Hanson Brenner is the ECSNA faculty adviser in Eau Claire and Ms. Stephany Andres is the faculty adviser in Marshfield.

A few examples of activities in which the ECSNA in Eau Claire was involved included making tie blankets for residents of the Rosebud Indian Reservation, creating and delivering cards to an area nursing home, and bringing in guest speakers. Additionally, they also organized and hosted their 55th annual Nursing and Healthcare Career Fair in November (it was featured on the local ABC news station, WQOW.COM, see image of flyer), held stethoscope and apparel sales, provided a peer mentorship program for pre-nursing students, participated in the Shamrock Shuffle, and assisted with the orientation of newly admitted undergraduate nursing students, among many other activities. Plus, they actively participated in Nurses Day at the Capitol.



The students in Marshfield likewise participated in many activities that served communities, including conducting a band-aid drive and making tie blankets (see photo) to benefit Marshfield Clinic Health System pediatrics and the cancer center. Additionally, they provided a dinner at the Ronald McDonald House and participated in a Teddy Bear Clinic event at a local elementary school in which they taught basic health knowledge with the teddies while helping to make the children more comfort-



Eau Claire Student Nurses' Association (continued)



able with the healthcare environment (see photos on left and top right).

In December, they used their funds to purchase over \$1,500 worth of essential items that were part of wish lists for Mary's Place, Shirley's House of Hope, and the Orenda Center (see photo on bottom right). The three charities provide transitional housing for people reestablishing themselves in the community, emergency shelter for women and children, and advocacy and education for families experiencing crises, respectively.



Men in Nursing Student Organization

The UW-Eau Claire chapter of the American Association for Men in Nursing (AAMN) is up and running again. The local chapter was formed in 2016 and is open to all genders. It had been on hiatus briefly this fall while a new faculty adviser was found for the student organization (Dr. Gunnar Larson, the prior adviser, retired at the end of June 2024). Fortunately, Mr. James Hubert, Clinical Instructor, stepped forward to help the students. A formation meeting was held in December to revitalize the group (see photo of their first meeting). There has been great interest in the group by the men in the nursing program.

Since their initial gathering in December, they have been quite active, as they held multiple meetings and took part in activities such as the Shamrock Shuffle, a community health fair at an area high school, made and delivered Valentine's Day cards for an area nursing home, and had "stress free nights" to help members engage with each other and de-stress.



Special Thanks to Clinical Agencies, Preceptors, Alumni, & Donors

We extend our gratitude to the many health care agencies and individuals and preceptors at those settings for the wide array of rich clinical and mentorship opportunities they provided for our undergraduate and graduate students. We also appreciate our many donors who funded scholarships for our students, provided funds for our simulation laboratories, enabled clinical and classroom offerings in Eau Claire and in Marshfield, or supported our general Nursing Advancement Fund as well as faculty and staff development and recognition opportunities. ***Thank you!***

Greetings from Dean Kristen Abbott-Anderson (continued)

ing forward to integrating more opportunities for interdisciplinary practice and education. Vision teams have now shifted to Implementation teams, which will begin their work in earnest this fall. What makes me most excited is the opportunity to identify ways through which we can intentionally engage interdisciplinary teams—through education in the classroom, in simulation labs, and in community settings. Our students will be even better prepared to step into their professional roles having had this interdisciplinary experience as learners.

This year, we also made a shift from three Co-Chairs to a two-Chair model: A TBSN Chair, and a Graduate Programs Chair. This model will be in place for Fall 2025. My aim in making this change was to streamline supervisory lines and to accommodate for the Marshfield Site phase out in May 2026.

Advisory Groups

This past year, I established a student advisory council. This council is

comprised of two representatives from each cohort in our TBSN program (10 representatives), our BSN Completion program (1 representative), and our graduate programs (3 representatives). My priority is to hear our students' thoughts, questions, concerns and reflections about their experiences here in the College of Nursing and in the University. I look forward to inviting new representatives from our sophomore 2 students, and to those continuing their participation on the Student Council this year.

We also hold a clinical partner meeting at least every three years. Please see additional details about this much anticipated meeting in this newsletter. These meetings are integral to the College to maintain an on-going open dialogue with our clinical partners that extends beyond the day-to-day interactions we have in order to maintain our joint operations.

It is also important to share that our college leadership meets on a monthly basis to discuss the overarching

functioning of the college and to engage in proactive discussions anticipating the needs of our students, of our faculty, and of our community.

In conclusion, we are so fortunate to have outstanding staff and faculty here who are committed to our students, to their learning experiences, and to caring for our students as individuals. We are equally blessed to have wonderful alumni and former faculty and staff that continue to connect with us and to care about the college. I'll close with a standing invitation, if you are in the area, please reach out to me, I value the connections we make. Until next time, I wish you well.

Kind regards,



Kristen Abbott-Anderson, PhD, RN, CNE
Dean & Professor

In honor of our 60th Anniversary, you are invited to explore the following pages for —

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories.

University of Wisconsin-
Eau Claire
College of Nursing

*A Look into our
Past and
Present: 60
Years of
Student
Memories*



Debra Jansen, PhD, RN
Associate Dean & Professor
Alumna
jansenda@uwec.edu

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A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories

This Fall 2025 marks the 60th Anniversary of our traditional pre-licensure undergraduate Bachelor of Science in Nursing (TBSN) program. Under the leadership of Dean Marguerite Coffman, in Fall 1965, the first nursing course, N50 Nursing and the Social Order, was taught to sophomore nursing students. It was a two-credit “Exploration of social movements and technological changes that have influenced the development of professional nursing.” Since that time, much has transpired in terms of subsequent social movements and technological advances that have influenced the programs we offer at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

Nearly 6,700 unique individuals have graduated from either the undergraduate and graduate nursing programs or both since 1965. As of June 2025, at least 6,173 BSN degrees (873 through the Marshfield Site, 660 through the collaborative BSN Completion program, and 60 through the accelerated option), 628 Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degrees, and 260 Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degrees have been awarded.

The following pages focus on the 60-year history of our TBSN program, with special attention given to memories from alums. Since the TBSN program does not exist in isolation, additional information is provided regarding significant events, including restructurings and name changes for our School/College of Nursing, as well as the creation and advancements of our baccalaureate completion program and graduate programs. This article is rather lengthy but is meant to preserve a bit of our history. Please peruse as you like. Additionally, people’s memories and experiences vary regarding some events—please do not hesitate to contact me (Associate Dean Debra Jansen at jansenda@uwec.edu) with additional or differing information to share, as well as photos. Appreciation is extended to the countless alums who shared memories and keepsakes. Many of the photos not appearing here are being placed in the McIntyre Library digital archives.

60 Years of Expansion

The first class of 22 sophomore nursing students began the nursing program in September 1965, with 17 of them graduating in June 1968 (an 18th student graduated later). The closing of the Luther Hospital diploma program sooner than expected necessitated the rapid expansion of our School of Nursing. Consistent with that need, 53 students were admitted to the second class, and more added in subsequent years with the eventual goal reached of 90 students to start each fall. However, the Nursing building was not yet built when the program began and was not ready for students until the Fall of 1969. Consequently, the School of Nursing utilized Schofield Hall for the first year of the program, from 1965-1966. In the meantime, the first floor of Crest Commons was set up for classroom and clinical laboratory space for use from 1966-1969, until construction of the School of Nursing building was finished.

Having enough office space for faculty proved to be daunting as the program grew. Although the program started with only Dean Marguerite Coffman and a few faculty members who arrived within the first year or two, including Ms. Berniece Wagner (1965), Dr. Carol Lindeman (1965), and Ms. Athene Dale (1966), by 1967 there were 16 faculty, including Ms. Marilyn Burgess (1967), Ms. Josephine Gibson (1966), Ms. Winifred Lund (1967), Ms. Clara Smith (1967), and Dr. Rita Kisting Sparks (1967), among others. Three trailers were set up outside of Crest Commons for use by the faculty as shared offices.

Groundbreaking for the new School of Nursing building occurred in July 1968, with the building ready for classes in Fall 1969. Still, even the new building proved to be insufficient, and a west side addition was begun in 1984 and completed by Fall 1985.

As part of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Strategic Plan/Vision for 2030, we are working to incrementally double our enrollment for our TBSN program over the next 5 years. Initially we admitted once per year for the pre-licensure program, but around 1990 (May and December 1993 graduating classes), the switch was made to admit-



Photo 1: School of Nursing Building, 1969.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)



Photo 2: Students walking into Building, circa 1988. Construction of the west side addition was completed in 1985.

ting twice/year for the Eau Claire campus. We thereby accepted about 40 students per semester (80 students per year) for more than 25 years. Recently, in June 2022, with the support of Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) grant funding, we began admitting approximately 64 students per semester and have been progressively increasing this number (78 students were accepted in June 2025). The goal is to admit 128 students per semester.

Such growth necessitates the need for additional and creative uses and scheduling of space, including holding some classes in the Centennial Building. When the new Science and Health Sciences Building (located by the former Katharine Thomas Hall and Katherine Putnam Hall dormitories) is completed and ready for occupancy in the Fall of 2027, we will expand our simulation laboratories and clinic rooms to the new location. Our practice laboratories, however, will remain in the Nursing Building.

Admission to the Traditional Bachelor of Science in Nursing (TBSN) Program

Few graduates of the program likely can forget the competitive nature of admission to the TBSN program and the sense of relief when an acceptance letter arrived in the mail. The criteria and process of getting admitted, as well as the immunization and health/clinical requirements expected upon acceptance have varied over the years. For instance, minimum overall GPA requirements increased from 2.00, to 2.20, to 2.50, to 2.75, and eventually to 3.00.

Additionally, besides submitting proof of CPR certification, TB test status, and immunizations, for many years students also needed to undergo physical assessments for admission acceptance. An admission letter signed by Dean Coffman dated June 7, 1966 indicates that admission was “pending a satisfactory health report in the fall. A physical examination will be done by the University physician soon after the opening of school.” In later years, students asked their health care provider to complete a form. The physical examination requirement ended after the 1980’s. Interestingly, for a few years in the 1980s, results of the Omnibus Personality Inventory also were considered in admission decisions. Although not an admission requirement, CNA certification became a sophomore clinical course prerequisite, beginning around 2010.



Photo 3: Nursing Building showing the west side addition completed in 1985 and the removal of the front step and ramp following the construction of the new Davies Center in 2012.

The admissions process additionally involved interviews throughout much of the 1970s and into the 1980s. Members of the class of 1982, including Ms. Jeanine (Schuldes) Lindeke and her brother Scott Schuldes and sister-in-law Tricia (Anderson) Schuldes, Pam (Gronlund) White, and Cheryl (Richards) Drozdowicz, remember being interviewed by members of the School of Nursing. Based on the interviews, “some 4.0 students didn’t get in.” Ms. Lindeke recalled questions pertaining to their families, what was important to them, and where they saw themselves in five years. Consistent with the requirements specified in the University catalogs from the 1960s and extending into the 1980s, they recalled that references also were needed as part of the application materials.

For many years, somewhat akin to how graduates carefully monitored their mail with trepidation for thick or thin NCLEX results letters, applicants carefully watched for thick envelopes with admission acceptance information as opposed to thin envelopes with denial letters. Such practices went away as NCLEX results became available online and UW-Eau Claire nursing decision letters were emailed to applicants, starting during the COVID-19 pandemic years.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

Classroom Learning

In the early days of the program, the students relied on the faculty teaching through lectures, enhanced by the use of chalkboards, overhead projectors, slide projectors, and other visual aids. There was not a heavy reliance on films, but there were some pertaining to nursing practice. Handouts were available at times.

Taking nursing classes also meant lugging around numerous heavy books and long hours spent studying on the fourth and fifth floors of McIntyre Library or in the large study room in the Old Library, a space (now known as Vicki Lord Larson Hall) that connected the library and Schofield Hall. Additional required reading assignments often were placed in the "Reserve Library" for brief check-out periods. Finding journal articles for papers meant physically paging through large volumes of the *Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL)* and *Index Medicus* in the library, before journal searching became computerized. If the student was fortunate, the relevant articles could be found in large bound volumes or on microfiche; otherwise, interlibrary loan requests were submitted. Locating pertinent books meant thumbing through card catalogs. Students also utilized the Luther Hospital Medical Library and the Sacred Heart Hospital Medical Library, and in later years for students at the distance education site, the George E. Magnin Medical Library at the Marshfield Clinic Health System in Marshfield and the Saint Joseph's Hospital library.

Once fully researched and written out by hand, students often had to plan a day or two just for typing (and retyping) each page of a paper for submission. Dorm rooms and kitchens and bedrooms in off-campus housing were taken over by typewriters for many students, with alums being grateful for electric as opposed to manual typewriters. On the other hand, pencils in hand, students spent hours carefully hand writing care plans for patients seen during the clinical rotations. Students in the late 1980s and early 1990s were caught in the computer transition years. For instance, Michelle (Buteyn) Rayburn (Marshfield Site class of 1991) recalled, "I typed my school papers on a portable typewriter at my kitchen table and occasionally used a word processor at the School of Nursing, where I printed out papers with tear-off tabs on the sides."



Photo 5: Dean Emerita Elaine Wendt teaching in Room 114, circa 1980.

education site in which we strived to provide excellent pedagogical experiences for the students. Michelle (Buteyn) Rayburn further noted about her experience at the Marshfield Site, "I had the honor of being part of the second class in the distance learning program, and it felt as if we were pioneers. I enjoyed it so much that when I went back to school for a master's degree in a different field years later, I chose an online program."



Photo 4: Ms. Athene Dale conducting a class demonstration in the new School of Nursing Building, Room 104, circa 1969.

By the early 1990s, both faculty and students were utilizing computers to prepare for classes, conduct library database searches, and write papers. Faculty could create PowerPoint presentations and outlines and handouts for use in the distance education rooms. In the 1990s and up through the early 2000s, lecture outlines and handouts for taking class notes often were assembled into course workbooks that students purchased from the bookstore. These handouts were made available to students in subsequent years via e-mailed attachments or online. The School of Nursing, like many buildings on campus, had a computer lab for students.

Compared to the rest of campus, Nursing faculty were perceived as early adopters of online technologies for teaching undergraduate and graduate courses. This embrace of technology could be due to having a distance

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

Additionally, we had graduate programs in which students often drove three hours to come to campus, despite snow (which always seemed to occur on class days) with Monday classes running from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. for first-year students and all day on Tuesday for second-year graduate students. Therefore, we were interested in finding ways to serve and accommodate them, as well.

Some of the earliest online courses occurred with the BSN Completion and graduate programs. The BSN Completion program began offering online core courses in 1998 and 1999. For the graduate program, NRS 712 Pharmacotherapeutics for Advanced Clinical Practice was offered online for the first time in the summer of 2002. At the TBSN level, some one-credit nursing wellness courses (offered to all students across campus) were likewise available online by 2003. With our current TBSN curriculum, a required sophomore nursing course on nutrition has been online since 2014, with others soon to follow.

In the 2000s, online Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Blackboard, D2L, and Canvas became widespread across campus as the expected location for housing course materials, e.g., syllabi, slides, outlines, handouts, practice questions, recorded videos, etc. Paper and pencil exams (involving the use of bubble sheets) were replaced by online exams that could be administered outside of or within the classroom.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, starting in March 2020 when on-campus face-to-face classroom and clinical courses were not allowed and students were sent home, faculty and students quickly adapted to online and remote synchronous and asynchronous learning. Instructors taught courses remote synchronously (live) through platforms such as BlueJeans, Collaborate Ultra, and eventually Zoom, while students participated from their homes. Alternatively, some content was delivered asynchronously (not live) via a combination of recorded lectures, posted online content, and online discussion boards. Undergraduate and graduate students creatively practiced clinical skills at home.

As we work to dramatically increase enrollment numbers for our TBSN program, we are finding additional and more creative clinical experiences and locations for students. This necessitates more flexibility in student schedules so they can participate in clinical opportunities not occurring during our usual times. To accommodate varying student schedules, if not already online or hybrid, the TBSN courses were transformed from fully face-to-face classes to hybrid, starting in 2024. As hybrid courses, most of the time is spent in the classroom with a part of the remaining class time converted to asynchronous online learning. The online portion can be devoted to students studying the content with the classroom time spent in active learning activities, such as working in groups to address case studies.

Given their ubiquitous use, laptops were required of the TBSN students by 2013. This ensured being able to take standardized practice NCLEX exams as well as regular course exams online. At the same time, the student computer lab in nursing and most of the computer labs across campus were eventually repurposed.

Something that stood out in the minds of many graduates from the late 1980s through the 1990s and early 2000s was the Loomis and Wood Model, which provided a framework for the nursing curricula and clinical decision making. Members of the class of 1987, including Tammy (Goetsch) Deering, noted “We were also the first class to switch over to the holistic curriculum (Loomis and Wood).” Ms. Deering’s class even had T-shirts made with a picture of the model and a reference to being the Loomis and Wood Guinea Pigs. Students spent many hours organizing data collection for clinical care plans into the different categories of the model, striving to assess and meet the needs of the whole person, capturing all human response systems.

Of course, students need a break from their classes. Nancy Fugate Woods (class of 1968) recalled peers getting together for brown bag lunches in the recreation/community areas of local dorms. They watched the soap opera, *The Doctors*, and had fun critiquing it for accuracy. The practice of watching soap operas together during breaks continued for years.



Photo 6: Members of the Eau Claire Student Nurses Association in Room 114 in Eau Claire, making Valentine’s Day cards for residents of an area assisted living/memory care facility, 2022.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

Learning Clinical Skills in the Skills Laboratory

Although our TBSN program has been around for 60 years and underwent many evolutions, needing to learn both critical thinking and technical skills has remained. In the early years, much of the learning of technical skills, both basic and advanced, such as making beds, brushing teeth, doing bed baths, administering injections, conducting physical assessments, and sometimes even inserting nasogastric tubes came through practicing on fellow students. There wasn't a heavy reliance on manikins, although a few Mrs. Chase manikins and models were available.



Photo 7: Nursing student regulating an IV flow rate, counting drops, circa 1981.

For nearly the first 19-20 years of the program, prior to starting the junior year, the students took didactic and clinical courses in the summer. Some members of the class of 1982 recalled being in the skills lab, with its hospital beds and about four manikins. There, from June to August 1980, they remembered learning both basic and some more advanced skills, including bathing and oral hygiene, occupied bedmaking (with Sister Joel Jacobi carefully



Photo 8: Nursing skills laboratory with Ms. Aurelie Chinn teaching (left), circa late 1980s/early 1990s.

ensuring the “tightness” of the linen), repositioning/turning each other, bedpan placement, the drawing up of insulin from vials (“clear to cloudy”), sterile technique/donning gloves, and foley catheter and nasogastric tube insertion. Cheryl (Richards) Drozdowicz even “practiced” shaving her boyfriend (now husband), as that skill was a bit hard to acquire in the lab.

Handwashing effectiveness for the class of 1982 was evaluated via the “Germ Machine,” which detected fake germs using a “germ detector light.” Intramuscular injections were practiced on oranges and on each other, rather than on the manikins. Jeanine (Schuldes) Lindeke recalled working with some manikin arms as she learned IV insertion. At the time, the instructors and students were quite excited to have the latest technology for practicing IV starts—the IV arms were hooked up to bags of red dye that ideally would let students know if they were successful in accessing a vein. Of course, like all technologies, it did not always work, disappointing students when they did not see the red flashback (or the dye leaked onto beds or Chux pads, to the chagrin of the faculty).

That summer of taking nursing courses was particularly memorable for the class of 1982. On the evening of July 15, 1980, “The Storm” hit Eau Claire and knocked out power for much of the area for over a week. Living off campus during that time, many of the students had no electricity for 10 days, with some walking to the dorms to shower. As a nursing group, they signed up to help the local Red Cross.



Photo 9: Learning Resource Center (LRC), 1992.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

With the addition of the west wing of the Nursing Building in 1985, the sophomore nursing students now spent countless hours in the first-floor clinic rooms, practicing taking histories and conducting head to toe physical assessments on partner students. Friendships often formed through these bonding experiences. As videotaping became more readily available, the histories and physicals, as well as other skills, were sometimes recorded to enable faculty and student viewing and feedback discussions. As April (Darst) Eddy (class of 1993) related, “We did family histories and physicals on each other, so we did get to know each other quite closely. Those were videotaped. . . . We also gave each other injections because there were no computers, sim labs, etc.”

The practice of administering injections to each other was stopped in the early 2000s, in favor of having students work with manikins and model arms and participate in supervised vaccination clinics (see photo of student volunteers at an early COVID-19 vaccination clinic on campus in March 2021). Practicing complex technical skills, such as packing sterile wounds, suctioning and cleaning tracheostomy tubes, inserting Foley catheters, and central line care, was often done on manikins or models (e.g., Chester Chest and Seymour Butts), before attempting on patients in the clinical setting.

The bonds students formed with each other and with their clinical instructors also were evident. Emeritus faculty Dr. Michaelene (Pheifer) Jansen (BSN class of 1977) recalled the extracurricular activities of one clinical group in the 1990s: “They showed up at our house on Lowes Creek to sing Christmas Carols.”



Photo 10: Undergraduate nursing students in clinic room doing well child assessment, 1993.



Photo 11: Nursing students participating in COVID-19 vaccination clinic in Zorn Arena, March 2021.

E. Moore. The manikin simulator was computerized to enable assessment of heart, lung, and bowel sounds as well as pulses. Beginning with SimMan in 2003, simulations with high fidelity manikins slowly grew in use in the program.

Since then, every student cohort engages in high fidelity simulations in our Clinical Learning Centers (CLCs) in Eau Claire and in Marshfield in multiple courses. These simulations support students in building their critical thinking skills while in a safe environment. The learning of technical

The pedagogy of learning critical thinking and technical skills underwent significant transformations in the 2000s. In November of 2002, SimMan, a high-fidelity human patient simulator, was purchased using donated funds from Jane (Webert) Moore, class of 1973 (see photo with SimMan), and her husband James



Photo 12: Jane (Webert) Moore, class of 1973, with SimMan, Homecoming 2003.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)



Photo 13 above: Dr. Gunnar Larson operating the equipment from a control both for one of the simulation rooms, circa 2018.

skills, however, is generally reserved for the skills practice areas of our CLCs, as they contain many model arms, torsos, and low fidelity manikins for hands on work with dressing and irrigating wounds, suctioning, inserting Foley catheters, etc.

For Spring 2025, an immersive virtual reality room was completed in Room 155, which previously housed a student computer laboratory that was no longer needed (students purchase their own laptops). The room enables students to interact with images projected onto the walls, thereby immersing them in simulations (see photo).

While still new, to date, the sophomore nursing students used the virtual reality space for a "Room of Errors" activity as a way to enforce room safety; and the second semester junior students engaged in an exam preparation exercise. For Fall 2025, the "Room of Errors"



Photo 14 above: Nursing student in the immersive virtual reality room, Spring 2025.

Photo 15 right: Students engaged in a pediatric simulation, 2024.

activity will be updated with photos from the actual clinical sites utilized by the students; an inpatient-style acute care/hospital-type room also is being created for simulations in the virtual space.

We look forward to expanding our CLC into modern new simulation and clinic rooms when the Science and Health Sciences Building is ready in Fall 2027. Nevertheless, we will continue to use our classrooms and skills laboratories, which were recently updated, in the Nursing Building.



A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

Clinical Locations and Experiences

Since the 1960s, the two main acute care clinical sites were Sacred Heart Hospital, which became Hospital Sisters Health System (HSHS) Sacred Heart Hospital; and Luther Hospital, which became Mayo Clinic Health System - Eau Claire. However, on January 22, 2024, HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls announced they would be closing, necessitating immediate relocation of some clinical sections for the Spring 2024 semester.

Besides utilizing the Mayo Clinic Health System - Eau Claire and Marshfield Medical Center - Eau Claire hospitals, we currently have students at the Marshfield Medical Center in Marshfield, as well as at rural critical access hospitals in Bloomer, Barron, Menominee, and even Superior, among others. We utilize a few Dedicated Education Units (DEUs) in which students sign up for shifts with the nurses (Clinical Nurse Teachers). Additionally, students have experiences with area health departments, long term care facilities, schools, and other community agencies.



Photo 16: Shannon (Blado) Gabower, class of 1977, during an operating room clinical at Luther Hospital.

From the very outset of the TBSN program, community and public health clinicals have been a vital part of student learning. Connie (Winter) Korger (class of 1968) recalled having community and public health clinicals for four semesters, alongside acute care experiences. The students often followed patients discharged from the hospital to home.

Dr. Nancy Fugate Woods (class of 1968) vividly remembered being asked by a physician (through the health department and her instructor) to visit the home of a woman whom she had been with in the hospital when the woman gave birth. The woman believed her baby had diarrhea. The physician knew she had developed a good rapport with the woman, who had been considered “difficult.” Dr. Fugate Woods went to the home and found her holding a gun, asking if she was from the “welfare department,” as she was afraid of her baby being taken away. Through her communication skills, Dr. Fugate Woods was able to establish enough trust to make several home visits with the family, discovering that a few of the baby’s siblings had special needs, for which they were able to get help.

Ms. Renee Ryder (class of 1976) remembered other types of clinical rotations, including traveling to the Northern Colony (later renamed the Northern Center for the Developmentally Disabled) in Chippewa Falls. Additionally, she had a psychiatric mental health clinical at Luther Hospital for which she was assigned a male patient in his early 30s who lived two blocks from the hospital. He needed to retrieve some items from his home during one of the evening shifts. She simply had to sign him out to walk with him to his home and then sign him back in upon their return. She took her responsibility seriously, thinking to herself, “I am in charge of this patient.” Ms. Ryder cannot imagine a student or nurse walking a patient to and from home in the present day.

Completing *process recordings* was vividly recalled by alums from multiple decades. Renee Ryder (class of 1976) described having specific communication goals each week and having to develop therapeutic communication questions to assist with meeting each goal. She would then ask the resident in the nursing home or patient at Luther Hospital she was seeing that week for permission to tape record their conversation. The nursing instructor would review the analysis of the communication, in addition to listening to the recording. Similarly, Lynette Wachholz (class of 1985) remembered going “to a nursing home . . . where we went once a week to practice therapeutic listening. And then, of course, we had to write some sort of analysis of how it went.” These analyses involved “cassette tapes and transcriptions” as students tape recorded and transcribed their conversations with the older people as part of doing the process recordings. Liane (Storzer) Weinberger (class of 1986) “thought I would wear out the machine rewinding so often to complete that paper.” A 1989 alum recollected borrowing her younger brother’s large 1980s “boombox” to tape record a conversation with a resident of a nearby housing complex for older people—the boombox certainly surprised the resident.

Alums also recalled preparing “med cards” and being quizzed about them. Although students purchased “drug books,” they were expected to write out essential facts on individual index cards for each medication they were to administer to patients on the clinical units. These were essential when questioned by their clinical instructors who pushed and challenged them to make connections between the drug mechanisms of action and potential adverse and therapeutic effects.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

Graduates from the 2000s found cultural immersion experiences to be invaluable components of their clinical education. For instance, starting in 1998, Associate Professor Emerita Dr. Rita Sperstad traveled with undergraduate students to a freestanding birthing center in Weslaco, Texas, near the Mexican border (see photo). Other immersive clinical experiences have included healthcare facilities in Anchorage, Alaska (see photo); the Indian Reservation in Rosebud, South Dakota, offered beginning in 2004 (see photo); and a palliative care hospital and orphanage in El Salvador in 2014 and 2015. Another cultural experience has been ongoing since 2011 with nearby counties in which students engage, using interpreters, with Hispanic migrant workers on large dairy farms (see photo).

In Fall 2023 and Spring 2024, we piloted a new immersive clinical experience at Essentia Health St. Mary's Hospital-Superior, a 25-bed critical access hospital. Starting in Fall 2024, we also included a pediatric/obstetric experience with Essentia Health in Duluth.



Photo 17 above right: Dr. Rita Sperstad (back row, far right) and students in Weslaco, Texas, Winterim 2014.

Photo 18 above: Undergraduate students in Anchorage, Alaska, August 2007.

Photo 19 below: Students spelling out UWEC in the South Dakota Badlands, courtesy of Morgan (Goris) Theisen, class of 2014, as part of the Rosebud Indian Reservation senior clinical.

Photo 20 right: Senior nursing students at one of the dairy farms, Fall 2011.



A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

Transportation

Over the years, with clinicals occurring in various settings besides the local hospitals, access to transportation has been challenging and necessary. Even though cars were recommended, if not required, many students tried to manage without them. Billie (Rydberg) LaBumbard (class of 1968) recalled, "I had no car and had to take the city bus and walk some way to my home visits."

Likewise, Jeanine (Schuldes) Lindeke and her brother Scott Schuldes (class of 1982) did not have a car and often walked together from Towers Hall (both were resident assistants there) to their clinicals at Luther Hospital and Sacred Heart Hospital (see photo of them in uniform). However, getting to the public/community health clinicals frequently required using the city buses. Ms. Lindeke described taking two different buses throughout the semester to get to the home of a mom who was expecting a baby. The experience was invaluable and profound.

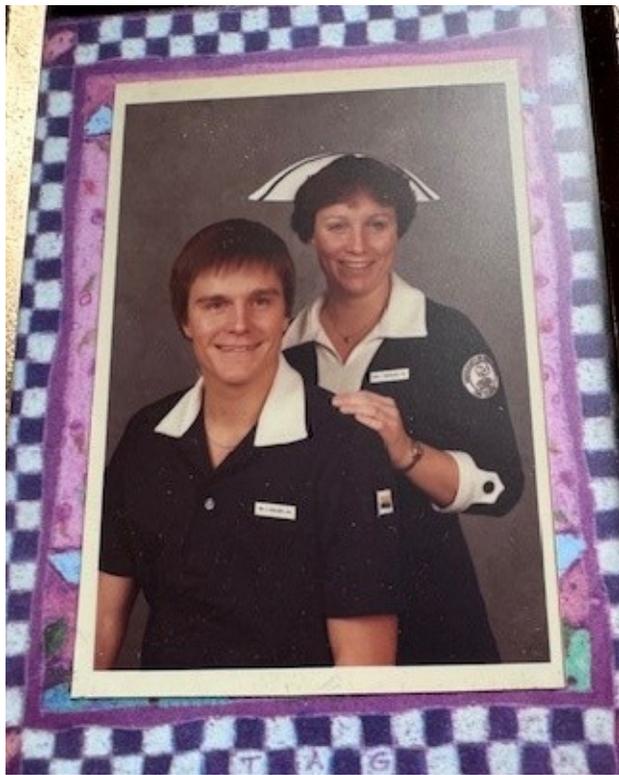


Photo 21 above: Scott Schuldes, with bars visible left sleeve, and sister Jeanine Schuldes Lindeke, class of 1982.

Photo 22 right: Saint Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield.

Marshfield Site

For nearly 40 years we have had a distance education site in Marshfield, Wisconsin. As Saint Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield was phasing out its diploma program, they established a partnership with UW-Eau Claire in 1986. In academic year 1987-1988, the first cohort of UW-Eau Claire students started taking nursing courses in Marshfield, with 18 students graduating in May 1990. Our nursing program was originally housed in the South Building of the Hospital with funding for faculty and staff, room space, and other resources provided by the Hospital.

On the other hand, Amy (Converse) Hunter (class of 1976) and a fellow classmate, Renee Ryder, rode small motorcycles to their Luther Hospital and Sacred Heart Hospital clinicals. Since they drove the motorcycles to class and clinical even during the winter, they donned slacks or jeans underneath their uniform dresses to stay warm during the rides. That is, until they rolled up to a stoplight and Dean Coffman saw them "and had a serious frown on her face." They were reprimanded for wearing the pants under their uniforms.

Other students without cars relied on classmates to pick them up. Dr. Nancy Fugate Woods (class of 1968) bought a car for \$200 that her father fixed up, enabling her to transport other students in need.

Many other students have relied on carpooling, especially as they had clinical experiences in cities and counties outside of Eau Claire. For instance, Morgan (Goris) Theisen (class of 2014) talked about clinical groups carpooling in two vehicles with about 3-4 students in each, to go to experiences in Osseo or Marshfield. For the Osseo clinical, they enjoyed stopping at Norske Nook along the way for pie. She added that traveling to the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota entailed being "jam packed" in vans with their instructors.



A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

After Marshfield Clinic Health System (MCHS) purchased the Hospital in July 2017, they took over providing the support. However, given its age, in May 2021, we moved out of the South Building (which was demolished in December 2021) and set up our nursing program on the UW-Stevens Point at Marshfield Campus in the Helen Connor Laird Fine Arts Building (see photo of student in the Clinical Learning Center in Marshfield). MCHS leased the space for us and continues to support our operations in Marshfield, but starting in Spring 2024, it began phasing out our distance education site. The last cohort of three undergraduate students will commence in May 2026. To date, 873 individuals have graduated from UW-Eau Claire through the distance education site.



Photo 23: Student in the Clinical Learning Center in the Helen Connor Laird Fine Arts Building on the UW-Stevens Point at Marshfield campus, January 2023.

Despite the phasing out of the Marshfield Site, we will continue to work with MCHS in providing rich learning experiences for students. For at least a decade, students from the Eau Claire campus have been traveling to Marshfield for acute care pediatric clinical experiences at the MCHS Marshfield Children's Hospital. With the expanding enrollments at the Eau Claire campus, combined with the closures of HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls, we are increasingly sending clinical groups to Marshfield for other acute care experiences at the MCHS Marshfield Medical Center hospital there.

Students at both the Eau Claire campus and Marshfield Site have taken the same nursing courses. However, the students in Marshfield completed prerequisite and general education courses at a variety of institutions, but primarily the Universities of Wisconsin campuses in Marshfield, Wausau, and Stevens Point. For nearly the first 20 years of the program, up through 2006, the students in Marshfield were required to come to the Eau Claire campus for one summer to take a sophomore level clinical and fundamentals course (see photo). That created several interesting stories over the years, including at least one rainy summer in which



Photo 24: Students from the Marshfield Site in the LRC in Eau Claire, circa 1997. Students from the Marshfield Site were required to take a sophomore clinical / classroom course at Eau Claire in the summer.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

several of the students camped out in tents at a campsite, rather than acquiring other housing arrangements (see photo).

The initial classes were broadcast via an Optel audiographics system, which essentially relied on telephone lines and was known to more than occasionally cut out. Students and faculty utilized microphones to hear each other but could not see each other. Much of what the students saw in lecture classes in Marshfield were basic computer graphic visuals. As technology evolved, the distance education rooms in Eau Claire and in Marshfield were upgraded with interactive video (ITV) systems, starting in 1994. This meant that students and faculty were finally able to see each other on large screens set up in the classrooms, in addition to viewing document camera materials and PowerPoint slides. For the last few years, the classroom connections between the Eau Claire campus and Marshfield Site have been made through Zoom.

Despite the advances with the ITV technology, faculty at both the Marshfield Site and Eau Claire campus liked to travel to the other location a few times a semester to better see and get to know the students. Emeritus faculty Dr. Michaelene (Pheifer) Jansen (BSN class of 1977) recalled, "I walked into the Marshfield classroom and they all broke out in laughter and then it got very quiet. I asked what was so funny and one brave soul said, 'you are so short! You look a lot taller on TV.'"

Michelle (Buteyn) Rayburn (class of 1991) had taken her first two years of courses at the UW-Eau Claire campus before transferring to the Marshfield Site. There she "loved the small class size and personal bonds formed with both traditional and non-traditional students." She "appreciated that . . . our classes, study, and practicum were all in the same building. Outside of some clinical work at local nursing homes or community health, it was all self-contained. The hospital and clinic in Marshfield both had libraries with volumes of medical journals, so students could complete research or study between classes. I could start out in the morning for a clinical on the hospital floor and walk through the medical complex to our classroom wing on the other end." They also had a skills lab for practicing clinical skills on manikins and on each other.

Besides acute care experiences, they "traveled to Neillsville for public health visits, and I drove far out into the country to do well-baby checks for one family. . . . We met our instructors back at the public health department at the courthouse to debrief after clinical." Ms. Rayburn further noted, "Families came from far and wide for care at Marshfield, and I remember caring for an Amish baby during my peds rotation. I learned how to consider a family's culture while creating a plan of care."

Additionally, Ms. Rayburn described how "our distance-learning room had rows of tables with microphones so we could ask questions of the professors who lectured via a satellite connection. I recalled being in the large lecture hall at UW-EC and hearing the voices of students from Marshfield when they joined in the discussion, and now I was among that group, learning from a distance. We seldom could see the lecturer, but we had an outline on the screen." She added, "sometimes we had to just use the audio because the video wouldn't connect. I remember our technology person was named Leon, and he had a big job to do to keep it connected for us! The satellite connection was finicky and cumbersome, but we were on the cutting edge of technology. I had the honor of being part of the second class in the distance learning program, and it felt as if we were pioneers."



Photo 26: Marshfield Site distance education classroom, Room 111, May 2008.



Photo 25: Students from the Marshfield Site camping out while taking NRSNG 260 in the summer at UW-Eau Claire, circa 2001.

For about the first two decades of offering the nursing program in Marshfield, we admitted approximately 24 students once per year, with many of them being place-bound due to family or work obligations. Later grant funding in 2008 enabled us to begin admitting 16 students each semester, for a total of 32 students per year. By 2019, interest in applying to the Marshfield Site had declined significantly, with the last class of three students admitted in June 2023 (May 2026 graduation date), coinciding with the 2024 decision by MCHS to phase out the program.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

Accelerated Pre-Licensure Program

In 2006-2007, we piloted a 12-month accelerated program for students with second degrees interested in earning a bachelor's degree in nursing. The students were required to have already completed all prerequisite courses so they could focus for the year on the program's 60 intense nursing credits. The pilot group consisted of 8 students who graduated in May 2007. From June 2009 until June 2012, we continued to offer this option, admitting up to 16-18 students per year. However, due to faculty and staff resource concerns, admission to the program was stopped in 2012.

The students and faculty spent long days in Room 127 of the Nursing Building, having "staked out" their seats. They likewise devoted many hours at the clinical sites. Kennilyn Burnaugh (class of 2012) kept a diary that captured her impressions. For instance, she wrote, "my first official day taking care of hospital patients was a day to remember; the RN was also a graduate of the accelerated program. Cared for a patient near death who became unresponsive and was transferred to critical care. Saw how the status of a patient could change so quickly, "Ten minutes ago she was sitting on the bed reading her newspaper, and now she's unconsciously sprawled on the bed. This woman had changed in front of my eyes all within a few blinks." Ms. Burnaugh also recalled observing a woman giving birth, "I remember being captivated as this baby began emerging into the world."



Photo 27: Students in the accelerated BSN program practicing in the skills laboratory, Summer 2010.

Studying Abroad

An enriching opportunity experienced by numerous students was studying abroad. Students with Spanish minors, such as Spanish for the Health Professions, traveled to places like Costa Rica; Valladolid, Spain; or Puebla, Mexico during the summer to complete minor requirements. For decades, others traveled to England during various times of the year, including summers in the 1980s. Since 2009, a popular opportunity for nursing students in Eau Claire and at Marshfield has been to attend nursing classes through the University of Evansville (in Indiana) at Harlaxton, England during the first semester senior fall term (see photo of students in front of the Harlaxton Victorian manor house). The Harlaxton courses are substituted for UW-Eau Claire nursing courses, thereby not adding an additional semester on to the programs of the students.



Photo 28: Three senior nursing students in front of Harlaxton Manor, Fall 2013.

Susan (Markfelder) Eckwright (class of 1991) as part of a group of 8 senior nursing students, recalled studying at King Alfred's College in Winchester, England from January 17 to April 15, 1991. Dr. CeCelia Zorn accompanied them and taught two senior nursing courses and a British elective. The 8 nursing students included one RN/BSN Completion student and two from the Marshfield Site. Ms. Eckwright returned in time to rejoin the rest of her class in April as they prepared for graduation.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

Nursing Uniforms

The Nursing uniforms worn by the students underwent many modifications over the decades, consistent with the changing times and styles. For instance, the first class wore light blue with white pinstripes dresses with little white neck ties (no men in the first class). Variations in the uniforms and the light blue shades occurred in the 1970s. While specific dates have been challenging to track, it appears that by the 1980s, the switch was made for women to navy blue dresses of a knit polyester material, accented by differing versions of a white collar and cuff and a blue fabric belt affixed to the uniform. The men and some women in class wore a similar top with either white or blue knit polyester slacks (slack color varied throughout the 1980s). Shoes were white uniform shoes.

In the 1990s, a brief shift was made. Michelle (Buteyn) Rayburn (class of 1991) at the Marshfield Site recalled, “I had a light blue button-up top that had subtle pinstripes with a white skirt” (see photo). These uniforms were eventually replaced by light blue scrub tops and white or blue bottoms (see Spring 1999 photo with class of December 2000) before the transition was made to royal blue tops and pants in 2013. Many students (and their faculty instructors) were quite delighted when the bottoms were no longer white.



Photo 29: Class of 1991 uniform top and skirt, courtesy of Michelle Buteyn Rayburn.

As lab coats became popular in nursing programs in the early 2000s, by 2005, students purchased white laboratory coats. These coats were frequently worn in the nursing skills laboratories as a means of encouraging students to practice in the rooms as if they were in real clinical settings. The lab coats also covered less formal attire the students may have been wearing to school, thereby adding to the fidelity.



Photo 30 above: Members of the class of December 2000, taken Spring 1999, courtesy of Melissa (Provost) Boellaard.

Photo 31 left: Uniform patch, courtesy of Michelle Buteyn Rayburn, class of 1991.

Photo 32 below: Students in current uniform assessing an obese manikin in the Eau Claire Clinical Learning Center, 2024.

For several decades, the students bought uniforms and UW-Eau Claire Student Nurse patches (see photo) from Lee's Uniform Center (near the old K-Mart), a local uniform shop. They were responsible for sewing the patches onto the uniform tops and lab coats. In 2014, Lee's Uniform Center even filmed a local commercial showcasing our students in their uniforms. During some of those years, representatives from Lee's Uniform Center came to the School of Nursing and used one of the smaller class rooms as a place where the new students could examine or try on the uniforms prior to making an order. Eventually, students in Eau Claire were required to visit the shop. However, Lee's Uniform Center still traveled to the Marshfield Site to assist the students there with the purchases.



After the owner of Lee's Uniform Center sold the business, a couple different vendors were utilized between 2017-2019 until a relationship was built with Scrubs Direct in 2020, which had just settled into a local shop in the Oakwood Mall. The students currently purchase their uniforms through an online portal with the company.

The present uniform (see photo) consists of a royal blue scrub top and bottom, with a modified UWEC Nursing seal embroidered with gold thread on the tops, thereby saving students the difficulty of sewing on patches. The practice of wearing the lab coat in the clinical laboratories was stopped during the pandemic to reduce possible virus transmission; additionally, wearing lab coats was not encouraged at many clinical agencies,



A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

particularly the acute care settings. Because lab coats are no longer used in most clinical courses, students stopped purchasing them after 2024. Students are now required to wear their uniforms whenever in the skills or clinical simulation rooms. Although shoes must still be white, many students opt to wear athletic shoes rather than traditional uniform shoes.

Capping

Consistent with the times, students in the undergraduate program in the 1960s through the early 1980s had nursing caps. The caps were worn in the hospitals and in long term care, but usually not in the public or community health settings. The UW-Eau Claire nursing cap was designed by Dr. Nancy Fugate Woods, a 1968 graduate of the first class (see photo of her with cap). The cap was a bit unusual in that a royal blue velvet ribbon was affixed to the cap from the beginning and not applied later after graduation or as the students progressed in the nursing program, as was the practice with some nursing schools.



Photo 33: Dr. Nancy Fugate Woods, class of 1968, with the cap she designed.

Dr. Fugate Woods recently explained that she modeled the design of the cap after that worn by a nurse at Sacred Heart Hospital. She applied a royal blue velvet ribbon because she “thought it looked nice,” and “after all, we were the Blugolds.” Associate Dean Berniece Wagner noted in the 1990s that the “very attractive cap . . . was unanimously approved by both students and faculty.” It had been voted on by the first two student cohorts. Dr. Fugate Woods also recently mused about how she and her fellow students initially were “so excited to have nursing caps.” Later, however, the reality set in of how impractical and unhygienic they were to wear in practice. Ms. Connie (Winter) Korger, also from the class of 1968, wore her cap for many years following graduation but, as she noted, since men could not be required to wear a cap, “places got rid of them.”

The caps were applied during a capping ceremony, referred to as *Nursing Convocation*, that occurred in January, just before the start of the second semester of the sophomore year. It was held “the Sunday afternoon before the beginning of classes on the first Monday of the Spring semester. Symbols identified with nursing are presented to the sophomore students—caps to the women and sleeve patches to the men. Sophomore students are privileged to invite parents and other guests” (*Handbook for Nursing Students*, 1976). According to Dean Marguerite Coffman (1977), “The convocation is just that – a convocation or assembly” with two purposes: “Its main goal is to bring inspiration and challenge to the students, faculty and parents through the guest

speaker. Secondly the convocation recognizes the new class of future nurses by awarding it with the historically symbolic caps and bars of the nursing profession.”

Initially, for the very first cohort of students (all women), the beginning students wore simple “nondescript” white paper caps they folded themselves. These were worn for their sophomore and junior clinicals in the hospitals and nursing homes until the official cap was designed and the first capping ceremony occurred in 1967 (see photo of Dean Marguerite Coffman capping the first class in 1967; also see photo of two students at a time being capped in 1974).



Photo 34 above left: Dean Marguerite Coffman capping the first class, January 1967.



Photo 35 above right: Class of 1976 being capped, January 1974, courtesy of Renee Ryder.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

Rather than caps, at least some of the men received bars or “sleeve patches.” Scott Schuldes (class of 1982) remembered having a set of blue and gold bars on the upper sleeve of his uniform (see close-up image). It was rather “military like.” As stated in a 1976 School of Nursing Student Handbook, “Sleeve patches incorporate the school colors of the University as well as the military tradition of nursing. They were designed by the Student-Faculty Affairs Committee and were first presented to men students during the 1976 Nursing Convocation. Once the bars are securely anchored on the left sleeve of the uniform shirt, they need no special care in laundering.”

A brochure from a January 16, 1977 Convocation (courtesy of a 1979 alum) indicated a 3:00 p.m. Sunday afternoon ceremony in the Davies Center, with Dean Marguerite Coffman presiding, Chancellor Leonard Haas providing a greeting, and Dr. Rozella Schlotfeldt, former Dean of the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University, giving an address. This was followed by the presentation of caps and bars and a reception held in Davies Center. Dr. Michaelene (Pheifer) Jansen, class of 1977, remembers a January capping ceremony “when it was 20 below zero and my parents drove up from Milwaukee in an old car, but they made it.”

By the 1980s, the caps were being phased out. Michael Landgraf (class of 1985) recalled serving “on the Deans advisory committee and . . . discussing the future of the capping ceremony and whether this tradition should be discontinued since nurses no longer wore nursing caps.” In that regard, the class of 1986 was the last to officially have a capping ceremony, in January 1984.

Liane (Storzer) Weinberger, class of 1986, and a few other graduates from the 1980s believe they arrived at the ceremony with their caps already in place (see the photo of her shaking hands with Dean Ostmoe).

Members of the classes of 1984, 1985, and 1986 acknowledged having the capping ceremony but some such as Dr. Robin (Young) Beeman (class of 1984) and Julie Langfeldt (class of 1985) did not recall ever wearing the cap for clinical. Others remember some wearing the cap as sophomores in the nursing homes. Dr. Sherrill (Dodsworth) Smith (class of 1985) shared that she and her sister, Shannon (Dodsworth) Roller (class of 1984), “were not allowed to wear caps in acute care settings, due to the infection control risk” (see photo of the two sisters).



Photo 37: Liane (Storzer) Weinberger, class of 1986, shaking hands with Dean Patricia Ostmoe at the January 1984 Capping Ceremony (the last for the School of Nursing).



Photo 36: Close-up of the bars visible on left sleeve of Scott Schuldes, with sister Jeanine Schuldes Lindeke, class of 1982.



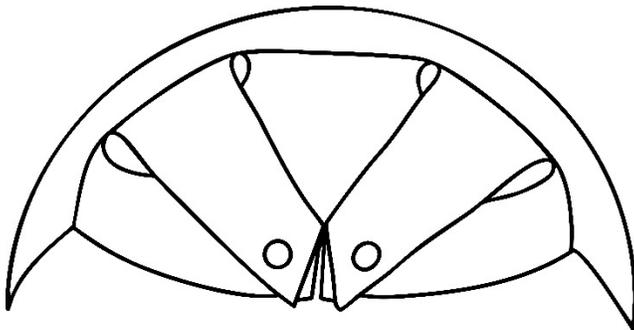
Photo 38: Dr. Sherrill (Dodsworth) Smith, class of 1985, on the left with sister Shannon (Dodsworth) Roller, class of 1984, on the right in uniform on the day of her capping ceremony.

The location of the capping ceremony varied. Michael Landgraf (class of 1985) believed the capping ceremony for his cohort was held in the Haas Fine Arts Building Gantner Concert Hall but did not “recall receiving any material recognition like bars during the ceremony. I do remember wearing the UWEC nursing uniform which was a scratchy blue polyester top, white pants and white shoes. Each of us walked across the stage and shook Dean Ostmoe’s hand.”

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Purchasing the cap from the bookstore subsequently became optional well into the 1990s, with a few students choosing to do so, but without a capping ceremony. Mary Schwanebeck (class of 1987) bought a cap from the bookstore and received help from Associate Dean Berniece Wagner regarding how to affix the ribbon.

The School of Nursing retained the cap for several years, “believing it to be a symbol of the nurse’s link with history.” Unlike during the Middle Ages when a cap could conceal, cover, and manage long hair that was only occasionally washed, it now no longer served any “utilitarian purpose”; however, “the presentation of which more or less ushered the student into the profession after a probationary period during which her fitness for the intellectual and physical rigors of nursing was determined” (Convocation brochure, 1977).



Back of cap when folded and secured with studs.

Directions for caring for the caps were included in the School of Nursing student handbooks well into the 1980s: “The caps must be stiffened with a very heavy starch mixture. They may be soaked in the starch and, while wet, smoothed onto a very smooth, flat surface (such as a refrigerator door) to dry; or they may be ironed. The half-inch royal blue velvet ribbon is attached about one inch from the outer edge, using K-Y lubricant jelly as paste, which is readily available from drug stores. Small size tubes are available. Certain commercial laundries launder caps at reasonable cost. (Be certain to remove studs from the caps.)” The students were advised not to use the lubricant jelly from the area hospitals where they had their clinicals. See image of the back of the cap when properly folded and the studs applied to secure the folds.

Pinning Ceremony

In addition to a capping ceremony, a pinning ceremony has been an important tradition for the Nursing program. The pinning ceremony is held around graduation, on either the Friday evening before the Saturday graduation or on the day of graduation. The ceremony was originally referred to as the *Pinning Ceremony*, but was later called the *Nursing Convocation*, after capping no longer occurred. A note in the 1976 *Handbook for Nursing Students* indicated, “The culminating nursing event for seniors is the pinning luncheon held on the day of Commencement.” Tickets for the luncheon had to be purchased at Davies Center. The pinning luncheons are no longer held.



School of Nursing Pin

The UW-Eau Claire pin (see image) was designed by Ms. Berniece Wagner, a founding faculty member and former Associate Dean for Student Affairs in the School of Nursing. Each college or school of nursing has its own uniquely designed pin awarded to graduates when they successfully complete their basic nursing education. Students from the first class initially were asked in the 1967-1968 academic year to submit designs for the school pin, which was needed in time for the Spring 1968 graduation. Ms. Wagner and Dean Coffman reviewed the submitted applications but felt they were reflective of symbols associated with diploma schools rather than collegiate education. Therefore, Dean Coffman challenged Ms. Wagner to design the pin, which she did.



Photo 39: Dean Linda Young, Dr. Debra Hofmann, and Dr. Cheryl Brandt pinning a student at Nursing Convocation in Schofield Auditorium, December 21, 2014.

The pin incorporates the Council Oak Tree (from the official seal of the University), a lighted lamp, and the word *EXCELLENCE*, in addition to small Maltese crosses and the words *SCHOOL OF NURSING*. According to Ms. Wagner (1998), “the students were delighted with the design I submitted, particularly after Dean Coffman interpreted the meaning of the symbols.” The tree and lamp were academic symbols of learning and knowledge, with the lamp also recognizing the Florence Nightingale lamp, and the Maltese crosses harkening back to the early historic monastic nursing orders. “Nursing leaders had long worked very hard to make a place for nursing education on college and university campuses . . . the UWEC School of Nursing pin reflects that vision come to fruition.”

The ceremony has evolved, often taking into consideration the wishes of the students. For instance, some graduating classes have worn

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their graduation regalia, while others have preferred dress clothes, and most recently, lab coats on top of dress clothes. Initially, students in the BSN Completion program were not part of the pinning ceremony, according to Marilyn (Goettl) Bowe (BSN Completion class of 1986) but were later included.

The practice for many years had been for faculty and instructors, selected by the graduating cohorts, to affix the pins (see photo with Dr. Hofmann and Dr. Brandt). Currently, family or other significant other(s) of the student's choosing do the pinning. Student speakers are voted for by the graduating classes, with the selected graduates representing the Eau Claire campus, the Marshfield Site, and the BSN Completion program. Michael Perry (class of 1987) sent photos of "showing off my pin" before giving the student address with his self-ascribed "Miami Vice suit and mullet" (see photo on left) and shaking hands with Dean Patricia Ostmoie with Associate Dean Berniece Wagner reading the graduate names (see photo on right).



Photo 40 above left: Michael Perry, class of 1987, about to give a student address at Convocation.

Photo 41 above right: Michael Perry shaking hands with Dean Patricia Ostmoie while Associate Dean Berniece Wagner reads the names.

For many years, the graduating MSN students also were invited to Convocation, at which the titles of their projects or theses were read and the graduates received a flower as they walked across the Schofield Auditorium stage. This practice faded away after May 2011 as a reception was instead held for both the MSN and DNP students on the day they presented their MSN and DNP Projects. The reception was believed to better recognize them, distinct from the BSN graduates.

Uniform Mischief and Other End of Program Activities

When reminiscing, graduates frequently recalled their uniforms, but wearing them for clinical was not their only memories of them. For instance, around graduation time, one 1970s class hung their uniforms from hangers on all of the parking meters on campus (see photo). More commonly, graduating nursing students were known to hang their uniforms (and sometimes shoes) from the original Council Oak Tree until it came down in a 1987 windstorm. As Shannon (Blado) Gabower (class of 1977) acknowledged with hanging them, "the blue uniforms were distinctive."



Photo 42: Nursing uniforms hanging from the original Council Oak Tree in front of the School of Nursing, May 1979.

Not satisfied with simply hanging their uniforms, the class of 1976 made their uniforms three-dimensional with balloons and nylons and agile students Renee Ryder, Amy Converse Hunter (see photo), and a few others climbed the Tree to display them.

Ms. Ryder remembers climbing so high into the tree, which probably

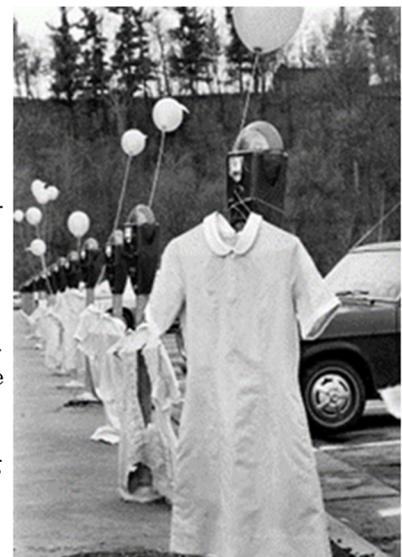


Photo 43: School of Nursing uniforms on parking meters, circa 1975.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)



Photo 44: Amy Converse Hunter, class of 1976, hanging uniforms in Council Oak Tree.

was not so daring for someone who later attained her pilot's license and still actively skydives. After the loss of the original Council Oak Tree, several subsequent classes took advantage of the nearby catalpa tree for displaying their no longer needed school uniforms. The tradition seemed to subside after the 1980s, but uniforms and laboratory coats appeared again in the catalpa tree around 2010. Interim Dean Mary Zwygart-Stauffacher graciously laundered and donated them (the associate dean was grateful the wind blew them down so that she did not have to climb the tree to retrieve them). Uniforms also were spotted in the early 2000s tied to the railings of the footbridge crossing the Chippewa River.

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Hanging the uniforms was not the only activity in which those commencing engaged. Re-designing the uniforms was a common practice (see photo of some 1984 graduates, courtesy of Dr. Robin Young Beeman). A graduate in the late 1980s vividly remembered nearly the entire class donning their navy blue uniform dresses (purposely tattered for the occasion) on the Thursday prior to graduation. They joined hands to form a long chain and snaked across the entire campus, including up and down and throughout the five floors of the library, and down the middle of Water Street, stopping to dance at some of the establishments. April (Darst) Eddy (class of 1993) also recalled going out the Thursday night before graduation and writing and drawing on the uniforms – "Quite a ritual." Morgan (Goris) Theisen (class of 2014) described going out on Water Street and wearing matching T-shirts, with the graduates from the Marshfield Site joining them.



Photo 45: Class of 1984, photo courtesy of Dr. Robin (Young) Beeman.

These actions were an informal and not particularly School of Nursing-sanctioned part of graduation week, marking the end of their time as nursing students and their transition to their new roles as nurses. Nursing students were known across campus to "let off a little steam" after their years of hard work in getting admitted to the nursing program and the subsequent demands of the program itself, including clinicals spent caring for patients and families undergoing major life-altering events, on top of taking frustrating "multiple-multiple choice exams" in which they had to choose the "most important" or their "first priority." More than one of the deans, including Dean Marguerite Coffman, was not fond of the mischief, and often advised classes to not engage in such actions. Understandably, Dean Coffman threatened to suspend graduation for the class of 1978 which had toilet-papered one of the large classrooms on the eve of their last class.

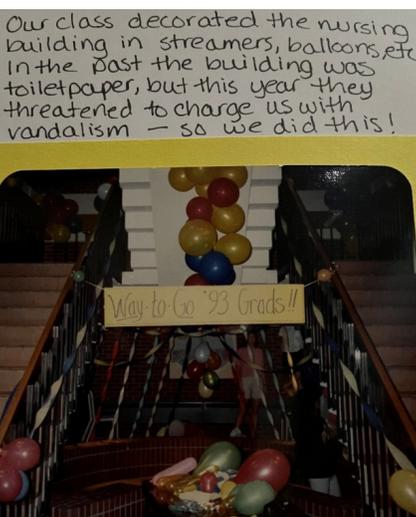


Photo 46 above left: Conversation well in the Nursing lobby decorated by the class of May 1993, photo courtesy of April Darst Eddy. Photo 47 above middle: Quilt created by the class of 1981. Photo 48 above right: Quilt created by the class of December 2000.

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More condoned, student-organized senior banquets or dinners held at area restaurants also were common for many years and were attended by the graduates as well as faculty. This was an occasion to dress more formally. The graduating classes often created slide shows for the event, in addition to decorating the conversation well in the lobby of the Nursing building (see photo from 1993). The class of 1981 even created a quilt with their names written on the light blue dress uniform in the center—it was displayed in the Learning Resource Center (LRC) for more than a decade or two. The December 2000 class likewise crafted a quilt that included their names and screen images of the graduates, often with their clinical groups (see photos).

BSN Completion Program

Beginning in 1974, the School of Nursing offered a BSN Completion Program for registered nurses with associate degrees or diplomas in nursing. Various iterations of the program occurred in the 1980s, with at least a few of the nursing courses being taken with the TBSN students. Students were able to earn credit by examination and by completion of a confirming nursing course for some nursing requirements. Courses also were taught at the UW Center-Marshfield/Wood County campus for several years, starting in 1980, to better meet the needs of nurses in central Wisconsin.

Those early BSN Completion program versions were phased out in 1996 to be part of a newly created statewide Collaborative Nursing Program (CNP) facilitated by UW-Extension. Each student, however, was required to declare a home campus.

Through the collaborative, UW-Eau Claire, UW-Oshkosh, UW-Green Bay, UW-Madison, and UW-Milwaukee each offered one of the required core courses. Students enrolled in a capstone clinical course at their home campus. The first two core courses in the program were piloted in Spring 1996 with UW-Eau Claire and UW-Madison offering them.

In the beginning of the Collaborative, courses were offered through audiographic technologies (see photo) but later transitioned to online learning management systems, starting in 1998 and 1999. For several years, some of the core courses were also available on campus on a rotating basis, as an alternative to the online format for interested students. Additionally, selected sections were offered at the Marshfield Site, when there were sufficient numbers of students located in central Wisconsin. In 2012, UW-Stevens Point became the sixth member of this collaborative and began admitting students to their program in 2014. In Fall 2024, UW-Superior received Board of Regents approval to also join the collaborative.



Photo 49: Ms. Sandra Dirks, Coordinator of the RN/BSN Education Track, teaching a course for the BSN Completion Program.

MSN and DNP Graduate Programs

After years of planning, the MSN program launched with three full-time and nine part-time students starting courses in the Fall of 1981. The first three students graduated in May 1983. The initial emphasis for the degree was adult health nursing,



Photo 50: Dr. Norma Briggs with MSN students, circa 1981.

with the role preparations of nurse clinician with advanced clinical expertise or nurse educator. By 1983, role preparation options were clinical nurse specialist (CNS), educator, and nursing service administrator. A Family Health Nursing specialization was added as a population focus for the 1989-1991 catalog.

In the early 1990s, the CNS role preparation was expanded to an advanced clinical practice role which allowed students the option to sit for adult or family nurse practitioner (NP) certification. Following further curriculum revisions in 2002, the role preparations were Advanced Clinical Practice for Adult Nurse Practitioner (ANP), Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP), and Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS, Adult); Nurse Educator; and Nursing Administration.

In 2010, in response to national nursing organization requirements, the Adult NP and Adult CNS role preparations were transitioned to

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Adult-Gerontologic NP and Adult-Gerontologic CNS preparations. The first classes graduated with these changes in May 2012.

In 2004, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) recommended that the advanced nursing practice roles be moved from the master's degree to the doctorate level by 2015. Therefore, the last class of MSN students seeking NP or CNS role preparations was admitted for the summer of 2011.

In preparing for the MSN changes, approval was received from the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents on May 8, 2009 to establish a DNP program at UW-Eau Claire. This is the first and only doctoral program at the University. For the first two academic years of the program, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, only a post-master's (MSN-to-DNP) option was available. Sixteen students were admitted to the initial cohort, with classes beginning in the summer of 2010. The first class of post-master's DNP students graduated in 2012, with 14 of them commencing in May, and a 15th individual graduating in August. The MSN-to-DNP option was intended for NPs, CNSs, or nurse administrators who already had master's degrees in nursing in these areas.

However, in 2015, a more tailored post-master's Nurse executive option was created for those with prior master's degrees in nursing administration. In December 2024, a new Nursing Education Leadership post-master's option was approved for a Fall 2025 offering.



Photo 51: First Post-Master's DNP graduates, May 2012.

The first class of post-baccalaureate DNP (BSN-to-DNP) students was admitted for the Fall of 2012, with 13 of them graduating in May 2015. Initial emphases for the BSN-to-DNP option included Adult-gerontologic primary care NP, Adult-gerontologic CNS, Family NP, and Nurse administrator/nurse executive. In December 2024, approval was received to offer a Family psychiatric mental health NP emphasis for Fall 2025.

School and College Structure and Name Changes

Our School of Nursing began in 1965 as part of the Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire, under the leadership of Dean Marguerite Coffman. Between 1965 and 1970, the School operated with coordinators for various clinical areas of the curriculum. In 1970, to be more consistent with the University's department structure, the School formally established five departments: Medical-Surgical Nursing, Maternal-Child Health Nursing, Community Health Nursing, Psychiatric Nursing, and Nursing Leadership. In July 1984 the departments coalesced into two departments, General Nursing and Adult Health Nursing, with faculty organized along undergraduate and graduate lines, respectively. In 1990, the department structure was reorganized again, this time into three departments: Nursing Systems, Adult Health Nursing, and Family Health Nursing.

Despite great nursing faculty opposition, in 1995, Chancellor Larry Schnack merged the School of Education, the School of Human Sciences and Services, and the School of Nursing into a new college, the College of Professional Studies. Dr. Patricia Ostmoe was asked to step down from the dean role as Dr. Ronald Satz was appointed Dean of the College of Professional Studies. As the associate dean, Dr. Marjorie Bottom was then named the Educational Administrator for the School of Nursing.

Nearly a decade later, in 2004, Chancellor Donald Mash dissolved the College of Professional Studies and we were officially named the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, with Associate Dean Dr. L. Elaine Wendt named as Dean of the College. Initially the College of Nursing and Health Sciences included the Department of Public Health Professions (consisted of Environmental Public Health, Health Care Administration, and Music Therapy), in addition to the three nursing departments: Adult Health Nursing, Family Health Nursing, and Nursing Systems.

In 2007, the nursing faculty voted to restructure the three nursing departments into a nursing department of the whole. The College was then comprised of two departments: Nursing and Public Health Professions. However, in July 2013, the Environmental Public Health Program, the only program remaining within the Department of Public Health Professions, moved to the College of Arts and Sciences, which better coincided with its course requirements and needs. With no other departments besides Nursing housed in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, at the request of the College, the College was renamed the College of Nursing, with Board of Regents approval received in July 2024.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

With our new name, the College of Nursing, we embrace our 60th anniversary with a renewed sense of our identity and a commitment to preparing undergraduate and graduate students in nursing for the future. We are reflecting on our values and charting a new strategic plan to carry us forward.

Generations of UW-Eau Claire Blugold Nurses

Having educated nearly 6,700 alums over the course of 60 years, we are delighted by the many families with multiple Blugold nurses. Countless identical and fraternal twins and siblings have graduated from UW-Eau Claire. At times, we even have had parents and sons and daughters simultaneously in the program, providing support to each other. We now also have grandparents who graduated from our program and are proud of their grandchildren being UW-Eau Claire Nursing students.

The Schuldes family of Blugolds is particularly notable. Scott Schuldes and his younger sister Jeanine (Schuldes) Lindeke went through the nursing program together, graduating in 1982. While in the program, Scott met his wife, Tricia (Anderson) Schuldes, who also graduated with them in 1982. Years later, two of Tricia's and Scott's children, Matthew Schuldes (class of 2007) and Katie (Schuldes) Denney (class of 2009) earned their BSN degrees through UW-Eau Claire.

Serving Patients, Families, Communities, and the Profession

In relating their memories, graduates expressed high praise for the faculty they encountered in the nursing programs. Graduates from throughout the 60 years described them as brilliant, kind, compassionate, and with a sense of humor. As April (Darst) Eddy (class of 1993) elaborated, they “helped us learn so much about how to care for our patients. They also cared for us, which made it a lot better.” Ms. Michelle (Buteyn) Rayburn (class of 1991, Marshfield), voiced how a faculty member’s “belief in my abilities stuck with me.” During a particularly difficult time, “Her compassionate and caring words gave me the courage to press forward.”

Alums commented on how well they were prepared to take on their various nursing roles. As Jeanine (Schuldes) Lindeke (class of 1982) noted, their employers appreciated the graduates of UW-Eau Claire, as they respected their leadership skills as well as their “good people skills” in being able to “play nice with each other.” Alums including Geraldine Guerin (class of 1975) also expressed how “UWEC had prepared me well” to pass the NCLEX exam, which for decades involved two days of testing. A common theme from graduates was their respect for the Nursing program and their pride and gratitude for the quality education they received. Faculty and administrators expected a lot out of them but helped them achieve their goals.

Carla (Andrews) Wech (class of 1987) expressed her love of being a Registered Nurse and FNP and how her “education from UWEC was a foundation” for her ability to lead as a nurse. Similarly, Ms. Rayburn acknowledged “my education at UW-EC has been a life-long building block for who I am today.” Morgan (Goris) Theisen (class of 2014), a nurse anesthetist, voiced how through a clinical rotation at the Rosebud Indian reservation, a nurse anesthetist she met during the birth of a baby had taken her under his wing: “If it wasn’t for that opportunity at UWEC, I don’t know where I would be.”

Many of our graduates have gone on to formal nursing leadership roles as chief nursing officers, directors of nursing, department heads, nursing academic deans, nursing department chairs, advanced practice nurses (NPs, CNSs, nurse anesthetists, midwives), military officers and soldiers, case managers, nurse educators, nurse researchers, counselors, and state inspectors, among others. The number of graduates who completed advanced degrees, both in and outside of nursing, including law degrees, is impressive.

Numerous alums have also become successful best-selling and award-winning writers of fiction and nonfiction, while still keeping in their hearts their foundational nursing education, experiences, and values. Most importantly, graduates have been providing kind, compassionate care, based on the science and art of nursing, regionally, nationally, and internationally, often through mission trips. Thank you to our graduates and the future generations of nurses they inspire! As Dean Coffman wrote in the early admission letters, “Nursing is a wonderful profession.”



Photo 52: Morgan Goris Theisen, Class of 2014, scrubbed in for OR experience at Rosebud Indian Reservation.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

Nursing History Highlights across the Decades

1960s

- 1964: Ms. Marguerite Coffman charged with laying the groundwork for a BSN degree program.
- 1964-1977: Ms. Marguerite Coffman served as the first Dean of the School of Nursing.
- July 14, 1965: Wisconsin State Board of Nursing approved the establishment of a School of Nursing at Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire. Wisconsin Board of Regents approval also received.
- 1965-1979: Ms. Berniece Wagner appointed Chair of the Department of Medical Surgical Nursing and later (1979-1988) Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
- September 1965: First class of 22 sophomore nursing students admitted and enrolled in the baccalaureate nursing program.
- 1965-1966: The School of Nursing operated out of offices and classrooms located in Schofield Hall while the first floor of the new Crest Commons Building was completed for temporary use by the School.
- 1966: The School of Nursing temporarily relocated to the Crest Commons Building, which soon became too limited and mobile office facilities (trailers) were placed next to the building for the overflow.
- June 1968: First class of 17 students graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. An 18th student from the original cohort graduated later.
- 1960s: Dean Coffman wrote, "It is hoped that the students in the school of nursing, other students, faculty in the University and the community will view these students as students in the University who are studying nursing, not as a segregated group of 'student nurses.'"
- July 1968: Groundbreaking began for the School of Nursing building.
- Fall 1969: The School of Nursing Building was completed and occupied.
- 1969: The School received full accreditation from the National League for Nursing (NLN).

1970s

- April 1970: The new School of Nursing building was dedicated. Speakers included Margaret Dolan, the past president of the American Nurses Association and Jesse Scott, the Director of the Division of Nursing of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.
- 1972: The course, Comparative Study of Nursing and Health Care, was offered for the first of many times during the summer at the Instituto Technologica de Monterey in Mexico. The course was later taught in Harlaxton, England and King Alfred's College in Winchester.
- 1974: The first RN students were admitted to the School of Nursing for RN degree completion. The students took some of the same nursing courses as students in the traditional undergraduate nursing program.
- 1974: The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction approved the school nurse program.
- 1976: The University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents granted an entitlement to plan for a master's degree in nursing.
- 1976: Men students presented with sleeve patches of blue and gold bars for the first time during the Convocation (Capping) Ceremony.
- 1977: Dean Marguerite Coffman retired.
- 1977-1982: Dr. Suzanne Van Ort served as Dean of the School of Nursing.
- 1970s: The traditional undergraduate nursing program continued to grow, admitting up to approximately 85-90 students once/year.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

1980s

- 1980: Nursing courses for nurses returning for degree completion were taught on the UW Center-Marshfield/Wood County campus for several years to accommodate nurses in that region.
- 1980: A Charter was awarded by Sigma Theta Tau, National Honor Society of Nursing, creating the Delta Phi Chapter.
- Fall 1981: First graduate students in the MSN program began courses; the focus was adult health nursing, with role preparations of nurse clinician with advanced clinical expertise or nurse educator. The first cohort consisted of 3 full-time and 9 part-time students. By 1983, the role preparation options were CNS, educator, and nursing service administrator.
- 1982: Dr. Suzanne Van Ort leaves after having served as Dean of the School of Nursing from 1977-1982.
- 1982-1995: Dr. Patricia Ostmoe served as Dean (in 1989-1990 she served as Acting Vice Chancellor of the University).
- May 1983: The first three graduates of the MSN program were awarded their degrees, with a focus in adult health nursing.
- 1984: Last Convocation (Capping) Ceremony held in January, for the class of 1986.
- 1984: Construction began of an addition attached to the west side of the building.
- Fall 1985: The west side building addition was completed.
- Fall 1985: A special educational option was created for registered nurses for BSN degree completion (it was replaced by the Collaborative Nursing Program in 1996).
- 1986: A partnership to create a distance education site in Marshfield was established with Ministry Saint Joseph's Hospital.
- 1987: Council Oak Tree blown down in a windstorm.
- 1987-1988: The first cohort of students started taking courses at Ministry Saint Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield, in the South Building.
- 1989: Honors program in nursing was initiated.
- 1989-1990: Dr. Linda M. Finke served as Acting Dean of the School of Nursing.
- 1980s: Traditional undergraduate nursing program remained strong, admitting up to approximately 65-90 students once/year.

1990s

- May 1990: The first cohort of 18 students at the Marshfield Site graduated.
- 1990: The School of Nursing celebrated 25 years of excellence. An open house was held on October 13th.
- 1990: A family health focus was added to the MSN program, which already had an adult health specialization. Students could choose from clinical nurse specialist, nurse educator, and nurse administrator role preparation options. The nurse practitioner role preparation option was added by 1993.
- 1990: Switch made from admitting once/year to twice/year for the Eau Claire campus traditional prelicensure program (May and December 1993 graduating classes). Began admitting about 40 students/semester.
- 1992: An agreement was signed with Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) Ojibwa Community College to enable students to take pre-nursing courses at the tribal college and then transfer to UWEC to complete the BSN. Ten years of Indian Health Service (IHS) grant funding (1993-2003) provided for student scholarships, faculty development, and hiring student/program support personnel.
- 1994: Began to convert the Optel audiographics system of distance education for the Marshfield Site to an interactive video system.
- 1995: Chancellor Larry Schnack proposed merging the School of Education, the School of Human Sciences and Services, and the School of Nursing into a new college, the College of Professional Studies. Although opposed by the School of Nursing, the proposal was supported by University Senate. With the reorganization, Dr. Ronald Satz was appointed Dean of the College of Professional Studies and Dr. Marjorie Bottoms was appointed Associate Dean and Educational Administrator of the School of Nursing.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

- 1995-1998: Dr. Marjorie Bottoms served as Associate Dean and Educational Administrator of the School of Nursing (she already had been the Associate Dean but was also now the “Educational Administrator”).
- 1996: A new Collaborative Nursing Program for registered nurses to pursue the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree was developed and offered. This program involved UW-Eau Claire, UW-Oshkosh, UW-Green Bay, UW-Madison, and UW-Milwaukee collaborating with UW-Extension to jointly offer nursing core and elective courses through distance technologies.
- 1998: Began offering a cultural clinical immersion experience at a birthing clinic in Weslaco, Texas, near the border of Mexico.
- 1998-2000: Dr. Susan Johnson Warner served as the Associate Dean and Educational Administrator of the School of Nursing.
- 1990s: Traditional undergraduate nursing program admitting 40 students twice/year at Eau Claire, rather than once/year. About 24 students were being admitted once/year to the Marshfield Site.

2000s

- 2000-2002: Dr. Rita Kisting Sparks appointed Interim Associate Dean and Educational Administrator and continued in the role until her retirement in 2002.
- 2000: First Nursing Alumni Walk held. After missing 2001, the walk was held every Homecoming weekend through 2019 (was stopped with the pandemic in 2020).
- 2001: Baccalaureate and master’s degree programs granted accreditation by the new Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). A switch was made from seeking accreditation through NLN to CCNE.
- 2002-2003: Dr. Elaine Wendt served as Interim Associate Dean and Educational Administrator from 2002 until 2003-2004 when the interim designation was removed.
- 2002: SimMan, a high fidelity human patient simulator, was purchased in November using funds from a significant donation by Jane Weibert Moore (class of 1973) and James E. Moore. SimMan was steadily used beginning in 2003.
- May 2004: Chancellor Donald Mash dissolved the College of Professional Studies, effective September 2004, and created the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. This new college was comprised of four departments: Adult Health Nursing, Family Health Nursing, Nursing Systems, and Public Health Professions (consisting of Environmental Public Health, Health Care Administration, and Music Therapy).
- 2004-2008: Dr. Elaine Wendt named Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences and served in that role until her retirement in 2008.
- 2004: Began offering cultural clinical immersion experiences at Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota; experiences also offered at Anchorage, Alaska as resources allowed.
- 2005: Nursing alliance agreements with the Chippewa Valley Technical College and with Western Technical College were formed to enable students not admitted to the UW-Eau Claire traditional undergraduate nursing program to complete associate degrees in nursing at the technical schools and continue to take general education classes at UW-Eau Claire. After completing the associate degree, students could return to complete the BSN degree through the BSN completion program.
- 2006: Rooms 222 and 224 remodeled as clinical simulation rooms for SimMan, a high fidelity human patient simulator, and Noelle, a birthing simulator.
- 2006-2007: Piloted a one-year accelerated BSN program, with the first class of 8 students graduating in May 2007.
- 2007: The nursing faculty voted to restructure from three academic departments to a department of the whole. Thus, the College of Nursing and Health Sciences was comprised of two departments: The Department of Nursing and the Department of Public Health Professions.
- 2007-2009: Chippewa Valley Child Advocacy Center (CVAC) was temporarily located on the 1st floor, west side of the building. “The Garden” mural was completed on July 27, 2007 by mural artist Cyndee Kaiser and North High School art students for the CVAC.
- 2008: Began admitting 16 students to the Marshfield Site twice/year. Previously had been admitting 24 students once/year for the spring semester.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

- 2008-2011: Dr. Mary Zwygart-Stauffacher served as interim Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences.
- May 8, 2009: The University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents approved establishing a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program at UW-Eau Claire, making it the first doctoral program at the University.
- 2009: Created a 3rd distance education room (Room 119A) in Eau Claire. This was followed by the creation of a 3rd distance education room in Marshfield.
- June 2009 – June 2012: Offered the one-year accelerated BSN program in Eau Claire, admitting up to 16-18 students per year; program placed on hold in 2012 due to resource concerns.

2010s

- 2010: CNA certification became a sophomore clinical course prerequisite for the traditional pre-licensure BSN program.
- 2010: The graduate program adult nurse practitioner and adult clinical nurse specialist options transitioned to the adult-gerontologic NP and adult-gerontologic CNS preparations in response to national nursing organization requirements. During the 2012-2013 academic year, the adult-gerontologic NP role preparation was retitled to Adult-Gerontologic Primary Care NP.
- Summer 2010: The first class of post-master's DNP students (16 students) began taking courses.
- 2010: Two high fidelity SimMan 3Gs, a SimBaby, and geriatric manikins were purchased using HRSA grant funds.
- 2011: Offices and classrooms remodeled to add two new simulation rooms (Room 246) and a laboratory classroom (Room 202) in Eau Claire.
- 2011: Began offering an undergraduate cultural clinical immersion experience at Wisconsin farms with Hispanic migrant workers.
- 2011-2022: Dr. Linda Young served as Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences from August 2011-January 2022.
- May 2012: First class of post-master's DNP students graduated (14 students); a 15th student graduated later in August.
- 2012: UW-Stevens Point joined the BSN Completion Program state-wide collaborative.
- Fall 2012: The first class of post-baccalaureate DNP students began taking classes. Offered role preparations included Adult-Gerontologic Primary Care NP, Adult-Gerontologic CNS, Family NP, and Nurse Executive.
- 2013: 25th Anniversary Celebration of the partnership with Ministry Saint Joseph's Hospital in operating a distance education site in Marshfield was held at the Hospital in April. Up to that point, 531 nurses had earned their BSN through the Marshfield Site.
- July 2013: The Environmental Public Health Program, the only program still within the Department of Public Health Professions, moved to the College of Arts and Sciences. The College of Nursing and Health Sciences now consisted of one department, the Department of Nursing.
- March 2014: Began offering an undergraduate cultural clinical immersion experience in San Salvador, El Salvador. This experience was no longer offered after 2015 due to the Zika virus epidemic.
- May 2014: The last students in the MSN program with NP or CNS role preparations graduated, as those role preparations transitioned to the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program.
- May 2015: First cohort of 13 post-baccalaureate full-time DNP students graduated.
- Fall 2015: Enrollment numbers: 442 pre-Nursing students; 369 admitted Traditional BSN program students; 98 BSN Completion students; 5 MSN students; and 88 DNP students.
- 2015: Nursing 50th Anniversary Gala held at the Florian Gardens in Eau Claire in October. The event included a banquet, silent auction, and dance. Deans and former Deans shared their reflections, including Dr. Marjorie Bottoms (Associate Dean & Educational Administrator, 1995-1998), Dr. Rita Kisting Sparks (Associate Dean & Educational Administrator, 2000-2002), Dr. Elaine Wendt (Associate Dean/Dean 2002-2008), and Dr. Linda Young (Dean 2011-2022).
- 2016: The Northwestern Wisconsin Chapter of the American Assembly for Men student organization was formed.
- 2016: Nursing Departmental Honors program placed on hold due to a shortage of nursing faculty compounded by state budget cuts.

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

- 2017: Marshfield Clinic Health System (MCHS) finalized the purchase of Ministry Saint Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield in July 2017. The hospital was renamed the Marshfield Medical Center. MCHS agreed to continue to support our Distance Education Site in Marshfield.
- 2017: 30th Anniversary of the Marshfield Site was celebrated in November with a program and reception at the Froehle Auditorium and Erdman Lobby of the Marshfield Clinic Laird Center for Medical Research in Marshfield. Between May 1990 and May 2018, we graduated 698 undergraduate nursing students through our program at the Marshfield Site.
- 2018: The creation of the first donor-supported faculty chair in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, the Jane W. (class of 1973) and James E. Moore Chair in Nursing Research, was announced in May. The position was later converted to a Research Professor position.
- 2019: 50th Anniversary of the Nursing Building celebrated at the annual Nursing Alumni Homecoming Walk in October.
- 2010s: Traditional undergraduate program continues to admit about 40 students twice/year in Eau Claire and about 16 students twice/year in Marshfield, with an exception of admitting only 8 students/semester in Marshfield in 2016 due to resource concerns.

2020s

- 2020: The Year of the Nurse kicked off with a global pandemic. On March 12, 2020, Chancellor James Schmidt announced that students would be going on an extended 3-week spring break and not returning to campus. Classes were to be virtual, starting April 6, 2020. Faculty converted undergraduate and graduate classes, including clinicals, to online and virtual platforms. Undergraduate and graduate students creatively practiced clinical skills at home.
- 2020-2021: Didactic classes held virtually; clinicals occurred in the skills laboratory and at some clinical sites. Faculty, staff, and students coming to campus or living in the dorms were required to undergo regular on-campus COVID-19 antigen testing (twice a week at times), along with daily symptom monitoring/taking their temperatures, masking, and social distancing.
- Fall 2021: Didactic classes held in the Nursing Building, with safety protocols in place.
- 2021: Undergraduate and graduate nursing students and faculty participated in COVID-19 vaccination clinics both on and off campus. Mass vaccination clinics were held in Zorn Arena from March through June 2021, in collaboration with the Eau Claire City-County Health Department and FEMA.
- May 2021: Marshfield distance education site moved from the South Building of the Marshfield Medical Center to the Helen Connor Laird Fine Arts Building on the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point at Marshfield campus. Space leased by Marshfield Clinic Health System.
- 2021: South Building of the Marshfield Medical Center demolished in December, as part of a multiyear renovation plan.
- January 2022: Through Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) grant funding, began increasing traditional undergraduate pre-licensure student admission numbers. In conjunction with the University Strategic Plan/Vision for 2030, the goal is to eventually admit 128 students/semester.
- January 2022: Dean Linda Young stepped down from the dean position to focus on state advocacy and research related to the nursing faculty shortage, as part of a sabbatical leave. She officially retired in June 2022.
- January 2022: Dr. Sonja J. Meiers appointed Interim Dean and the inaugural Jane W. and James E. Moore Nursing Research Professor. She served as Interim Dean from January 2022-January 2023.
- January 2023: Dr. Kristen Abbott-Anderson began her position as Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences on January 3, 2023, following a national search.
- 2024: Hospital Sisters Health System (HSHS) Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls announced in January they would be closing, necessitating immediate relocation of some clinical sections for the Spring 2024 semester.
- 2023-2024: Piloted a new immersive clinical experience at Essentia Health St. Mary's Hospital-Superior, a 25-bed critical access hospital. Essentia Health clinical experiences expanded to include pediatrics and obstetrics in Duluth for 2024-2025.
- 2024: Marshfield Clinic Health System (MCHS) notified the College in Spring that the distance education site in Marshfield would be phased out over the next two years, with the last cohort of 3 students to graduate in May 2026. MCHS

A Look into our Past and Present: 60 Years of Student Memories (continued)

merged with Sanford Health, with announcement of the merger completion on January 2, 2025.

- 2024: At the request of the College, the College of Nursing and Health Sciences was renamed the College of Nursing, with Board of Regents approval received in July 2024.
- 2024: Inaugural Mary C. and Fred Bliss Contemporary Nursing Seminar held October 24-25. Dr. Vincent Guilamo-Ramos, the Executive Director for Policy Solutions at the John Hopkins School of Nursing, addressed issues around social determinants of health. Ms. Mary Campbell Bliss is a 1978 alum of the undergraduate program.
- 2025: Immersive virtual reality room completed in Spring in Room 155 (former student computer lab).
- 2025: Offering a Nursing Education Leadership post-master's DNP option and a Psychiatric Mental Health NP post-baccalaureate DNP option, starting in Fall. WEDC funding supported their creation.
- June 2025: At least 6,173 BSN degrees (873 through the Marshfield Site, 660 through the collaborative BSN Completion program, and 60 through the accelerated option), 628 MSN degrees, and 260 DNP degrees have been awarded since 1965.
- Fall 2025: Preliminary enrollment numbers: 400 admitted Traditional BSN program students; 40 BSN Completion students; 5 MSN students; and 64 DNP students.



Debra Jansen, PhD, RN
Associate Dean & Professor
Alumna
jansenda@uwec.edu



Nursing Alumni Newsletter

July 2025



Please Update Contact Information

If your contact information has changed, please kindly update your current mailing address, phone number, email address, and job information by going to the following website:

https://uweauclaire.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_exKr7wPAaLHXdid

The College of Nursing can be reached at 715-836-5287; nursing@uwec.edu.

