UConn School of Nursing
Mission/Philosophy/History

Mission

Grounded in the arts, sciences, and humanities, the School of Nursing, as an integral part of the University of Connecticut, is committed to provide nursing education at the undergraduate, master’s, doctoral, certificate and continuing education levels. The programs are dynamic and respond to changing health care needs.

The Faculty and Staff are dedicated to:

- Educating individuals in nursing to deliver exemplary health care locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.
- Educating individuals in nursing to critically analyze and creatively respond to emerging health care challenges.
- Creating a challenging and supportive learning community that fosters achievement and intellectual interaction among students, faculty, and community.
- Advancing nursing knowledge through excellence in research and scholarship.
- Promoting personal and professional integrity, artistic creativity, and a commitment to service.

Philosophy (Affirmed May 2004)

The philosophy of the School of Nursing is directed by six guiding principles which are:

- Professionalism in behavior, presentation, and conduct
- Respect for others, richness, and diversity, and self
- Accountability for actions
- Xcellence in practice, research, teaching and service
Integrity and inquisitiveness

Service to students, the profession and community

We believe that nursing is a caring, healing art and science concerned with therapeutic action (PRAXIS) and understanding people and health as experienced by individuals, families, and communities. Nursing, as a practice discipline, is grounded in caring and multiple ways of knowing. The essential elements of caring include: compassion, competence, conscience, confidence, commitment, comportment, culture, and community. The ways of knowing are empirical, ethical, aesthetic, existential, and socio-political.

Consistent with the metaparadigm of nursing, person is viewed as a unique dynamic individual interconnected with others and continually interacting and responding with the environment. Environment is the context in which the human experience of health occurs. Humans have culturally derived values and beliefs that give meaning to life and health.

Health is a non-linear entity characterized as a matter of personal meaning and interpretation; an ever-changing quality of living and dying influenced by myriad sociocultural, spiritual, economic, physical, developmental and psychological variables.

Nursing practice is the convergence of caring elements, ways of knowing, personhood, health and environment.

History

For over a half century, the University of Connecticut School of Nursing has prepared professional nurses who have gone on to provide leadership at state, national and international levels. Hallmarks of the school's development include the founding of the school (1942), the establishment of the master's degree program (1971), and the establishment of the doctoral degree program (1994).

The UConn School of Nursing was the first public institution in Connecticut to offer a program leading to a bachelor’s degree in nursing. Carolyn Ladd Widmer, a Phi Beta Kappa Wellesley College and Yale University School of Nursing graduate, served as the school's first dean from 1942 to 1967. Prior to her arrival at UConn, she was the founding director of the School of Nursing at the American University of Beirut. Following Dean Widmer, Eleanor K. Gill led the school from 1967 until her retirement in 1980. Marlene F. Kramer was Dean of the school from 1980 through 1987. Beverly Koerner was Dean from 1988 through 1993, and Barbara Redman from 1995 through 1998. Laura Dzurec was appointed Dean in 2000.

Initially the School of Nursing's curriculum was five years in length. Students in the first class were also enrolled in the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps, a federal program within the U.S. Public Health Service, designed to increase the number of nurses needed to meet the WWII crisis. One member of that pioneer class later became the first director of the Division of Nursing at Southern Connecticut State (College) University. In accord with national trends, in 1953 the
UConn program was shortened from five to four calendar years. Approximately equal time was devoted to nursing and non-nursing course work at that time.

In 1955, the Mu chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, the International Honor Society of Nursing was chartered at the University of Connecticut. It had been preceded by the 1948 establishment of the local nursing honor society, Tau Pi Upsilon, standing for the Greek words meaning "healers and sustainers of health."

A survey of graduates conducted in 1966 revealed that alumni of the UConn School of Nursing held a broad array of national and international positions. They included the Peace Corps, armed forces, nursing service settings, academic institutions and religious orders. One graduate of the class of 1948 had been awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service rendered during the Korean Conflict.

In 1971 the first class was admitted to the School of Nursing's Master of Science program designed to prepare nurse educators and master clinicians, and later, nurse managers. Two graduates of that decade later completed doctoral studies and went on to become deans of schools of nursing, one at St. Joseph College and one at her alma mater, the University of Connecticut. By 1980, 146 nurses had completed the rigorous courses of advanced study and by 1955 the number exceeded 500. Current students continue to have an impact on health care through their advanced practice and by presenting their research findings at regional and national meetings.

In 1991, the School of Nursing building, which originally housed the university's first infirmary, was renamed the Carolyn Ladd Widmer Building in honor of the school's first dean. In the same year, the School's Center for Nursing Research was founded and the university acquired the professional book collection of renowned nurse leader, Virginia A. Henderson, thereby enhancing the research resources for both students and faculty. In 1992, the school's 50th anniversary was further marked by the dedication of a room in Storrs Hall honoring Josephine A. Dolan, Professor Emeritus and renowned nurse historian, who had been a School of Nursing faculty member for 35 years. Three years later she donated a valuable collection of papers which created the core for a designated history of nursing collection in the new Dodd Research Center.

**Former Deans**

**2000-2006** Laura Cox Dzurec’74, PhD, RN, CS

Dean Dzurec holds a BS degree in nursing from UConn, a MS degree from Ohio State University, and a PhD from Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Dzurec is a clinical specialist in Adult Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing and a childbirth educator. Before her deanship at UConn, Dzurec served as the Associate Dean at Oregon Health Sciences University. Dzurec has published extensively in various nursing journals. Her leadership highlights include the restructuring of Academic Advising to improve efficiency and management of rising enrollment, tripling the amount of scholarship dollars awarded annually, and successfully leading the School through the process of obtaining a full 10 year CCNE accreditation.
1995-1998 Barbara Redman, BN, MEd, PhD, RN, FAAN

Dean Redman earned her baccalaureate in nursing from South Dakota State University, then her master's and PhD from the University of Minnesota. As a professor at the University of Washington School of Nursing she wrote *The Process of Patient Teaching in Nursing*, a hallmark book currently it is in its eighth edition. Before her deanship at UConn she held many distinguished positions including Dean of the School of Nursing for the University of Colorado in Denver, Executive Director of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, and Executive Director of the American Nurses Association. Under her term as Dean the primary foci were increasing funded research and recruitment of internationally known faculty.

1988-1993 Beverly Koerner, BN, MSN, PhD, FAAN

Dean Koerner, an honor graduate of the undergraduate program at UConn, was a member of the first class of graduate students in nursing, earning her MS degree in 1973, followed by a PhD from the School of Education in 1979. She served on the faculty at UConn before becoming the Chair of The Department of Nursing at the University of Hartford, where she served for several years before returning to UConn as the fourth Dean of the school. Under her leadership, the PhD program was further developed and faculty research continued to expand. The School of Nursing buildings were renovated and space for the School was enlarged. Following her term as Dean, Dr. Koerner returned to the faculty to teach, practice, and conduct research.

1979-1987 Marlene Kramer, BS, MS, PhD, FAAN

Dean Kramer earned her baccalaureate in nursing from St. Louis University, a master's from Western Reserve, and a PhD from Stamford. She was nationally recognized for her scholarship, research, and publications. One of her best-known works is the series of books she published which made Reality Shock a household word in nursing. During her tenure as Dean, the school expanded its research mission and revised the curricula for undergraduate and graduate programs. Under her leadership, the Alumni Association became an important force in the life of the school.

1967-1979 Eleanor Keating Gill, BA, MN, MS

Dean Gill received her baccalaureate degree from Brown College in 1935 and her master's from Yale University School of Nursing in 1938. She also received a MS from Boston University in 1960. Before coming to UConn, Dean Gill had taught in the School of Nursing at Boston University and pioneered the role of the clinical nurse specialist at Boston University Medical Center. The UConn School of Nursing expanded dramatically during her deanship, with the consolidation and innovative revision of the undergraduate curriculum on the Storrs campus, and the establishment of the master's program, the first in a public university in the state.

1942-1967 Carolyn Ladd Widmer, BA, BN, MA

Dean Widmer was the founding Dean of the School. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Wellesley College in 1923, she earned her baccalaureate degree in nursing from Yale University School of
Nursing, graduating in 1929. After her graduation she organized public health nursing in Bogotá, Colombia. In 1932, she became the Dean of the School of Nursing at the American University in Beirut, Lebanon, then known as Syria. With the threat of war in Europe, she returned to the US with her two small children in 1940, and in 1942, opened the UConn School of Nursing. She received her MA at Trinity in 1951.

The Carolyn Ladd Widmer building (demolished in December, 1996) – Article by Eleanor K. Herrmann, Nurse Historian, Professor Emerita, UConn School of Nursing 3/31/96

Named in honor of the School of Nursing's first dean, will be demolished to make room for a new chemistry building. Completed in 1919 at a cost of $47,732.42, the Widmer building was the University of Connecticut's first infirmary. A substantial building, it was built of red brick on a stone foundation, had a slate roof and attached wooden porches. It contained an open ward for patients, several private rooms, office space and a large solarium with a fireplace. Located next to Swan Lake, then called Duck Pond, the infirmary was surrounded by a grove of tall trees until a hurricane destroyed many of them. The original setting was a valuable adjunct to any treatment for ill students that was offered at the time.

The School of Nursing first occupied the Widmer Building, also known as "the cottage," in 1950 when the present day infirmary was opened. Conversion of the old infirmary's open ward into a classroom, and the private rooms into offices, made the space suitable for academic purposes. The new accommodations also provided the expanding school with much appreciated relief after almost a decade of being in confined quarters in the Home Economics building, which is now known as the Design and Resource Management building. From the mid 1950's until the 1968-69 academic year, the building was shared with the School of Physical Therapy. Essentially, one wing of the building was assigned to each school. The basement room served as a combined library and conference room, and a small adjoining area contained hydrotherapy facilities and a men's shower and locker room. Some school of nursing alumni recall that for many years some of the class and office rooms still retained call-lights above the doorways to summon the nurses who had cared for the first occupants of the building. Additional renovations in the late 1960s further modified the building's interior space to meet academic needs. Other indicators of the evolution of the school are display cases and wall plaques which mark students' and faculty awards for scholarly achievements and the 1955 establishment of the school's Sigma Theta Tau chapter.

Despite considered thought to preserve the building by moving it to another site, and despite its being declared an historic landmark, structural deterioration of the 77 year old building and exorbitant costs for its relocation have prohibited that possibility.

Josephine Dolan Collection of Artifacts Illustrates History of Nursing Program
Advance Article February 18, 2003
[http://www.advance.uconn.edu/2003/030218/03021808.htm]