

In 2005, Dr. Pat Meyer, Associate Dean for the School of Nursing, retired from her position. She and the faculty had developed and maintained an excellent nursing program. Employers actively recruited the program's graduates, NCLEX pass rates were consistently high, and the School of Nursing was seen as an overall quality program. I applaud Dr. Meyer for leaving the program in such good standing for my arrival in the fall of 2005.

Being hired as Associate Dean for the SWOSU School of Nursing was like coming home. Originally from western Oklahoma, I obtained my BSN from SWOSU in 1983. Since graduation, I have been employed as a staff nurse, nurse manager, clinical educator, nursing faculty, and school administrator. Along the way, I earned a master's of science with a nursing major from the OU College of Nursing and a doctorate in adult education from OU.

We currently have nine nursing faculty, but one of our group is retiring this December. Diana Knox will retire in December after eleven years at SWOSU. We wish her well in her retirement plans and hope she grows enough vegetables in her garden to keep us all healthy. Remaining are faculty members Tammy Blatnick, RN, MS; Carol Kish, RN, MSN; Marcy Tanner, RN, MS; Betty Walters, RN, MSN; Tamra Weimer, RN, MSN, CCRN; Kathy Wolff, RN, CNS, CNE; Chris Young, RN, BSN; and Kelly Young, RN, MS.

As leadership and faculty change, other changes follow. A constantly changing healthcare system requires a nursing curriculum to be current and to adjust to changes in the workplace. Feedback from faculty and students in fall 2005 indicated that it was time for a curriculum change. To prepare graduates for the challenges of today's healthcare system we made the requested change beginning with the class starting fall 2006. May 2008 marked the graduation of the first class under the new curriculum. The changes implemented in 2006 were on target because the pass rate for this class was 96%, our best pass rate in the last six years.

In keeping with the ever-changing world of technology and student demand we also changed the IETV Week-End RN to BSN program to an online format. The change involved an onsite visit from out-of-state nursing educators representing the Higher Learning Commission (HCL). The HCL site visit was required because the School of Nursing had initiated the first online program at SWOSU. The site visit resulted in the RN to BSN program receiving full approval without any recommendations from the HCL. The online program will facilitate RNs returning to school for their BSN by increasing flexibility to meet work schedules and necessary personal commitments. Students will be able to complete the classes from their home computers while performing their clinical experiences in their home communities. We anticipate a continued increase in enrollment as others learn about the online program. In fact, since the approval approximately 8 months ago, enrollment has almost doubled from 18 to 35 students.

Future plans for the School of Nursing involve the additions of LPN to BSN and Paramedic to BSN options. However, these plans depend on gaining additional space as we continue to be housed in the basement of Stewart Hall. We currently have 33 senior nursing students and 45 junior nursing students. The basement offers a safe haven from western Oklahoma weather, but we are rather limited in our current quarters. We are in hopes that remodeling efforts on campus may allow us to move into a larger space.

An update to the School of Nursing pin was finalized within the past year. A focus group consisting of past graduates were asked for feedback regarding the nursing pin and shown photos of updated designs. The chosen design now adorns the entry page for our School of Nursing website. The graduating class of 2008 was the first to receive the newly designed pins.

A celebration of 25 years of nursing was held this past June for the class of 1983. Approximately half of the class returned to Weatherford for the reunion. Letters and photos from students unable to attend were received. Reunion participants contributed monetarily to the School of Nursing foundation account to enable nursing scholarships for students needing an extra financial boost to complete school. Anyone wishing to make such a donation can contact me at 580-774-3237 or the SWOSU Foundation at 580-774-3267 or foundation@swosu.edu

Also, if any alum want to share professional and/or personal news items and photos for the summer 2009 School of Nursing Newsletter, please forward them to barbara.patterson@swosu.edu

I am fortunate to be a part of a great group of alum, students, faculty, support staff, and administrators who work together to create the best possible education for future nurses. We are all committed to continuing the SWOSU tradition of graduating quality nurses.

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SWOSU