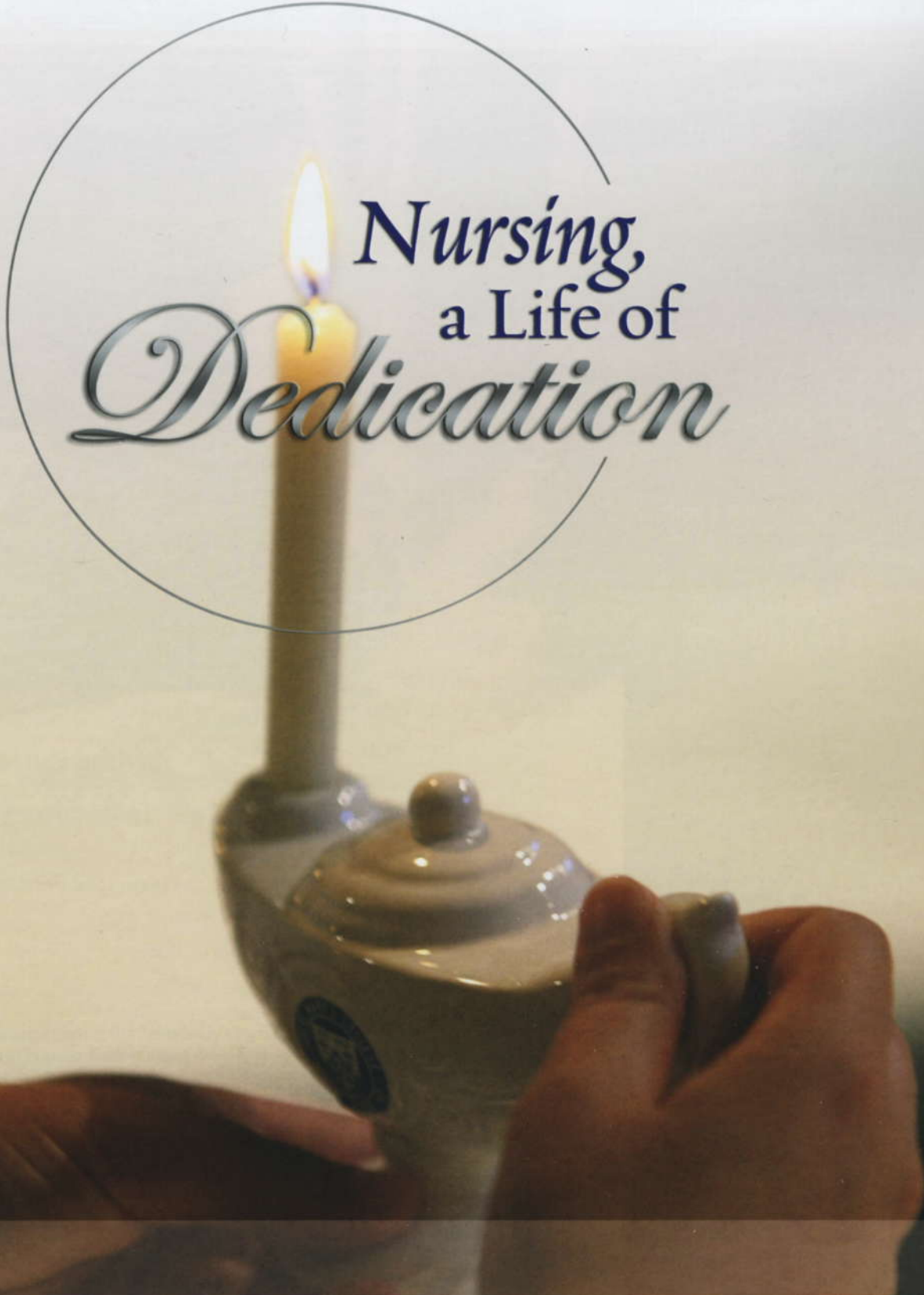


Saint Mary's College COURIER

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Nursing,
a Life of
Dedication

A Call to Service

By Jennifer Taylor '95



Nursing students in Saint Mary's nationally accredited program have the choice of entering the traditional or accelerated program.

The roots of the Saint Mary's College nursing program stretch back farther than you might imagine,

beginning with the Sisters of the Holy Cross, who served as nurses during the Civil War at the behest of General Grant and President Lincoln. Nursing has always been a venerable profession, steeped in compassion and governed by the rules of math and science. It is not a career for the faint of heart. Although nursing certainly isn't a new profession, it is growing. Trish Keresztes, PhD, RN, CCRN, assistant professor at Saint Mary's, points to an aging population and the retirement of existing nurses to explain the need for nurses throughout the country.

The Saint Mary's program has two rigorous tracks for students to obtain their Bachelor's of Science in nursing. The traditional program is a four-year degree for undergraduate students, with 29 prerequisite credit hours in the sciences

and introductory nursing courses and 45 credit hours of nursing major classes. In addition, students must be able to demonstrate advanced writing proficiency and pass a senior comprehensive designed to help prepare students for the nursing board exams taken after graduation. The accelerated option program is the second track that students can follow. It is geared toward women who already hold a baccalaureate degree in a different major and entails fifteen months of continuous instruction. Students pursuing this program have 52 semester hours to complete it, along with the advanced writing proficiency requirement, and completion of the senior comprehensive exam.

The numbers of Saint Mary's nursing graduates indicate a program on the rise. In 2007, there were 37 traditional and

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seven accelerated option graduates. In 2006, there were 22 traditional and four accelerated graduates, and in 2005, there were 18 traditional and seven accelerated graduates. To maintain program quality, the number of students annually enrolled in the upper-division nursing program is limited to 40 traditional students, and eight accelerated students.

Saint Mary’s accomplished nursing faculty is comprised of ten full-time professors, along with part-time instructors that assist with clinicals. The nursing student to faculty clinical ratio is 8:1, and the classroom ratio averages 20:1. The program is designed for students to be fully prepared to leave college confident that they will successfully pass their board exams, and go on to secure jobs in the health care field. Ashley Vachon, a summer ’07 graduate in the accelerated option program says, “Saint Mary’s College has prepared me for the many challenges that I face as a nurse.” As Linda Zoeller, PhD, APRN, BC, department chair and associate professor comments, “Students are truly challenged to take care of patients and be prepared for them. We are very proud of our graduates.”



Kate Hohler '05 works with Professor Cindy Iavagnilio during a clinical.

One of the training tools used to prepare students is an eight-bed lab housed in Havican Hall. In the lab, mannequins are used to practice taking vital measurements and practice wound care, among other exercises. With support from donors like the Wallach and Kearney families, the department will be able to purchase a “Simulated Man.” Zoeller describes this as a “complex computer-simulated mannequin program that has tremendous potential for helping students learn.”

Clinicals begin during a student’s sophomore year, and allow nursing candidates to receive a fully rounded education in different specialties. Zoeller says, “After graduation students can look at job possibilities in any of the areas and be hired in them.” Clinical placements include Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center, Memorial Hospital, Oaklawn, and a variety of community agencies within the county. Nano Farabaugh, RN, MS, RTC, associate professor, has been with

the department since the seventies. “It’s just a pleasure to see women care for patients who have many physical and psychological problems and really help them,” she says.

To build on experience gained in clinicals, nursing internships are encouraged during the summer between junior and senior year. Many students have interned in distinguished institutions, including Mayo Clinics and Hospitals, Cleveland Clinic, Sloan Kettering in New York, and Rush University in Chicago. Internships usually last ten weeks, and carry a 40-hour per week time commitment. Amber Steury, RN, an ’07 traditional nursing graduate, completed her summer internship at Dupont Hospital in Fort Wayne. The excellent experience allowed her to “work as a tech on a medical/surgical/telemetry unit with up to 13 patients.”

Aside from the first-class education and real world experience, another characteristic makes the program stand out. The tradition of community service is exemplified by the nursing program’s dedication ceremony. Students in their junior year have the opportunity to reflect on their commitment to the profession, and their hands are blessed at the Church of Loretto. During the ceremony, students receive a candle symbolizing their pledge to nursing. Zoeller refers to the ceremony as “the bringing together of the professional and spiritual commitment that one makes.”

The excellence of the program is evident in the faculty, what students accomplish, and the accreditation it has received. The National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, Inc., granted original accreditation to the baccalaureate nursing program in 1979, and the recognition of the quality of the degree has continued to grow over the years. With Zoeller’s guidance, the program has recently been re-accredited through 2012. In addition, the program is also accredited by the Indiana State Board of Nursing.

Demand for Saint Mary’s nursing graduates is high, and they are often able to find positions shortly after graduation. Keresztes recently had dinner with Julie Strong and Amy Parker, who are both May ’07 graduates and working at Riley Children’s Hospital in Indianapolis with children stricken with cancer. Steury has a full-time RN position at the IU Medical Center in Indianapolis, where she works on a surgical progressive care unit and says, “I attribute a great deal of my success to the wonderful nursing professors.” Caitlyn Mack is an ’08 traditional nursing student who feels “blessed to be able to be part of such a wonderful program, and I am proud to be a Saint Mary’s student.” Her goals include working on a Pediatric Hematology-Oncology floor and attending graduate school. In fact, Zoeller says, about 40% of the graduates continue with their education within five years of graduation. It is evident from the incredible preparation and what students go on to accomplish that the Saint Mary’s nursing program is creating leaders in the health care field.

Jennifer Taylor '95 is a freelance writer currently living in Atlanta.