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Nursing Education at Illinois Wesleyan University: 1923 to 1976

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NURSING EDUCATION AT ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY: 1923 to 1976.

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The purpose of this research was to reveal the history of Illinois Wesleyan University's (IWU) School of Nursing from the earliest affiliations with Brokaw Hospital's School for Nurses to the formation of the free standing baccalaureate program. Two research questions were formulated: 1) How did Brokaw Hospital School for Nurses and Illinois Wesleyan come together? 2) What were the critical factors which contributed to the development of IWU School of Nursing?.

To address the questions historical research methods were utilized. First, archival research was conducted at Illinois Wesleyan's Sheean Library, at A.E. Livingston Health Sciences Library of BroMenn Regional Medical Center, and at the Midwest Nursing History Museum at the University of Illinois, Chicago campus. Oral interviews were subsequently conducted with three past administrators and one past faculty member from the School of Nursing.

The findings suggested the primary force to be the determination and drive of three nursing leaders at key points in the program's development. Maude Essig, Director of Brokaw Hospital School for Nurses from 1924 to 1938, changed the standards for admission to be consistent with those of the University and also, acquired important necessary educational resources. Margaret Griffin, Director of Brokaw School of Nursing of IWU, worked closely with Dean William Beadles to establish plans for the integration of the school, dispelled opposition from the medical staff, realized the importance of a public health curriculum, and sought to enhance the educational aspects of the School of Nursing. The third leader, Mary D. Shanks was director of IWU Brokaw Collegiate School of Nursing from 1960 to 1976. During this time, she established the philosophy and objectives for the School, received initial NLN accreditation, overcame opposition from the medical staff, and obtained financial resources and support from the community.

Yet, determination and drive were not the only commonalties among the three leaders mentioned above. Documentation of a genuine interest in the professional lives of the students and graduates and a commitment to the growth of the profession was found in all three directors.