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From Student to Nurse

While preparing for their profession, Illinois Wesleyan's nursing students explore a range of liberal arts experiences.

Text by KIM HILL



In Stevenson Hall, home of Illinois Wesleyan's School of Nursing, another busy day has begun. Peek inside the Nursing Interventions Laboratory and you will see students starting an IV on a lifelike female manikin. Across town, at OSF St. Joseph Medical Center, nursing majors take charge of the care of actual patients, guided by their clinical instructor. Meanwhile, several time zones away, nursing students enrolled in IWU's study-abroad program in Barcelona participate in the video-conferencing of the course "Pathophysiology and Pharmacology II," being taught back in Stevenson.

Throughout this day and well into the night, the 150 students who major in nursing can be found both at Stevenson Hall and throughout campus. Hanging up their white lab coats, they take liberal arts courses on a variety of subjects, from art and sociology to literature and history. They also make their mark in extracurriculars: this year, for example, one nursing student was named women's soccer MVP; another was crowned Homecoming Queen.

Part of what makes the School of Nursing distinctive — and a big part of its appeal, students say — is that it is fully integrated into the University's undergraduate liberal arts curriculum. It was in 1959 that the University's four-year bachelor of science in nursing program was officially launched. Its roots date back even further, to 1923, when Illinois Wesleyan formed a partnership for a nursing program with the Brokaw School of Nursing at what is now the Advocate BroMenn Medical Center in Normal.

While technologic advances and the explosion of health-care knowledge in recent years have changed how nursing is taught and practiced, nursing majors past and present hold a common bond in their shared experience of Illinois Wesleyan's liberal arts traditions, according to Vickie Folse, director of the School of Nursing.

"They are students of the University who are majoring in nursing," Folse says. "We believe we are educating global citizens, and to do that in a vacuum, as some professional schools of nursing do, is a missed opportunity to develop a young mind and prepare a future leader."

It's no coincidence that many of the school's alumni have become educators (indeed, four nursing professors are also IWU alumnae) and have assumed leadership positions in their fields. As the following photo essay and student profiles illustrate, many facets converge to create a diverse and dynamic experience for Illinois Wesleyan's nursing majors, from hands-on learning to original research on new approaches to patient care.

The common denominator among all these experiences was expressed by one of this spring's nursing graduates who wrote about her decision to choose nursing as a profession: "I value the opportunity to step into someone's life and provide support and encouragement at a time when they need it most. I chose nursing because I wanted to be the person who can find a way to make someone's most difficult times a little more manageable."

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