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Preparing Tomorrow's Nurses

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Renovations transform the School of Nursing as it readies students for the challenges of a rapidly changing field.

Preparing Tomorrow's Nurses

Story by **KIM HILL**

Built in 1910, Stevenson Hall is the oldest building on the Illinois Wesleyan campus. But look inside these days and what you see resembles a major medical center or a primary care setting.

Thanks to the \$2 million renovation completed before classes began this fall, Stevenson's first two floors have been reconfigured and rearranged to better accommodate the increased size of nursing classes and the growing importance that laboratory and simulation learning play in today's nursing education. It is the first comprehensive and planned reconfiguration of Stevenson's teaching spaces since the building became home to the School of Nursing (SON) in 1959.

The renovated spaces were dedicated in an Oct. 1 ceremony held during Homecoming, with nursing alumni and others invited to tour the facility. Present were many of the approximately 350 donors who contributed to the project's *Redesigning the Future* fundraising campaign — including faculty, alumni and even current students.

Stevenson's garden level has been named the Jarvis Center for Nursing Excellence, honoring Professor of Nursing Carolyn Jarvis, whose lead gift provided substantial funding for the renovations. ([Read more](#) about what inspired Jarvis to make her gift.)

On the garden level, visitors to the new Nursing Interventions Laboratory first walk past a centrally located nurses' station. Nearby, lifelike manikins lay in one of the five distinct patient-care bays. Each bed has a head wall including suction, air, power and a note-taking desk. A high-tech medicine-dispensing machine is a short distance away.

"It's realistic and simulates a real hospital," said Keith Carter '17, one of some 175 nursing students who are benefitting from a setting designed to integrate assessment, skill acquisition and simulation in a more comprehensive manner.

At the west end of the new center is the Jarvis Health Assessment Lab, which contains six examination tables



Students such as Nubari Kanee '17 like how closely the new Jarvis Center for Nursing Excellence simulates a hospital setting

mimicking a primary care setting. The lab also honors Jarvis, an internationally recognized authority in health assessment and the author of North America's most widely used health assessment textbook, *Physical Examination and Health Assessment*, now in its seventh edition.

In the new Simulation Center, students are challenged to solve simulated patient events. Faculty and a simulation expert develop and program high-fidelity manikins to respond in lifelike fashion to various medical scenarios. The simulation expert observes student responses and decision making from a control booth equipped with new video screens wired to new cameras installed over patient beds.



Tours of the renovated Stevenson Hall followed a ceremony dedicating the Jarvis Center for Nursing Excellence that included remarks by Professor of Nursing Carolyn Jarvis, whose lead gift provided substantial funding for the \$2 million renovation project.

A new Pediatric Simulation Lab houses both pediatric and newborn simulation manikins. "Some nursing schools have eliminated specialized clinicals such as pediatrics," said SON Director Victoria Folse. "We have not, and we believe combining direct patient-care opportunities with high-fidelity simulations is very important to student learning."

Another renovated area on the garden level is a Home Healthcare Room. With both living and sleeping areas, this environment simulates an apartment where students can practice assessment, ambulatory and other skills in a non-hospital environment, according to Folse, who is also the Caroline F. Rupert Endowed Chair of Nursing.

The addition of a Medication Room gives students experience in the safe handling and dispensing of medications. The room contains a Pyxis Medstation automated medication dispensing system. Hayley Gastman '17 noted the device looks exactly like the dispensing system she uses during her clinical experiences, which begin during the sophomore year in IWU's nursing curriculum.

Renovations of the garden level included the addition of a Student Lounge and Study Area. Folse noted IWU nursing majors helped to design all the renovated spaces, and students wanted a place where they could gather between classes to mingle or to study. The area helps students from different class years get to know each other more easily, according to Kristen Dace '17 of Freeport, Ill.

First-floor renovations included creating larger classroom spaces. Three of the four classrooms on the first floor can now seat 48 students, allowing all the core nursing courses to be held in Stevenson Hall.

The number of first-year nursing students has doubled since 2009. Driving that growth, said Folse, are factors such as the 100 percent job placement rates of SON graduates as well as opportunities for early clinical experiences, study abroad, internships and collaborative research. Prospective students are also impressed by the diversity and success of SON alumni, who include chief operating officers of major healthcare institutions and community healthcare clinics, nursing professors, researchers, nurse midwives, nurse anesthetists and nurse practitioners.

While recent enrollment growth was a driving factor in the need for the renovations, Folse said that SON will maintain an entering class of 48 students. "We feel this is an ideal number for meaningful interaction between faculty, staff and students. These relationships are what make us unique from other schools of nursing."



New cameras installed over patient beds in the Simulation Center allow Simulation Coordinator Becky Altic to observe student decision-making during a variety of medical scenarios.

The close-knit SON community was reflected in the wide support for funding the Stevenson renovations, said Folse. Donors for the renovations included all SON faculty and staff; community partners such as OSF, Advocate Health Care and the Carle Health System; alumni; current students and their parents; and recent students who are now young alumni. During a 36-hour giving drive in February, students, including seniors who would graduate in May, made fundraising phone calls and donated funds.

“Students who would never have instruction in the renovated space donated to that fund drive,” Folse said. “I think that says something about the enthusiasm we all had for this project. We built it together.”