



Fall 10-29-2014

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### Recommended Citation

University Communications, Illinois Wesleyan University, "New Simulation Center Opens at School of Nursing" (2014). *News and Events*. 2464.  
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/2464>

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## New Simulation Center Opens at School of Nursing

Oct. 29, 2014

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— A new teaching center simulating both hospital and home healthcare environments has been completed at Illinois Wesleyan University's School of Nursing (SON).

Housed on the garden level of Stevenson Hall, the center features two "hospital" rooms equipped with sophisticated, computer-run manikins. The design of the new center allows Professional Staff Laboratory Associate Becky Altic, BSN, RN, to program the manikins with medical conditions, vital signs and outcomes from a control room that is not visible to the nursing students practicing their skills in the simulated hospital environment. Altic works collaboratively with SON faculty to develop, implement and evaluate simulations as an integral learning experience in all core nursing courses.

Simulation in nursing education is a method to guide students in clinical scenarios and let them experience a course of medical and nursing events in a safe environment. Student preparation in clinical simulations enhances their critical thinking skills on the job, according to SON officials.

In the SON's previous physical space on the first floor of Stevenson, Altic programmed the scenarios from a computer station in the same room as the students. While that design adequately provided quality and safety training for nursing students, it was no longer consistent with best practices in simulated nursing environments.



Nursing students in the new simulation center at Illinois Wesleyan cannot see Simulation Expert Becky Altic, RN, BSN, through the two-way mirror as she programs manikins with medical conditions and outcomes.

"Removing the person running the simulations from the proximity of the patient and the students increases fidelity tremendously," said Altic. "For students to experience the full range of conditions and situations they will encounter as nurses, the simulation center must appear to be like an actual medical setting."

"Today's hospital patients are sicker, with more intense medical conditions," said Associate Professor of Nursing Susan Swanlund. "So the need for increased technology for nursing assessment and intervention is essential, even in a simulated practice setting."

Students Elise April '15 (left) and Rachael Stevenson '15 practice their skills in the new simulation center. The room mimics an actual medical setting.

With the additional space on the garden level, SON also added a room designed to mimic a small apartment. This space is a unique feature; it allows students to conduct home health assessments and nursing interventions in life-like settings. As the U.S. population over age 65 continues to grow, a simulated home environment allows students to practice functional assessments and

evaluations of the skills older adults need to successfully live independently, Swanlund said.

“In home health, practitioners not only assess the patient, but they also are assessing the environment,” explained Altic. “They are looking for safety issues, proper medication storage and necessary resources.”.

After students finish their simulation experience, they “debrief” with a SON faculty member in a separate classroom appointed with multi-media equipment. All simulations are filmed; previously, a lack of electronic equipment prohibited playback reviews of every simulation, Altic said. Faculty and students discuss all aspects of the simulation in an environment that promotes more critical thinking and reflection than the previous physical space allowed.

The layout of the simulation center provides a deliberate pathway from simulation to debriefing. Students who are waiting to start their simulations are protected from any transfer of information or emotion from the students who have just completed their debriefing – a vital element in experiential learning.

“Research findings confirm that well designed high fidelity simulation is effective in preparing students for complex direct patient experiences by promoting clinical judgment in a safe learning environment,” said SON Director Vickie Folse, who is also Caroline F. Rupert Endowed Chair of Nursing.

Folse said the new space helps meet the demands of increased student enrollment and that a state-of-the-art simulation center makes the SON more competitive when recruiting prospective students.



Natalie Statham '15 prepares a syringe.