



Throughout 2012, Dillard University has celebrated the 70th anniversary of its School of Nursing. There have been roundtables and panel discussions to enrich the education of today's nursing students. Commemorative banners have been hung across campus and on Gentilly Boulevard. And finally, a scholarship gala featuring dinner, dancing and memories will be held on Sunday, Nov. 11, following Founders' Day, to benefit the program. **Nursing alumna Dr. Mackie Norris will serve as the evening's guest speaker.**

A Brief History of Nursing

In 1942 Albert Dent, a Morehouse graduate and Dillard's third president, sought to create a nursing program for blacks that would develop leaders in a field dominated by white women. It was important to him that students graduated not only as effective nurses, but also as better individuals than they had been when they arrived. He selected Rita E. Miller, a graduate of Columbia University and the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing, as the division's first chair.

At the time, it was the only collegiate nursing school open to African-Americans in Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma and Mississippi, an area with nearly four million African-Americans, and it was one of only four such programs in the country. The nursing course at Dillard consisted of five years of study leading to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. The first two years followed the pattern of liberal arts education conducted at Dillard for freshman and sophomore students, including music, the sciences, and literature. The final three years were devoted to clinical and professional education. The first class of four students graduated in 1945. Dillard University owned and operated Flint-Goodridge Hospital, and the 100-bed facility proved to be the perfect place to provide clinical training. Students worked at the Hume Child Development Center, too. They also traveled to other hospitals to gain experiences in a variety of nursing specialties, though societal constraints necessitated that they travel quite far in order to do so – all the way to the other side of the Mason-Dixon line, to Montefiore Hospital in New York and Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn. Later, in the 1950s, students went to the Tuskegee Mental Hospital in Alabama to work with black soldiers and civilians.

In 1952, the Dillard University Division of Nursing became the first accredited nursing program in the state of Louisiana. In the 1960s, the program adopted its current four-year curriculum. Throughout the '50s and '60s, Dillard nursing students provided care to African-American patients at Charity Hospital of New Orleans and the New Orleans Department of Health, in addition to Flint-Goodridge. Following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, students gained more opportunities and no longer had to travel out of state to New York for broader clinical experiences.

In May 1973, the program graduated its first white student, Tamzon D. Tuthill. Three years later, Louis V. Gregoire became the first male graduate. Over 1,200 students have successfully matriculated through the program. Today Dillard's School of Nursing is based in the Professional Schools and Sciences Building, which opened in 2010. Students have the benefit of state-of-the-art laboratories and equipment, including nursing simulators – picture really fancy mannequins – that breathe, speak, sweat and exhibit a broad range of human functions conducive to training scenarios. A lot has changed since 1942. But the values upon which the program was founded – training better nurses, and better people – remain the same.

"To do what nobody else will do, a way that nobody else can do, in spite of all we go through; is to be a nurse." – Rawsy Williams