**15013, Marie Wiederholt**

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to welcome this new class of sophomores who are entering the nursing program for the first time. I also extend welcome to your families and friends who have accompanied you here. You have chosen a long respected career for your life.

Nursing has come a long way throughout history, going back to biblical times when women served as deaconesses and cared for the sick among the church. For centuries many hospitals were part of a religious order and the nurses were nuns, priests and monks depending on the religion. In the 1600’s with much religious reform, came changes in medical care as well. Non-religious hospitals were built and nurses were no longer nuns but women who chose to serve through caring for the sick and dying.

A dramatic change in nursing occurred during the Crimean War with the famous Florence Nightingale who lived from 1820-1910. She was an English nurse and is known as the founder of modern nursing. According to Nursing Care, <http://nursingcare.weebly.com/history.html>, “In 1844, she began to visit hospitals; in 1850, she spent some time with the nursing Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul in Alexandria; and a year later she studied at the institute for Protestant deaconesses in Kaiserswerth, [Germany](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Germany.aspx). In 1854, she organized a unit of 38 woman nurses for service in the [Crimean War](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Crimean_War.aspx). By the end of the war she had become a legend. With the testimonial fund collected for her war services she established (1860) the Nightingale School and Home for training nurses at St. Thomas's Hospital, [London](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/London.aspx). She was called "The Lady with the Lamp" because she believed that a nurse's care was never ceasing, night or day; she taught that nursing was a noble profession, and she made it so. Florence Nightingale was the first woman to be given the British Order of Merit (1907).”

In 1860 Queen Victoria ordered the first such training hospital to be built and for a long time nurses were assigned to military hospitals. For the first time in history nurses and doctors went to school to receive formal training in medicine. It wasn’t long before tented field hospitals were constructed and nurses and doctors cared for injured soldiers closer to the fighting, thereby giving more of them a chance for survival. Our modern hospitals both at home and in war zones have improved drastically from these modest beginnings, but nurses have an honorable history in caring for the sick and injured. The history of nursing may vary from nation to nation but modern nursing in the United States is among the best in the world.

From the earliest days some hospitals were specialized for specific purposes or illnesses and this practice continues today, although sometimes it may be with specialized wings of a large medical campus. One difference is the expansion of opportunities for nurses. Advancements in medicine alone have opened new career opportunities for nurses that goes beyond caring for either adults vs children, men vs women, or military vs civilian.

The important thing is that you have chosen a life’s work that is ever changing and ever growing. You have chosen a profession that is honorable in every way. Every society recognizes medical workers with high esteem. Whether it’s a local medicine worker in a small community or tribal society or a head of nursing in a large medical facility or university, nurses are invaluable to the medical profession. The work of a nurse is a profession that stands side by side with doctors, each having unique individual training and responsibilities. A good doctor will tell you just how indispensable a good nurse is to a doctor.

There was a time when only men were doctors and women could only be nurses. But, the changes in society and the changes in medicine have done away with those restrictions. Today both men and women can be doctors or nurses, depending on how they desire to serve with just as many organizations to support those who choose nursing as their profession. A few of them are Ambulatory Care Nursing, Critical Care and Cardiac Nursing, Diabetes Educators, Emergency Room Nursing, Gastroenterology Nursing, HIV/AIDS nursing, Hospice and Palliative Care Nursing, Infusion Nursing, Medical-Surgical Nursing, Neuroscience Nursing, Nephrology Nursing, Oncology Nursing, Operating Room Nursing, Pediatric Nursing, School Nursing, Nursing Educators, Urology Nursing, and Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing. Some nurses are becoming Nurse Practioners with the choice of either serving along with a doctor or independently. Due to technological advances nurses can even treat patients around the world over an internet connection.

In the earliest days nurses learned from doctors and other nurses, then came various types of nursing schools. But, in recent years nursing education moved from that to specialized nurse certification, to Associate Degrees and now Bachelor of Nursing degrees with greater opportunities available after that is completed. All of these educational programs partner with hospitals so that nurses may receive clinical experience along with their classroom experience.

Basically, the opportunities are endless. As you begin your studies you will start by building a strong foundation of nursing expertise. Later as you build your knowledge and experience you will learn which opportunities excite you. You will also learn where your strengths are so that you can choose which direction you want to take your nursing career.

I stand before you today to encourage you to look forward to a fulfilling and honorable career. I look forward to hearing how you fare as you move forward in your education. I can see some of you becoming experts in your chosen field, others as directors of nursing, and still others as nursing educators. There is no such thing as a boring, dead end nursing job. Whatever direction you choose, you will have a challenging and exciting career where you will make a definite contribution to society and you will make a difference.

Congratulations to each one of you and good luck in your future career choices.

Thank you