

The Legacy of Baccalaureate Nursing Education at UOG

Kathryn M. Wood moved to Guam in 1982 with her husband, Harold Richard (Rick) Wood, and their three children. They fell in love with Guam and her people, prompting Rick Wood to leave the Air Force after a few years. They stayed on-island as civilians. Their children grew up on the island and completed their primary and secondary education in the island's public school system. Kathryn Wood worked at the Guam Memorial Hospital and Naval Hospital as a nurse, while her husband worked at Guam Environmental Protection Agency, and then the Water and Environmental Research Institute of the Western Pacific (WERI) at the University of Guam. Dr. Kathryn Wood joined UOG in the School of Nursing and Allied Health in 1990. The School has had several school/college names over the years.

She earned her associate degree in nursing prior to moving to Guam. She completed her second-step Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) at UOG, followed by a Master's in Nursing (MN) from Washington State University and a Doctorate in Philosophy (PhD) from the University of Hawaii.

Kathryn Wood began her employment at UOG in 1990, and retired from UOG in 2020, completing a total of 30 years. She achieved the rank of Professor of Nursing. She was the Director of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences from 2010-2013, then returned to faculty ranks to complete her years at UOG. She came to the University upon hearing of an open position then applying.

UOG originally had an associate degree program (AND) for nursing, which had begun in the mid-1960s, its first class having graduated in 1968. Professor Emerita Sally Tsuda was an integral part of this program. When Dr. Wood began her employment as an instructor at UOG had just ended the program and converted to the Baccalaureate in Nursing (BSN) program. The class size was low for the first couple of years since then, with eight to twelve (8-12) students graduating from this department. Cohort sizes have grown overtime, and the program now admits close to forty (40) students each year.

Soon after joining the faculty, Dr. Maureen Fochtman became the Director of the program, eventually becoming Dean. The goal of the program was to achieve program level accreditation, and in 1996 they achieved that goal through the National League for Nursing (NLN). NLN has changed names several times and is currently known as the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). The program has had four accreditation visits and has maintained accreditation each visit. Dr. Wood participated in all these visits, having been the primary author of the last self-study report for accreditation.

UOG has seven hundred and thirty-seven (737) BSN-educated nursing students who have graduated from this department. Those nurses serve in all healthcare agencies on Guam, and throughout the United States Affiliated Pacific Island (USAPI), the U.S. mainland, as well as several international countries. The healthcare systems, especially in Guam and the USAPI, have grown and improved due to the impact of the UOG graduates.

Dr. Wood reports that she has been blessed to teach in the classroom at all levels of the BSN curriculum, and clinically at the junior and senior level. She served as Division Chair for the Nursing and Health Science programs for much of the last ten years with the program. In 2019, she, Dr. Margaret Hattori-Uchima, and Dr. Ana Joy Mendez brought a group of students to the National Institutes of Health in Washington DC for a clinical internship. This was going to be an on-going internship but was placed on hold due to the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic. Under the leadership of Dr. Hattori-Uchima, several grants have been secured, and faculty are more engaged in research today than ever before.

Through her service at UOG, Kathryn Wood became involved with the American Pacific Island Nursing Leaders Council (APNLC). This organization is comprised of each of the US-Affiliated Pacific Island jurisdictions. Each year, a conference is held rotating the host jurisdiction. She participated in many of these conferences over the years, making presentations for many of those times. She gave the keynote address in Pohnpei in 2015, but this group has not been active since the onset of COVID-19.

Dr. Wood served as a consultant to nursing programs in the region during her time at UOG. This included consultancies through the World Health Organization (WHO) and UOG, including Palau Community College, the College of Micronesia Federated States of Micronesia, College of the Marshall Islands, American Samoa Community College, and the nursing programs in Kiribati, Fiji, and Vanuatu. Work with the USAPI nursing programs led to the formation of the Pacific Islands Network of Nursing Education (PINNED) in 2010, where they provided ongoing support to each other.

Kathryn Wood has received recognition in the following ways:

- Guam Nurses Association – Nurse of the Year, 2007
- Guam Nurses Association – Honorary Nursing Practice in Nursing Management and Leadership, 2020

Dr. John Salas was an administrator when Dr. Wood joined the faculty in nursing, and she commends him for always being a champion for nursing. He mentored several nursing faculty members into their role as a faculty member, including herself. When he decided to retire from the University of Guam, there was a service to honor him. She attended the event and thanked him for all the work he had done for Dr. Wood and the nursing department over the years. He smiled and said that all the decisions he made over the years were made with the belief that it was the right thing to do. He continued that he left her with but one charge – the next time him, a family member, or a loved one needed nursing care, if the nurse who entered the room identified themselves as a UOG nursing graduate, he wanted to be completely assured that he or his family were getting the very best nursing care available on Guam. She replied that that was a very big charge, to which he smiled again and said, “It’s the right thing to do.” This has become a guiding principle.

Over the years, graduates will communicate with individual faculty members. The ones that stand out to Dr. Wood are those graduates who had spoken of a lecture or conversation taken with her – sometimes they would be conversations that she no longer remembers, however, the

nursing graduates relate how that conversation got them through difficult clinical situations. This has made an impression to her on how vital it is to provide the best education to our students.

Her advice or words of wisdom for current and future professors or administrators is as follows, “Do the best that you can every day. The students, and more importantly, the patients they serve, deserve no less.”

Kathryn M. Wood joined the University of Guam’s Society of Emeritus Professors and Retired Professors (SEPRS) in late-2021.