

(Booklet text follows:)

NURSING EDUCATION ACCREDITATION, A SERVICE OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR NURSING¹

Accreditation has been called a way of life in American education. So, too, it is in nursing education—accreditation by the National League for Nursing.

NLN accredits programs of study in nursing offered by senior colleges and universities, junior and community colleges, hospitals and independent schools, and vocational and other secondary schools. NLN's accreditation services are designed to stimulate schools to improve their nursing programs and to provide a mark of recognition for those which meet certain qualitative criteria.

ACCREDITATION AS A PUBLIC SERVICE

Accreditation is a public service as well as a service to educational institutions offering programs in nursing. One of its purposes is to provide the public with well prepared nurses. It serves as an aid, too, to students, parents, and counselors in evaluating schools and in selecting nursing education programs. It provides a yardstick by which both tax funds and voluntary contributions can be channeled into high quality education. It assures the community that a school has a competent faculty and administration, that its curriculum meets the standards nursing school faculty themselves know are good and attainable, and that the educational experience will be a profitable one for the student.

Community groups of many kinds are concerned about nursing education and involved in developing new educational resources for nursing. National accreditation makes guidelines to quality in nursing education available to community planning groups.

ACCREDITATION AS A SERVICE TO NURSING SCHOOLS

Nursing schools have rallied to national accreditation since the inception of the program in 1948². The significance of this support is heightened by the fact that national accreditation is voluntary—a school seeks NLN accreditation of its program of study because of the values accreditation holds for the school.

National recognition is one of these. Another is the opportunity a nursing school faculty, going through the accreditation process, has to participate in its own evaluation of the school and to plan and execute changes that will improve the program. As a rule, accredited programs in nursing find it easier to attract qualified faculty and students than do nonaccredited programs. Their graduates customarily score higher on state board examinations to become licensed to practice as nurses than do the graduates of non-accredited programs. Having national standards to meet often helps a school withstand local pressures to initiate or continue questionable educational practices.

Acceptance of accreditation as an instrument for improvement stems from the American tradition to excel, to exceed the minimum expected. State boards of nursing *approve* schools of nursing for the preparation of students qualified to take the state licensing examination to practice as nurses. The criteria that must be met for *national accreditation* are over and above the requirements for legal recognition within a state, and they are established by the schools themselves. Accreditation in nursing education also is geared to the nationwide programs of accrediting in higher education as appropriate. It is *specialized* accreditation, conducted by nurse educators to evaluate programs of study for the purpose of maintaining educational standards in nursing. Thus accreditation benefits to a school are benefits also to the profession in improving the practice of its members.

¹ The National League for Nursing is recognized as the national accrediting agency for nursing education by: the National Commission on Accrediting—for bachelors and masters degree programs in nursing; the United States Commissioner of Education—for all nursing education programs; the American Nurses' Association—for all nursing education programs; and the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses—for practical nursing programs.

² The National Nursing Accrediting Service was established in 1948 to unify the separate accrediting activities of several national organizations concerned with accreditation in nursing. When the National League for Nursing was formed in 1952, the National Nursing Accrediting Service became one of the seven national services, committees, and organizations which merged to form the new organization. Nursing accrediting activities were then centered in NLN.