

Dr. Florence Meda Gipe, First Dean of the School of Nursing

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Photograph of Dr. Florence M. Gipe from the 1966 Pledge Yearbook.

Dr. Florence Meda Gipe was born in York, Pennsylvania in September 1895 to John W. and Mary Ella Gipe. She had two siblings, Edith M. and William Gipe. Gipe graduated from the York Hospital School of Nursing in 1919, receiving highest honors. She continued her education at the Catholic University of America (BS), the University of Pennsylvania (MS), and the University of Maryland, College Park (Ed.D).

Dr. Gipe joined the University of Maryland as the Director of Nursing Service and Nursing Education at the University Hospital in February 1946 after serving in several educational and director positions at nursing training schools at York Hospital, Providence Hospital and Reading Hospital. After accepting the role of director, Dr. Gipe began to challenge the existing educational standards of the University Hospital's Nursing Training School. She believed nursing education should move towards more traditional academic methods away from the existing training model; in other words, she proposed nursing schools have more formal lectures, group discussions, and theory in addition to hands-on clinical training. She was

angered by the menial tasks traditionally assigned to nurses and wanted the profession to undertake more challenging responsibilities such as taking blood pressure or give injections.

Dr. Gipe's vision for Maryland became a reality in May 1952 when the School of Nursing became an autonomous college in the University rather than under control of the University Hospital. The Hospital would remain an important site for clinical learning but this change allowed the school to offer a four-year bachelor's degree in Nursing—the first in the state of Maryland. Dr. Gipe's hard work and dedication to nursing education also led to the development of the Master of Science Degree in Nursing at the school, which began in 1954—also the first graduate degree in nursing in the state. By 1957, both programs (undergraduate and graduate) were fully accredited by the National League for Nursing.

In addition to her work at the University of Maryland, Dr. Gipe served with the Nursing Council of the Southern Regional Education Board. Through this group she helped to set guidelines for graduate programs in Nursing throughout the Southern United States. Dr. Gipe retired from the University of Maryland School of Nursing in June 1966 but continued to consult with Franklin Square Hospital, Nursing Hospital and South Baltimore General Hospital. She received an honorary degree from York College in 1979. Dr. Gipe passed away June 12, 1983 in York after complications from a car accident in May 1983.

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