Innovative Approaches to Increase Student Satisfaction with the DNP Scholarly Project in a BS-DNP and MS-DNP Program

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AACN on Final Project
“Doctoral education, whether practice or research, is distinguished by the completion of a specific project that demonstrates synthesis of the student’s work and lays the groundwork for future scholarship”.

Our Philosophy
- Faculty as guide to education and scholarship
- Student choose topics they are passionate about
- Application of scholarly inquiry to improve practice or patient outcomes
- Contribution to nursing in possible areas:
  - Leadership
  - Policy
  - Evidence-based practice
  - Program planning and evaluation

Our Program
- MS-DNP began in 2007 – executive format
  - Total graduates to date - 106
  - Students currently enrolled - 31
- BS-DNP began in 2008
  - First cohort of 29 graduated May 2011
  - Total graduates to date - 115
  - Students currently enrolled - 154

Program Structure
- First MS-DNP cohort 2007
  - Began as 4 semesters
  - Final project in last 2 semesters (6 credits)
- First BS-DNP cohort 2008
  - 8 semesters
  - Final project in last 2 semesters (6 credits)
  - In residency during final project semester

Past Scholarly Project Time Line
- Began during last final 2 semesters of program
  - First semester (3 credits)
    - Select project topic
    - Begin manuscript draft
      - Problem statement, objectives, literature review
    - Oral proposal defense
  - Second semester (3 credits)
    - Implementation & Evaluation
    - Final manuscript and deliverable product
    - Oral final defense
Student Challenges

**MS-DNP**
- Short time frame
- Some students without specific academic skills
- Literature searches
- Reference management
- Writing
- Technology
- Accomplishing projects in limited time frame

**BS-DNP**
- Lack of clinical experience in advanced role
- Difficulty conceptualizing a potential project in advanced practice role
- Students are focusing on mastery of advanced practice skills
- Limitations in specific academic skills

Faculty Resource Challenges

- Committee structure
- Traditional committee
- Restructured as part of the solution
- Faculty expertise
- Not able to address broad range of expertise for all projects
- Workload
- Student’s writing skills

Beginning Solutions

- Committee Structure change
- Early planting of the seed
- Restructure program to allow more time for scholarly project

Faculty Resource Solutions

- Committee Structure change
- Project Chair, Program Director & Executive Director of Clinical Graduate Programs
- Faculty expertise with wide variation in projects
- Use of outside content experts
- Workload
- Dedicated faculty as project chairs
- Student’s writing skills
- Use of editors

How to Plant the Seed

- Early planting of the seed
- Pre-admission interview: Topic of final project is discussed
- Initial orientation: Students are encouraged to begin to explore areas of special clinical interest
- Professors highlight possible project topics in individual courses early in program

Steps in Change

- Program Directors – Pilot for change
- Introduce DNP scholarly project during interviews and orientation
- Include introductory assignments in early semesters
- Used successfully in 3 programs
Program Restructure
- Course sequence reviewed by graduate curriculum committee
  - After 5 years of DNP student experience
  - Programs of study for all DNP programs blown up
- Restructure program to allow more time for scholarly project

First Semester Scholarly Project Course
Work with Program Director
- Selection of project topic
  - Beginning with 3 topics → Final topic
- Problem statement and clinical significance
- Objectives
  - Begin literature review
- Additional assignments
  - CITI modules
  - Vail certificate

Second Semester Scholarly Project Course
Work with Project Chair
- Continued work on the literature review
- Theoretical framework
- Implementation and evaluation
- Earlier proposal defense
  - Oral presentation to course faculty, students and program director
  - Must pass in order to begin the implementation

Final Semester Scholarly Project Course
- Finish implementation of project
- Poster Defense and session
  - Decreases faculty time vs oral presentation
  - Exposes student to different form of presentation
  - The session
    - Formal Presentation
    - Poster Session
      - Family, contents experts, College of Nursing and University Health Sciences colleges invited
      - Poster award done with prizes
      - Reception

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time, time, time</td>
<td>Changed sequence</td>
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<td>Identification of the problem to address</td>
<td>Three 2 credit courses</td>
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<td>IRB process</td>
<td>Begins summer semester before graduate</td>
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<td>Ability to complete the desired implementation</td>
<td>Program directors</td>
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<td>Increased number of students</td>
<td>Two methods of professional presentation</td>
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<td>Variety of project topics</td>
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Benefits of change

- Increased student experience
- Earlier and more support by individual programs
- More time to immerse in and complete project
- Formal oral and poster methods of presentation
- Maximize limited faculty resources
- Efficiency through maintaining seasoned faculty as chairs
- Increased program director involvement
- Reduced pressure on faculty through use of content experts and editors
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