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**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".

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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Beginning Solutions

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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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Summary

Challenges
- Time, time, time
  - Identification of the problem to address
  - IRB process
  - Ability to complete the desired implementation
- Increased number of students
- Variety of project topics

Solutions
- Changed sequence
  - Three 2 credit courses
- Begins summer semester before graduate
  - Program directors
- Two methods of professional presentation

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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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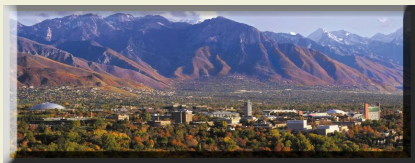
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