

The DNP in Academia

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Outcomes

- Discuss the DNP within the academic setting. Emphasis will be placed on the role of the DNP in assisting with existing faculty shortages and the DNP as a model for change in academic leadership.
- Identify how DNP prepared nurses impact the nursing faculty shortage.
- Discuss how the nursing faculty shortage shines a unique light on education tracks related to nurse educators.
- Interpret how the DNP translates new knowledge into practice within the academic setting.

Evidence

According to the AACN Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Practice Nurses (2006) DNP graduates should be able to “demonstrate refined assessment skills and base practice on the application of biophysical, psychosocial, behavioral, sociopolitical, cultural, economic, and nursing science as appropriate in their area of specialization” (AACN, 2006, p. 16). The DNP degree by its very design was conceived to be a program that prepares graduates to be experts in evidence based practice.



Fig 1. Simulation Labs at Kaplan University - Augusta Maine

Value of the DNP

Many DNP programs offer education elective courses or education leadership options in education theory, testing, evaluation, and curriculum development. A doctorally prepared nurse, no matter the educational track, is just that a terminal degree. With the shortage of doctorally prepared nurses and the economic frailty of academic budgets, there must be a push to recruit DNP graduates to assume faculty roles.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) released their Position Statement on the Practice Doctorate in Nursing in 2004, since that time the degree has evolved into a very diverse degree option. According to the AACN Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Practice Nurses (2006) DNP graduates should be able to “. . . demonstrate refined assessment skills and base practice on the application of biophysical, psychosocial, behavioral, sociopolitical, cultural, biophysical, psychosocial, behavioral, sociopolitical, cultural, economic, and nursing science as appropriate in their area of specialization” (AACN, 2006, p. 16). The DNP degree by its very design was conceived to be a program that prepares graduates to be experts in evidence based practice.



Fig. 2. Nursing Labs at Kaplan University – Augusta Maine

RESULTS

The nursing faculty shortage shines a unique light on education tracks related to nurse educators. The NLN (2007) reported that 1,900 vacant full-time faculty positions in 2007 affected 36% of reporting schools. In 2010 the AACN reported that 56% of nursing schools surveyed had faculty positions that remained unfilled (Fang & Tracy, 2009). Another important fact relates to the shortage of doctorally prepared nursing faculty. In 2004 less than 1% of nurses were educated at the doctoral level (Potempa, Redman, & Landstrom, 2009). Remember that only some of these doctorally educated nurses remain in academia, most choose to seek employment in the more lucrative nursing careers (Potempa et al., 2009). With the enrollments of nurses in DNP programs increasing exponentially each year (70 in 2009 to more than 5000 in 2010) academic institutions must realize the benefits that DNP prepared faculty bring.

The DNP prepared nurse educator is in the perfect position to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Many DNP programs offer education elective courses or education leadership options in education theory, testing, evaluation, and curriculum development. If one were to compare the core focus of the DNP degree and the NLN Core Competencies for Nurse Educators (2005) one would find the match complete. Through the use of DNP prepared faculty, both undergraduate and graduate education of nurses can be transformed. The DNP prepared nurse faculty, will be the faculty of the future.

CONCLUSIONS

Many DNP programs offer education elective courses or education leadership options in education theory, testing, evaluation, and curriculum development. If one were to compare the core focus of the DNP degree and the NLN Core Competencies for Nurse Educators (2005) one would find the match complete. Through the use of DNP prepared faculty, both undergraduate and graduate education of nurses can be transformed. The DNP prepared nurse educator is in the perfect position to bridge the gap between theory and practice.



Fig. 3. Sen. Angus King at Kaplan University – Augusta Maine

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Kaplan University Maine President – Dr. Christopher Quinn for allowing me the freedom to spread my wings