

Request to Plan a Doctor of Nursing Practice Program at Western Carolina University

Introduction

Western Carolina University requests approval to plan a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program (CIP 51.3818).

Program Description

The School of Nursing (SON) in the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte) and the School of Nursing (SON), College of Health and Human Sciences (CHHS) at Western Carolina University (WCU) propose to establish a consortium to offer a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) as a hybrid on-campus/online program. This DNP degree will prepare graduates to analyze systems of care and provide transformational leadership that will improve patient safety, quality of care, and implement evidence-based culturally competent care practices. Graduates from this program will be able to interpret and apply research findings to practice settings, determine and measure system and population outcomes, manage information systems and use appropriate technology for health and risk communication.

The proposed DNP will begin as a Post-Master's program only. Students entering the proposed program will hold a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree. In 2016 the consortium proposes to offer Post Baccalaureate admission to the DNP program that will include advanced clinical and systems/population education. MSN programs (with the exception of nursing education) will begin a transition to only Post-Baccalaureate-to-DNP admission at that time, thus replacing the MSN degree for nurse anesthetists, nurse practitioners, nurse administrators and community/public health nursing.

The choices of learning methodology will include mediating technology between the faculty and students that may be asynchronous or real time with geographic separation. This program will require visits to campus but will include online coursework. Such a design will expose students to a wider array of faculty, span urban and rural health care perspectives, and expand access for nurses in North Carolina and the southeastern region of the United States.

The focus of the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree will be nursing practice and leadership. Students will be able to specialize in one of two areas: **advanced clinical practice or systems/population practice**. Translational research will be emphasized throughout the program. Broad goals of the program will include the ability to interpret, analyze, and apply research findings to clinical and systems/population level practice settings, determine and measure system and population outcomes, manage information systems and use appropriate technology for health and risk management and communication. DNP candidates will collaborate with PhD prepared researchers to translate the findings of their research into clinical settings including direct care and public health.

Upon completion of the DNP, the student will be able to:

- Analyze and integrate evidence from nursing science with evidence from other relevant scientific disciplines to form a scientific foundation for advanced practice in nursing.
- Apply clinical scholarship, scientific evidence, and analytical methods to improve health care outcomes.
- Develop and evaluate systems to enhance safety and quality of health care.
- Advocate and participate in collaborative interdisciplinary efforts to improve health outcomes at the practice/organization, community, state and national levels.
- Engage in culturally competent and ethically sound advanced nursing practice.
- Demonstrate leadership in the improvement of patient outcomes and transformation of health care delivery.
- Directly manage complex health problems of clients or develop and implement organizational systems to facilitate access and navigation of the health care system.

Relevance to Institutional Mission and Strategic Plan

The DNP is congruent with the WCU School of Nursing's pursuit of excellence in graduate education, The DNP has been an integral Part of the SON's Strategic Plan since 2004. The DNP is also congruent with the College of Health and Human Science's mission for a dynamic learning community that prepares individuals for professional life by providing quality educational experiences that promote scholarship. The use of adult and online education theories and practices in the program will provide students educational flexibility and is congruent with the WCU Mission to provide learning opportunities through residential and online education.

Projected Enrollments

Estimated number of post-MSN students in the program during the first year of operation:

Full-time	12	Part-time	0
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Estimated number of post-MSN students in the program when it is fully operational (2015):

Full-time	24	Part-time	0
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(The projected total enrollments above are for UNCC and WCU combined.)

Graduate Council

The Council heard a presentation introducing the five proposals to plan the six Doctor of Nursing Practice programs under consideration. This presentation addressed the background of the DNP degree, reasons for its currently being offered in 37 states, an overview of the curriculum, student demand for the program in North Carolina, opportunities for employment of DNP graduates in North Carolina, and the relationship of the DNP program to the Master of Science in Nursing degree program.

Graduate Council members asked numerous questions, which were answered by the Deans and faculty members of the six Schools of Nursing in attendance. Questions addressed issues of the evolving relationship of the DNP degree and the MSN degree; which faculty members in what departments may be qualified to teach in the DNP programs; the effect of the DNP on the enrollment in Ph.D. in Nursing programs; student demand for the program in North

Carolina; opportunities for employment of DNP graduates in North Carolina; the new role of DNPs in hospitals and other healthcare facilities; the budget implications of initiating these DNP programs; how these six campuses planned to implement, support, and sustain the DNP programs should enrollment growth funding not be available; and other areas. All questions were answered to the satisfaction of the Council members.

Western Carolina University made a presentation on the specific details of its proposed DNP program, and answered questions about its program to the satisfaction of Council members.

After discussion, the Graduate Council voted, without dissent, to recommend approval of Western Carolina University's Request to Plan the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program.

Collaboration with Other Universities

As discussed in this summary, UNCC and WCU are establishing a consortium to offer the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree as a hybrid on-campus/online program. The consortium will share faculty and courses in the offering of the program.

Resource Implications

As stated in the proposal, anticipated start-up funds needed for this DNP program are modest. Any senior faculty positions that become available by retirement or resignation will be filled with faculty qualified to teach in the DNP program. The Coordinator of the program on each campus must be a DNP-prepared nurse; this Coordinator position on each campus will be filled by an existing DNP-prepared graduate nursing faculty member. In this consortium approach to offering the DNP, the total number of additional full-time faculty needed is less than would be required if separate programs were proposed for each campus.

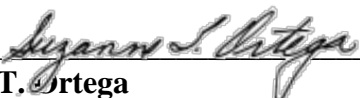
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte and Western Carolina University support the development of the Doctorate in Nursing Practice and are committed to the reallocation of existing resources to fund the program. The collaborative nature of this proposal is expected to maximize efficiency and lower costs. Both universities plan to consider a tuition surcharge/differential for enrolled DNP students.

Should the request to plan be approved, additional detailed budget information on the DNP program will be submitted with the Request to Establish document.

Recommendation

The staff of the General Administration recommends that the Board of Governors approve the request from the Western Carolina University to plan a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program .

Approved to be Recommended for Planning to the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs


Suzanne T. Ortega
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

May 31, 2012