

## Request to Plan a Doctor of Nursing Practice Program at UNC-Chapel Hill

### Introduction

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill requests approval to plan a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program (CIP 51.3818).

### Program Description

The DNP program of study will build upon baccalaureate education and expand current master's level education, to prepare nurses for clinical leadership and hands-on advanced practice in increasingly complex health care environments. Graduates of the DNP program will receive preparation in such key areas as evidence-based practice, organization and systems leadership, finance, health policy, information technology, population health, quality improvement, patient safety, and translational research with the goal of improving patient and population health status and outcomes.

The DNP curriculum prepares nurses for a tripartite role in *advanced nursing practice, clinical leadership/health advocacy, and practice inquiry*. Graduates use their advanced preparation to manage increasingly complex patient situations, to identify patterns of need in panels of patients experiencing similar health threats, to appraise and compare the evidence for care effectiveness, and to provide leadership for quality improvement in health care environments.

The current UNC-Chapel Hill Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program offers two advanced nursing practice tracks: (a) advanced clinical specialization focused on direct patient care (e.g. nurse practitioner), and (b) health care systems specialties focused on executive nursing roles that support clinical practice (e.g. administration, organizational leadership). The total course credits in the existing MSN program range from 40 to 46 credit hours. Although some of these courses will be revised to reflect the new DNP competencies, the majority will continue to be offered as part of the DNP curriculum. The DNP tracks will include nurse practitioner and nurse executive options already present in the existing MSN program.

The DNP program will be designed for nurses seeking a terminal degree in nursing practice offering an alternative to a research-focused doctoral program that offers the PhD. The credit hours for the DNP program are based on national accreditation standards as well as DNP programs at other comparable research universities. The AACN recommends three years of full-time, year round study including 1000 clinical residency hours for a bachelor's-to-DNP and at least one year of full-time year round study for a master's-to-DNP program.

The UNC-Chapel Hill DNP program will have two pathways. An entry-level Bachelor of Science in Nursing BSN-to-DNP pathway will include three years of full-time study consisting of approximately 68 to 72 credit hours. Those credit hours will reflect approximately 1000 clinical hours, required coursework for advanced practice, leadership, and practice-based inquiry and completion of a capstone experience, which will include a Practice-based Inquiry Project.

The second pathway will be the Master's of Science in Nursing MSN-to-DNP. This pathway will allow advanced practice nurses and nurse leaders with an earned MSN degree to earn a DNP degree. DNP students who are nationally certified as APRNs have completed a minimum of 500 precepted clinical hours to qualify for national certification. Thus, nationally certified MSN-to-DNP students will require approximately 36 credit hours, approximately 500 clinical hours, and the completion of a capstone experience including a Practice Inquiry Project.

The Doctor of Nursing Practice graduate will be prepared to function at the highest level of advanced nursing practice. The DNP graduate will be educated to:

1. Integrate nursing knowledge with knowledge from ethics and the biophysical, psychosocial, organizational, and information sciences as the bases for advanced nursing practice and innovative approaches to health care delivery.
2. Demonstrate organizational and systems leadership to promote quality, safety, and improved health of populations.
3. Demonstrate clinical scholarship and utilize analytical methods to identify best practices and translate evidence into practice.
4. Demonstrate leadership in the development and use of information systems and related technologies for health care delivery to optimize outcomes for individuals and populations.
5. Develop, evaluate, and advocate for health care policy at the institutional, local, state, national, and/or international levels.
6. Facilitate collaboration and teamwork to assure high quality patient or system outcomes.
7. Analyze and utilize strategies of risk reduction/illness prevention, health promotion, and health maintenance for individuals and populations.
8. Demonstrate practice expertise and specialized knowledge in a distinct focus or specialty area of advanced nursing practice.

### **Relevance to Institutional Mission and Strategic Plan**

The mission of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Nursing is to enhance and improve the health and well being of the people of North Carolina and the nation, and, as relevant and appropriate, the people of other nations, through its programs of education, research, and scholarship, and through clinical practice and community service.

As with many states, the majority of primary care providers in North Carolina are clustered near urban centers, leaving many areas of this largely rural state underserved for primary and preventative services. Of the one hundred counties in North Carolina, 56 are designated as Health Provider Shortage Areas and 91 are designated as Medically Underserved Areas. Advanced Practice Nurses, who are often recruited from and then return to these rural and underserved areas, are a major contributor to meeting the health care needs of the state.

**Projected Enrollments**

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

Full-time	30	Part-time	20
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Estimated number of students in the program when it is fully operational:

Full-time	210	Part-time	140
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**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.

UNC-Chapel Hill 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 UNC-Chapel Hill's Request to Plan the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program.

**Collaboration with Other Universities**

UNC-Chapel Hill and Winston-Salem State University have committed to collaborating to the extent practicable. For example, the two institutions will begin by sharing at least one course offered simultaneously via videoconferencing with faculty on both campuses sharing joint responsibility for planning and delivering the content of the course. Grading and enrollment will occur on the students' home campus.

**Resource Implications**

In order to meet the expenses of offering the DNP program, UNC-Chapel Hill plans to apply for increased enrollment dollars, program expansion funding, school-based tuition, and

federal grant funds. If sufficient funding is not available from the above sources, UNC-Chapel Hill would need to increase some class sizes, decrease MSN-to-DNP admissions, and/or consider charging a higher school-based tuition for the MSN-to-DNP students. The last resort would be decreasing BSN-to-DNP admissions, as this would decrease the workforce supply of Nurse Practitioners and Nurse Executives.

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 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to plan a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program.

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

  
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Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

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