

Pathways to the PhD in Nursing: An Analysis of Similarities and Differences  
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**Background:** The University of Wisconsin-Madison addressed the need to attract younger and more diverse students to PhD education in nursing by designing an early-entry option for pre-baccalaureate students interested in pursuing research careers. An evaluation of the Early-Entry PhD Option was completed with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Evaluating Innovations in Nursing Education Initiative.\* The purpose of the evaluation was to compare the Early-Entry PhD option to two more conventional entry points. The findings highlight the similarities and differences among the three groups and can be used to guide PhD program development, expansion, and revision.

**Methods:** Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from students admitted to the PhD program in nursing over a 10-year period. Three groups (N=84) comprised the sample: (1) Early-Entry students admitted as undergraduates or immediately upon graduation (N=29), (2) Mid-Entry students with baccalaureate degrees and at least one year of work experience (N=27), and (3) Delayed-Entry students with master's degrees in nursing with a minimum of one year post-master's work experience (N=28). The sources of data included transcriptions of individual interviews and review of secondary data. The telephone interviews focused on career decision-making, facilitators, and challenges of being a PhD student. Participation rates were 83% for the Early-Entry group, 70% for the Mid-Entry group, and 79% for the Delayed-Entry group. The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. The reviews of secondary data were compiled from databases maintained by the School's Academic Programs Office. The variables of interest included measures of diversity, productivity as PhD students, program progression, and post-graduation employment. The review included 87% of the total sample because 38% of the Early-Entry PhD students did not matriculate in the PhD program after earning the baccalaureate degree. Descriptive statistics and visual graphics were used to summarize and compare quantitative data about the three entry groups.

**Results:** The qualitative data revealed common themes among and within the three groups. Three themes were common to all of the groups: 1) funding impacted the decision to proceed, delay, or forego PhD study, 2) mentors were critical to student satisfaction and future success, and 3) preparation for the faculty role was viewed as inadequate. Two themes were specific only to the Early-Entry students: 1) the decision to pursue a PhD was influenced by a positive undergraduate research experience and 2) the perceived level of clinical knowledge was of concern. The quantitative data also revealed similarities across the three groups. All of the students showed evidence of dissemination (publications, papers, and posters) and were most likely to assume faculty positions post-graduation. Differences were apparent in the quantitative measures of diversity and program progression. The Early-Entry group was considerably younger at graduation than the other two groups (31, 41, and 50, respectively), and composed of more students from underrepresented populations (28%, 15%, and 0%). There was also a difference in time to degree. Students who pursued the PhD after a master's degree spent more total time to degree than those who began as undergraduate students.

**Conclusions:** Based on the results, the following recommendations are offered for consideration: 1) revise existing and develop new early-entry PhD programs in nursing, 2) identify the best practices of professor-student mentoring models, and 3) include strong teaching preparation in programs that intend to graduate future nursing faculty.

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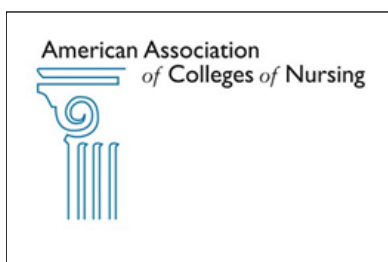
Identifying Barriers and Facilitators to Nurse Faculty Careers for Doctoral Nursing Students:  
Report to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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In 2013, AACN conducted a RWJF sponsored, national survey of 3,000 randomly selected doctoral nursing students (1,500 PhD students and 1,500 DNP students) on barriers and facilitators to faculty careers. This study aims to understand how salary, benefits, and job attributes, along with students' experiences during doctoral education, affect their decisions to pursue academic or non-academic careers in nursing.

The survey achieved a 60% response rate. Descriptive and multivariate analyses were conducted to generate findings including (1) doctoral education has a positive impact on students' plans to pursue academic nursing careers; (2) a large percentage of students are already faculty; (3) many students have post-graduation plans for academic careers; (4) most doctoral students will be middle-aged upon graduation; (5) students reported work responsibility, lack of financial resources, family responsibility, lack of exposure to doctorally-prepared nurses, and being less knowledgeable about doctoral education as the most common factors that prevented them from starting doctoral education earlier; (6) the most important factors motivating students to pursue doctoral education were previous teaching and research-related experience, social support, and a desire to advance the nursing profession; (7) in terms of preparation for academic careers, the majority of PhD students were confident to carry out general academic tasks but were less confident for some research tasks; (8) mentorship during doctoral education appeared to have a positive impact on plans to pursue academic careers; (9) the majority of doctoral students received financial support to cover major doctoral education expenses; (10) the most common barriers to academic careers were financial compensation in academic nursing and negative perceptions about the academic nursing environment; (11) common themes identified regarding facilitators to academic careers were personal interest in teaching and research, a desire to advance the nursing profession, positive experiences during doctoral education, and academic nursing environment; and (12) three distinct student profiles emerged for students who planned to pursue academic careers, students who planned to seek nonacademic careers, and students who were undecided about their career directions.

Based on the study findings, 11 recommendations were made in the following areas: (1) prepare nursing students for doctoral education and academic careers early; (2) provide opportunities for students who plan to seek academic careers; (3) improve student experiences during doctoral education; and (4) build a longitudinal database of doctoral students nationwide to monitor their outcomes.



**Evaluating Innovations  
in Nursing Education**

## Exploring Doctoral Education: Implications for the Nursing Faculty Shortage

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**Background:** Researchers at Indiana University conducted a study to address the benefits, consequences, facilitators and barriers associated with the intent to seek doctoral education, preparation for teaching and perceptions of an academic career in nursing. A two and a half year, five-phase, mixed-method, sequential explanatory, descriptive research design was used to study three groups of interest: MSN educators who were not enrolled in doctoral program, current doctoral students, and recent doctoral graduates.

**Methods:** First, pilot interviews were conducted with three sample groups of nurses representing the three populations of interest to help develop survey items. Next, the survey was piloted with 30 nurses prior to launch. Then, subjects were solicited from seven purposively selected states using cluster random sampling accomplished through dividing the U.S. into six sections by longitude and latitude, without the state of Indiana, where the researchers were located. The final sample included 808 nurses (260 MSN educators, 202 DNP and 196 PhD students, 75 DNP and 75 PhD graduates) who completed the electronic survey. This was followed by 36 comprehensive interviews (12 MSN educators, 7 DNP and 5 PhD students, and 6 DNP and 6 PhD graduates) with volunteers from participants who took the survey. All interviews occurred via telephone with each interview audiotaped, transcribed and analyzed individually and as a dataset. Finally, analysis of the integrated qualitative and quantitative data occurred.

**Results:** Time, money, program characteristics, frustration and faculty role were found to be the most important factors reported. Participants said finding the **time** necessary to do the intellectual work, the “right” time to go to school, securing release time from employers, and flexibility of the program were paramount in their decision to pursue and/or be successful in doctoral programs. Degree completion in three-four years was only important to DNP students. Findings related to **money** included distress about paying for doctoral education and concerns related to return on investment including the impact on salary after graduation. Financial aid in addition to the ability to continue working full-time was critical. Participants perceived **program characteristics** to be very important in their decision related to pursuing doctoral education however they were not focused on faculty research interests and school credentials. Program flexibility and online options with some residency were important. **Frustration** related to the unclear distinction and preparation of the two doctoral degrees for both academe and practice was reported. Participants also shared their perceptions of loss such as work quality, family time and intellectual engagement in doctoral content due to the pressure of being in a doctoral program. Finally, participants described an expectation of “being different” in their **faculty role** after obtaining a terminal degree, however, many found that they had no change in roles or responsibilities and did not feel prepared for the teaching or faculty role. Those without prior teaching experience did not feel prepared for teaching and marginally prepared for research so the first year as faculty was extremely stressful.

**Conclusions:** As a discipline, we must re-develop the infrastructure to overcome the barriers and provide the support that nurses need to become doctorally prepared faculty. This may involve re-visioning curriculum in both the DNP and PhD programs to include coursework in faculty role and teaching preparation. Moreover, clarity of how each degree fits within academe and particularly the intended outcomes of a doctoral degree is necessary for nurses who are already educators, as well as those who are entering faculty roles for the first time. Finally, flexibility in doctoral education delivery and student progression options as well as financial support are critical factors for attracting doctoral students.

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Evaluating Innovations  
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## Hiring Practices and Intentions of Directors of Nursing Programs Related to DNP and PhD-prepared Faculty

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Nursing schools report being unable to accept more qualified applicants due to the nursing faculty shortage (AACN, 2011), a shortage projected to worsen with looming faculty retirements. This study was designed to determine what nursing schools have in place or underway for the incorporation of DNP-prepared faculty as a means to address the shortage.

Program heads of 482 randomly-selected programs, approximately half of which offer ADN degrees and the rest baccalaureate and higher degrees, completed an online survey about hiring preferences and intentions regarding DNP graduates, mechanisms that are in place to determine rank, track and roles for DNP-prepared faculty, and the perceived capacity of DNP-prepared faculty to fulfill the breadth of tasks, responsibilities, and expectations associated with nurse faculty positions. We found that administrators of ADN programs are largely not targeting DNP-prepared faculty applicants and, if hired, generally place them in the same academic rank and job description as they do masters-prepared faculty. Conversely, program heads of BSN and higher degree programs are anticipating hiring DNP-prepared graduates, they are anticipating hiring more PhD-prepared faculty or faculty with no specific degree requirement than DNP-prepared faculty.

While there are differences between programs, there are a number of issues which may preclude the academic success of DNP-prepared faculty. These issues include a lack of research preparation, which limits teaching opportunities beyond clinical courses as well as the ability serve as a research advisor to students, the class structure developing between PhD- and DNP-prepared faculty, and a lack of teaching background shared with PhD-prepared faculty applicants. The lack of hiring emphasis on DNP-prepared faculty applicants along with other issues (e.g., fewer development-focused resources) will affect the acceptance and long-term success of DNP-prepared faculty which will, in turn, negatively impact the preparation of pre-licensure as well as advanced practice area-focused graduate students. The addition of the DNP-prepared applicant may not be sufficient to abate the faculty shortage.

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## The Impact of Teaching and Mentoring Doctoral Nursing Students on Faculty Members' Research and Scholarship Productivity and their Work-Life Balance

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**Background:** The nursing and nursing faculty shortages have resulted in the proliferation of doctoral nursing programs across the country. Faculty teaching in PhD and DNP programs are expected to teach and mentor doctoral students as well as other nursing students, conduct research and scholarship, and provide service to their schools, institutions, and profession.

**Purpose:** This study examined the effect of teaching and mentoring doctoral students on doctoral program faculty members' research and scholarship productivity and their work-life balance (WLB), which is known to affect faculty members' job satisfaction and intent to remain in their faculty position.

**Methods:** A mixed-methods study was conducted with a national sample of nursing faculty who teach in PhD or DNP programs. An on-line survey, based on the results of focus groups conducted with PhD and DNP faculty at two national meetings, was sent to a national sample of faculty who taught in a doctoral program for two or more years. Two rounds of random samples of schools were drawn and their doctoral program faculty (n = 1197) were invited to participate; 554 respondents (46.3% response rate) comprised the analytic sample.

**Results:** On-line survey results indicated that DNP graduates have moved into doctoral education in greater numbers than PhD graduates. Although PhD and DNP program faculty reported spending a large amount of time engaged in scholarship-related activities, DNP-prepared faculty reported fewer institutional resources to do so. Factors that most strongly supported faculty maintaining their level of scholarship productivity were the belief that engaging in scholarship made them better teachers and the personal gratification they experienced with doctoral students' successes. Regression analyses indicated that the average number of hours spent on scholarship-related activities and time bought out from teaching were the best predictors of research productivity. Scores on a WLB survey indicated better WLB than expected based on our focus group results. Factors associated with good WLB included higher academic rank, having tenure, older age, years in education, current faculty position and no involvement in clinical practice; regression analysis identified current faculty position as the best predictor of WLB.

**Discussion and Implications:** The growing number of doctoral programs in response to the nursing and faculty shortages has resulted in increased expectations for faculty to teach and mentor PhD and DNP students while being productive in scholarship despite increased faculty workloads. Efforts to address research, scholarship, and WLB in future cohorts of faculty will take on increasing importance as new faculty members with different expectations about WLB move into doctoral program teaching with retirements of current faculty. Institutional efforts are needed to ensure a cadre of doctoral program faculty who are able to establish and maintain their research and scholarship and WLB.