

DATE: February 26, 2016

TO: AACN Board of Directors

FROM: Karen Kesten, Director of Faculty Initiatives  
Robert Rosseter, Chief Communications Officer

RE: Follow-up on the Recommendations from the [RAND Report](#) on the DNP

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In October 2014, AACN released the results of a national study titled, *The DNP by 2015: A Study of the Institutional, Political, and Professional Issues that Facilitate or Impede Establishing a Post-Baccalaureate Doctor of Nursing Practice Program*. The Board commissioned the RAND Corporation to complete this assessment to better understand the issues facing schools moving to transition to the DNP, including market demand, institutional barriers, state policy and/or regulatory structures, university system constraints, sociological factors, and issues related to resources and financial impact.

The following provides an update on AACN's activities in response to the report's final recommendations. Please note that Recommendations 3, 4, and 6 have been grouped together since they relate to member education and providing technical assistance to schools.

**Recommendation 1 - Outcome Studies:** AACN should conduct and collaborate with others to conduct outcome studies of DNP practice to better understand the impact of DNP graduates on patient care.

- No action has been taken yet to conduct a national study on the impact of DNPs on patient and systems outcomes. When the Board last discussed the possibility of a study in March 2015, there was agreement that too few DNPs were currently in practice to conduct a study of this nature (no critical mass yet).

**Recommendation 2 - Outreach:** AACN should provide outreach and data to help employers and healthcare organizations understand the added competencies and capabilities of DNP-educated APRNs.

- Final RAND report, AACN press release, and talking points were distributed to CNOs and other practice leaders via listserves maintained by AONE and The Advisory Board.
- In September 2015, AACN's Dr. Karen Kesten was a keynote presenter at the annual meeting of the Doctors of Nursing Practice, Inc. held in Seattle, WA. More than half of those in attendance were practice leaders.

**Recommendation 5 – Clarify Requirements:** AACN should provide greater clarity and guidance related to requirements for the DNP project.

- In March 2015, the Implementation of the DNP Task Force released its final report as a white paper – titled *The Doctor of Nursing Practice: Current Issues and Clarifying*

*Recommendations* – to provide greater clarity and guidance related to requirements for the DNP final project. Three webinars focused on the DNP project are currently planned:

- *The Doctor of Nursing Practice: Current Issues and Clarifying Recommendations*, March 29, 2016
- *Showcasing a Three-pronged Approach to Creating DNP Leaders and Change Agents*, April 19, 2016
- *The Art of Getting What You Want from BSN-DNP Projects*, April 28, 2016
- AACN is in talks with the Doctors of Nursing Practice, Inc. about creating a central repository for DNP projects. Current work is focused on overcoming technology challenges.

**Recommendation 3 – Address Barriers:** AACN should focus on understanding and documenting successful strategies in overcoming barriers to offering BSN-to-DNP programs.

**Recommendation 4 – Showcase Successes:** AACN should document and showcase examples of collaborative partnerships between schools and hospitals or other healthcare organizations for the purpose of providing clinical practice sites.

**Recommendation 6 – Assist Schools in Transition:** AACN should continue with ongoing efforts to assist schools in overcoming challenges to offering the BSN to DNP.

- AACN’s conference and webinar programming has focused on addressing barriers, showcasing successes, and facilitating schools transitioning to the DNP:
  - At the Fall Semiannual Meeting in October 2015, a general session was held on *Success Stories from Post-Baccalaureate Doctor of Nursing Practice Programs*. Four schools provided podium presentations on overcoming barriers to implementing a BSN to DNP program.
  - In November 2015, members of the DNP task force participated in a webinar titled *The DNP: Current Issues and Clarifying Recommendations* to present strategies for overcoming barriers to BSN to DNP programs and receive feedback from members. Over 450 members registered for this event.
  - In January 2016, task force chair Dr. Sarah Thompson presented a session on *Implementation of the DNP Task Force: Recommendations* to clarify the purpose of the DNP final product and the practice hour requirements. More than 200 members attended this session and engaged in a rich dialogue.
- AACN has highlighted examples of partnerships between schools and hospitals/ healthcare organizations around providing clinical sites through its programming:
  - At the Fall Meeting in October 2015, a session on *Building Academic Partnerships* was presented by a panel of academic-practice partnerships award winners.
  - Three webinars were recently presented showcasing productive partnerships:
    - *Building Successful Academic-Practice Partnerships: UAB and Birmingham VA Medical Center*, February 9, 2016
    - *Building Successful Academic-Practice Partnerships: The Stony Brook University Experience*, March 8, 2016
    - *Building Successful Academic-Practice Partnerships: The Arizona State University Experience*, March 16, 2016

- Staff members routinely refer programs moving to offer the DNP to colleagues who have successfully made the transition as well as to the online DNP program implementation tool kit and other available resources.

### **Next Steps**

Advancing the RAND report recommendations has been incorporated into AACN's Activity Plan for FY 2017-2019 with specific activities focused on promoting research on DNP outcomes, providing guidance related to the DNP project and curricular design, creating informational pieces promoting the DNP, and expanding outreach to practice leaders to enhance the understanding of and demand for DNP-prepared practitioners.

**In addition, the Board needs to consider timing to conduct and/or collaborate with others to conduct outcome studies of DNP practice to better understand the impact of DNP graduates on patient and systems outcomes. Though not explicit in the RAND report's final recommendations, the Board might also want to consider its next steps in terms of outreach to certification and accrediting bodies since a lack of requirement of the DNP for advanced nursing practice roles was cited among the leading barriers for schools interested in offering the BSN-to-DNP option.**