

# PhD/DNP - Dual Degree Program

Patricia Gonce Morton,  
PhD, RN, ACNP-BC, FAAN

Dean Emeritus

University of Utah College of Nursing  
Editor, *Journal of Professional Nursing*

1

## Objectives

By the end of the presentation, the participant will be able to:

- ▶ Compare and contrast the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree and the PhD degree
- ▶ Describe dual degree program options
- ▶ Discuss strategies to recruit students to the PhD and DNP degree programs



2

## History of Degrees

- ▶ PhD in other disciplines
- ▶ EdD degree for nurse educators since 1930s
- ▶ PhD in Nursing started mid-1960 with rapid growth in the 1980s
- ▶ DNS and DNSc were other research focused doctoral degrees in nursing



3

## History of Degrees

- DNP degree established in 2004 by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) – position statement
- The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice, AACN 2006



4



## Purpose of Degrees

PhD

- ▶ Prepare nurse scientists/nurse researchers

DNP

- ▶ Practice focused – nurse practitioner, nurse anesthetist, clinical nurse specialist, nurse midwife, informaticist, administrator/leader

Neither is intended to prepare an educator

5



## DNP Recommendation

- ▶ American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) recommended four advanced practice roles be educated at the DNP level by 2015
- ▶ National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF) recommend DNP preparation for nurse practitioners by 2025
- ▶ American Association of Nurse Anesthetists require DNP program by 2025

6

## Number of Programs

### PhD

- 128 programs
- Enrollment flat to trending down

### DNP

- 348 programs, 98 in planning phase
- Enrollment markedly rising



7

## Plan of Study

### PhD

- Post-baccalaureate to PhD
- Post-master's to PhD

### DNP

- Post-baccalaureate to DNP
- Post-master's to DNP
- Post-graduate certificate option for nurse practitioners

8

## Years in Program

### PhD

- 3 to 5 years full-time
- 5 to 8 years part-time

### DNP

- 3 years full-time
- 4 to 6 years part-time

9

## Curriculum

### PhD

- Research methods
- Statistics
- Specialty area courses
- Research practicum

### DNP

- Practice focused
- Evidence-based practice, quality improvement, outcomes research
- Clinical practicum 1000 hours required

Each can add a teaching certificate



10

## Finances

### PhD

- Expectation of scholarships
- Financial aid
- Graduate assistant or research assistant positions

### DNP

- Often use tuition plan from workplace
- Fewer scholarships available
- Some teaching assistant positions

11

## Final Product

### PhD

- Original research, discovery of new knowledge – dissertation

### DNP

- Practice focused, protocols, implementation of evidence, outcomes evaluation – a project



12

## Employment

### PhD

- ▶ Faculty position as researcher
- ▶ Researcher for healthcare organization
- ▶ Government such as National Institutes of Health

### DNP

- ▶ Practice position
- ▶ Faculty position
- ▶ Leadership position in practice

13

## Dual Degree Programs

- Combined research and practice foci
- Some credits count toward both degrees
- Few schools currently offer
  - Case Western Reserve University
  - U Tennessee Memphis
  - University of Arizona
  - Johns Hopkins University
  - Others in development stage



14

## PhD After the DNP Degree

- ▶ Some universities offer a sequential option rather than simultaneous
- ▶ Will count some of the DNP credits toward a PhD
- ▶ Example, Indiana University of Pennsylvania – focus of research is nursing education



15

## Recruitment Strategies

### PhD

- ▶ Must work hard to sell the program
- ▶ Students often do not understand a research career; think it is only statistics that they did not like in school
- ▶ Must promote the research expertise of faculty
- ▶ Need to sell the excitement of answering clinical questions
- ▶ Admit students whose interests are a match with faculty's program of research

16



## Recruitment Strategies

### DNP

- ▶ Not as hard to sell the program
- ▶ Students usually have some notion of the practice roles
- ▶ Must promote the excellence of the program and the clinical sites
- ▶ Need to explain the role of an advanced practice nurse, informatician, or leadership position
- ▶ Admit students whose interests are a match with the program. Example if interest is primary care, do not admit to an acute care NP program

17

## Resources



- ▶ The PhD Pipeline in Nursing  
<https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/news/surveys-data/PhD-Pipeline.pdf>
- ▶ AACN website – DNP and PhD information

18

# Questions

