

# Better Together: Innovative Strategies to Educate DNP and PhD Students Collaboratively

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KNOXVILLE

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COLLEGE OF NURSING

# Background



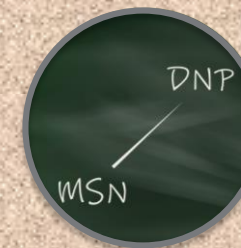
UT Knoxville  
College of Nursing  
offers PhD and  
DNP programs in  
an e-learning  
format with on-  
campus intensives



Faculty created a  
curriculum with  
shared coursework  
where PhD and DNP  
students learn their  
respective roles of  
generating nursing  
knowledge and  
translating evidence  
into practice



In Fall 2018, 47  
DNP students  
enrolled at BSN  
and post-master's  
entry levels



In August 2017,  
the MSN  
programs were  
elevated to the  
DNP

# Literature Support

- 📖 Teams consisting of DNP and PhD prepared nurses can more effectively bridge the gap between discovery and clinical practice than either could working alone (Murphy, Staffileno, & Carlson, 2015)
- 📖 Benefits of collaborative strategies at every stage of doctoral education, including pre-application and post-graduation (Buchholz, Yingling, Jones, & Tenfelde, 2015)
- 📖 Emphasis on placing DNP and PhD students in foundational courses together



# Literature Support



Course objectives can be written to emphasize the strength of each doctoral pathway; faculty development offerings should focus on mutual collaboration to balance teaching responsibilities and enhance strategies for working together

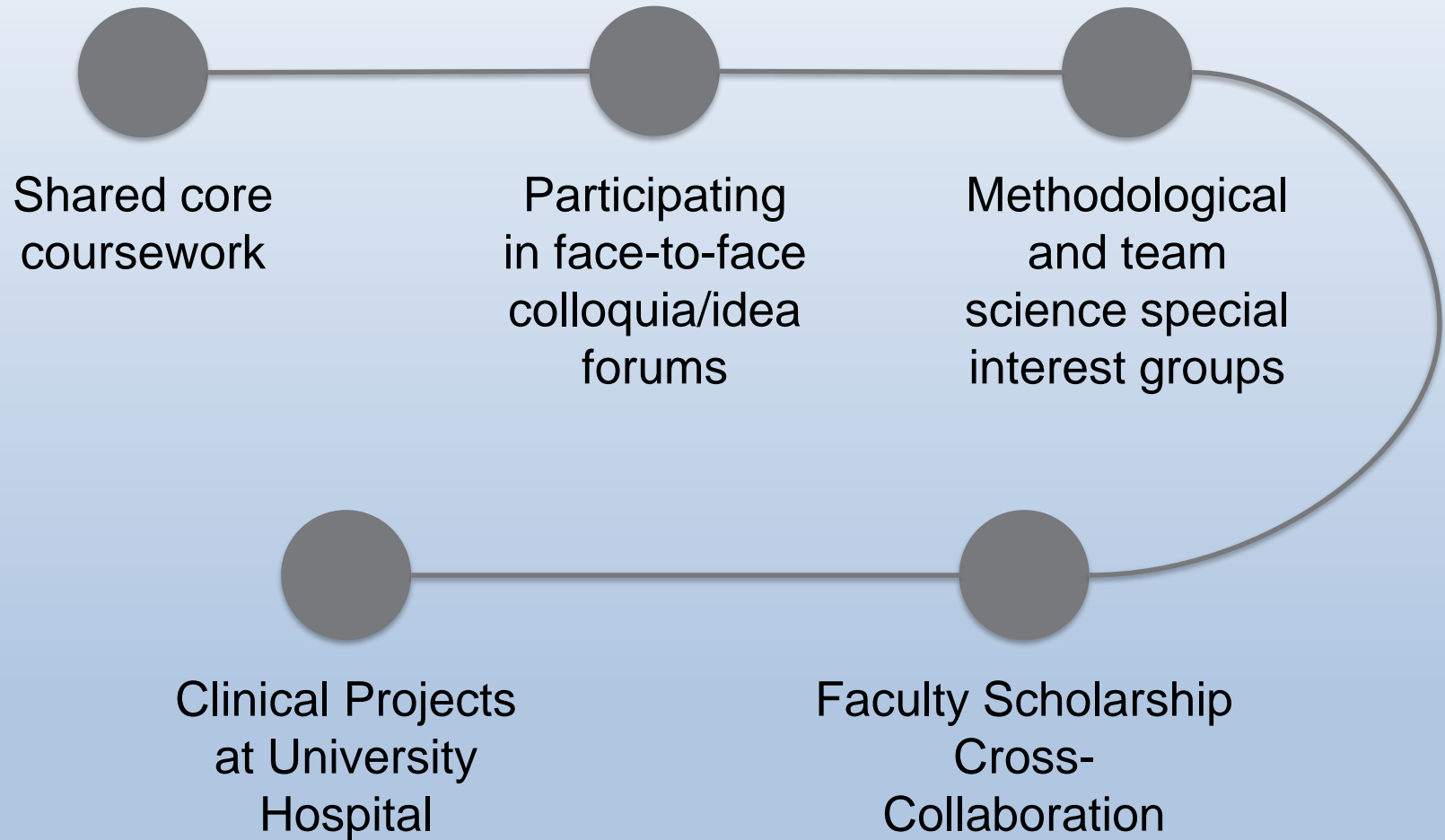
(Murphy, Staffileno, & Carlson, 2015)



One educational model included PhD and DNP students (n=12) with similar research and clinical interests partnering on dissertations and scholarly projects, which resulted in seven publications and six conference presentations

(Eaton, Gordon, & Doorenbos, 2017)

# Methods/Strategies



# Shared Coursework

Health &  
Healthcare  
Policy

Nursing  
Leadership in  
Complex  
Systems

Review &  
Critique of  
Scientific  
Literature



# Shared Doctoral Colloquia

- ❖ Lively face-to-face sessions that allow open exchange of ideas and promote excitement for scholarship
- ❖ Occurs during on-campus intensives twice a semester
- ❖ Coincide annually with Research Day, which focuses on knowledge discovery and translation







# Methodological and team science special interest groups

- ❖ Phenomenology Group

- ❖ Health Information Technology and Simulation Coffee

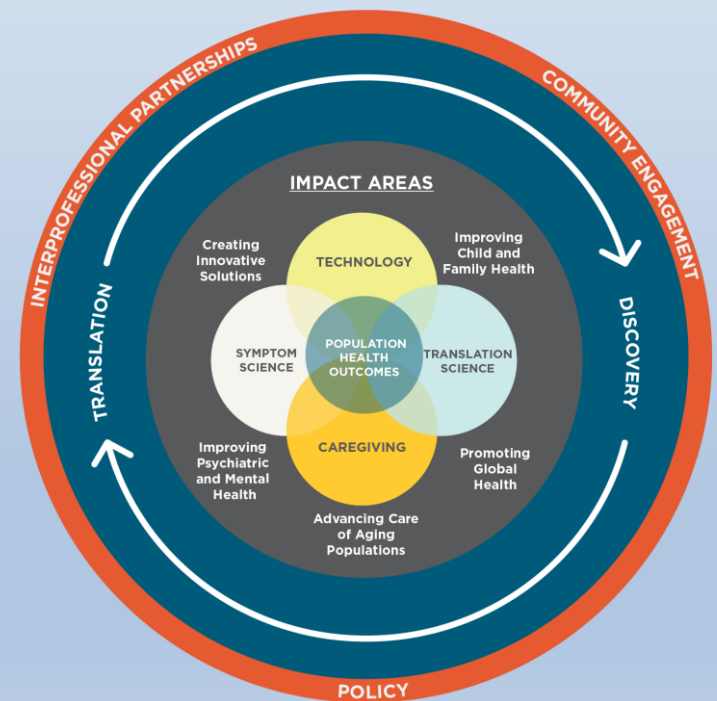
- ❖ Scholarship Model

  - ❖ Technology

  - ❖ Symptom Science

  - ❖ Caregiving/End-of-life

  - ❖ Translation Science



# Clinical Projects at University Hospital

- ❖ Establishes foundation to connect PhD and DNP students on projects that address needs of the medical center
  - ❖ PhD student conducting secondary analysis of patient data with staff to determine the root cause of 24-hour mortality rates in patients admitted with sepsis
  - ❖ Future DNP student will follow-up with new guidelines, practices, and outcomes measurement based on published findings

# Clinical Projects at University Hospital



- ❖ Working with the University Hospital promotes greater synergy among practicing nurses, DNP and PhD projects
- ❖ MAGNET status hospital adopting cyclical nature of generating knowledge and translating science in nursing research council through *think tanks*
- ❖ UTK has a unique advantage with Nursing Faculty Liaison who advises nursing research at the University Hospital



# Faculty Scholarship Cross-Collaboration

- ❖ PhD and DNP Faculty Scholarship Cross-Collaboration helps emulate the relationship, roles, and experiences for students
  - ❖ HRSA-funded project to develop Rural Communities Opioid Response Planning Consortium
  - ❖ HRSA-funded Improving Clinical Education for Advanced Practice Learning through Academic-Practice Partnerships
    - ❖ allows the College of Nursing to develop innovative academic clinical partnerships with two community clinical partners



# Opportunities for Feedback

## ❖ Formative Means

- ❖ Hutson's Huddles
- ❖ On-Campus Intensives
- ❖ Faculty virtual office hours
- ❖ Frequent informal student check-ins

## ❖ Summative Means

- ❖ End of Semester Teaching Evaluations

# Results



- ❖ Pairing advanced students with less experienced students has created an effective cooperative learning model;
- ❖ Shared activities have led to deeper and more meaningful learning across programs and within respective roles

# Challenges

- ❖ Discrepancies in enrollment numbers between PhD and DNP students
  - ❖ Does this change the student learning outcomes for one of the student groups?
- ❖ Identifying DNP and PhD prepared faculty who are enthusiastic about co-teaching shared coursework

# Strategic Gains



- ❖ Synergy between students
- ❖ Clinical projects at the University Hospital
- ❖ Increased faculty cross-collaboration
- ❖ Improvement in student learning/understanding of roles
- ❖ Fostering collaborative team approach to knowledge generation and translation



# Strategic Gains-Student Perspective

- ❖ “DNP/PhD collaboration aids in discovery, while encouraging one-another” (DNP Student)
- ❖ “DNP/PhD collaboration leads to a deeper understanding of research development and implementation” (DNP Student)
- ❖ “Shared classes should occur early in the programs of study to effectively communicate how professionals in each discipline can complement each other” (PhD Student)
- ❖ “Combined classes and sessions promote mutual respect between the academic tracks” (PhD Student)

# Lessons Learned



- ❖ Shared coursework should begin early and continue throughout the program
- ❖ Coursework should be designed to the strengths of each doctoral pathway
- ❖ PhD and DNP curricula must be coordinated to ensure shared courses occur at points of optimal learning
- ❖ Faculty buy-in is key to success
- ❖ Extensive faculty development is suggested
- ❖ Grouping students with shared interests is a technique that may increase student buy-in for collaborative work
- ❖ Scholarly productivity may be enhanced when students from the two pathways collaborate, because each student approaches the shared problem from a different focus

# Conclusion

- ❖ Collaboration among PhD and DNP nurse scholars during their educational program is a catalyst for advancing nursing science through the cycle of discovery and translation by facilitating post-degree teamwork
- ❖ Our experiences have demonstrated promise for preparing nurse scholars with the goal of making important discoveries to improve healthcare for patients and families