Scholarly Practice Guidelines

Philosophy

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) is distinguished by the completion of a Scholarly Practice Project that demonstrates synthesis of the student’s coursework and lays the groundwork for future scholarship. Because the DNP is focused on mastery of advanced practice in a specialty area, the Scholarly Practice Project should demonstrate the achievement of that mastery. The practice doctorate focuses heavily on practice that is innovative and evidence-based, reflecting the application of credible research findings, through an integrative practice experience. The criteria for the Scholarly Practice Project should reflect the Essentials of DNP education as outlined in the 2006 AACN document\(^1\) and listed below:

1. Scientific Underpinnings for Practice
2. Organizational and Systems Leadership for Quality Improvement and Systems Thinking
3. Clinical Scholarship and Advanced Analytics
4. Information Systems/Technology and Patient Care Technology for the Improvement and Transformation of Health Care
5. Health Care Policy for Advocacy in Health Care
6. Interprofessional Collaboration for Improving Patient and Population Health Outcomes
7. Clinical Prevention and Population Health for Improving the Nation’s Health
8. Advanced Nursing Practice.

The Essentials should be reflected in and define the scope of the Scholarly Practice Project. Broadly, DNP education prepares individuals for advanced practice leadership with interdisciplinary, information systems, quality improvement, and patient safety expertise.\(^2,3\)

Characteristics of Scholarly Practice Projects

The Scholarly Practice Project documents the outcomes of the student’s doctoral education experience, providing a measurable medium for evaluating the mastery of and growth in knowledge and clinical expertise.\(^4\) As noted above, the Scholarly Practice Project should represent a synthesis of all classroom and clinical learning experiences that together demonstrates the student’s achievement of program competencies.

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2 Ibid
4 Ibid.
Thus the Scholarly Practice Project should reflect those outcomes that the DNP program prepares them to meet.

Types of Scholarly Practice Projects

Scholarly Practice Projects are related to advanced practice in the nursing specialty and are designed to benefit a group, population, or community rather than an individual patient. Projects evolve from an identifiable practice problem and are done in partnership with another entity, e.g., clinical agency, health department, government agency, community group. Types of Scholarly Practice Projects* that are acceptable include but not limited to:

- Practice change initiatives
- Program evaluation
- Quality improvement initiatives (care processes, patient outcomes)
- Implementation and evaluation of evidence-based practice guidelines
- Health care policy analysis; develop, implement, evaluate or revise policy
- The design and use of databases to retrieve information for decision-making, planning and evaluation
- The design and evaluation of new models of care/practice models
- Designing and evaluating health care programs
- System change project
- Financial/cost analyses to compare care models and potential cost savings
- Implementation and evaluation of innovative uses of technology to enhance/evaluate care
- Collaboration on evidence-based legislative change
- The design, implementation, and evaluation of new evidence-based interventions

*Projects are selected and evolve through student collaboration with clinical and faculty mentors.

Examples of Scholarly Practice Project Topics

The list of topics provided below is by no means exhaustive, but illustrates the various ways in which projects can reflect the DNP essentials in various clinical problems, settings and groups/populations.

Translate Research into Practice Application

- Quality improvement (care processes, patient outcomes)
- Implement and evaluate evidence-based practice guidelines
- Design and use databases to retrieve information for decision-making, planning and evaluation
- Conduct financial analyses to compare care models and potential cost-savings

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6 Ibid,
• Implement and evaluate innovative uses of technology to enhance/evaluate care
• Design and evaluate new models of care
• Design and evaluate evidence-based programs

Evaluate Interventions, Innovations in Care Techniques

• Obtain baseline data, design an evidence-based intervention and plan, implement and evaluate
• Capture data on common problems and effectiveness of treatments with recommendations for change
• Evaluate management of the care of a specific group of patients (e.g., protocols, medications, metabolic monitoring, etc.)
• Evaluate peer led support groups and their impact
• Evaluate pain control methods in palliative care
• Promote patient safety by reducing errors in medications
• Evaluate home care comparing satisfaction with physician and NP care

Health Promotion & Community Health

• Compare strategies for health promotion/disease prevention with various populations/groups (community, schools, churches, etc.)
• Identify trends in patient visits, outreach programs
• Launch collaborative new health promotion program in vulnerable community population and evaluate it
• Develop and evaluate monitoring tools or screening programs
• Evaluate screening protocols
• Evaluate programs (care, training volunteers, education)
• Evaluate community responses to disasters
• Develop and evaluate the impact of self-care models
• Develop and test transition protocols to promote continuity of care across settings
• Evaluate high risk patients and develop approaches for risk reduction (e.g., child and elder abuse) for policy or care improvement

Policy-Related Projects

• Implement new policy collaboratively by designing and evaluating HPV vaccination program for 6th grade girls to prevent cervical cancer (partnering with School, Health Department)
• Evaluate or compare nursing home policies for treating chronic pain
• Evaluate students at risk (school dropouts, depressed, substance users, pregnant) and recommend policy change, programs
• Evaluate employer policies regarding health and potential cost savings of new policies
• Evaluate the effect of evidence-based policy in NICU
• Evaluate inconsistencies in scope of practice issues and use evidence-based knowledge to recommend changes
Integration of Technology in Care and Informatics Related Projects

- Create a database for monitoring childhood injuries in urgent care and evaluate its impact
- Use technology to improve care (e.g., telehealth consultation, interactive “home” visits, etc.) and evaluate results
- Evaluate technology’s impact on care (information transfer to point of care, etc.)
- Establish protocols that integrate use of technology in patient assessment in urgent care and evaluate their impact.

Quality and Patient Safety Projects

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