Looking Back, Moving Forward: Lessons Learned from a Doctor of Nursing Practice Program’s First Decade

Eileen J. B. Thrower, Ph.D., APRN, CNM, CNE, FACNM
Background

AACN (2019)

Growth in Doctoral Nursing Programs: 2006-2018

AACN (2019)
Purpose

• Examine the historical evolution of the DNP program over the past decade at Frontier Nursing University
Questions

• What lessons were learned by faculty members?
• What was the student experience?
Methods

- Purposeful sampling
- Historical methodology
- Online interviews
  - Faculty
  - Alumni
- IRB approval obtained
Results

• Redesign of the MSN curriculum
  – DNP Essentials
  – Seamless transition into the DNP program
• Service learning
• Rapid-cycle quality improvement project
  – Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s Open School curriculum
Results

DNP PROJECT RAPID CYCLE PDSA RAMPS

Staff education and teamwork  
Patient experience of care  
Process change  
Other

PDSA Cycle 1  
PDSA Cycle 2  
PDSA Cycle 3  
PDSA Cycle 4
# Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frontier Nursing University DNP Enrollment</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Served</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Degrees Awarded</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results
Conclusions: Students

Successes

• Confidence
  – Clinical, professional, personal
• Critical thinking
• Peer support
Conclusions: Students

Challenges

• “Not a real project”
• “Expected more doing”
Conclusions: Faculty

Successes

• Vision
• Applied learning
• Rigor
• Community
Conclusions: Faculty

Challenges

• Change
• Faculty Workload
• Individualized student guidance
Implications

• Backward design of curriculum
• Lean, standardized approach to DNP project
• Minimize barriers to implementation
• Realistic faculty to student ratios
• Create small student communities
Future Study

• Streamlined nursing education doctorate
• Approaches to support faculty and students as DNP enrollment grows
References


Questions