

Creating Healthy Work Environments VIRTUAL 2021

Practical Tips for Successfully Completing a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program

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Purpose: The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree is a rapidly growing degree with over 336 programs and an increasing enrollment annually, from 25,289 in 2016 to 29,093 in 2017. DNP students have expressed confusion regarding program requirements, particularly the DNP project, angst about limited DNP prepared faculty and advisors, the need for expanded mentoring and the financial challenges of DNP education. However, limited information exists in the literature to guide current or prospective DNP students on successfully completing a DNP program. Hence, the purpose of the presentation is to outline strategies and recommendations that current and future DNP students may use to successfully complete a DNP program, with a focus on key DNP program challenges.

Methods: Students can “learn about strategies other students have found to be successful.” Using a student-centered framework, two DNP graduates will highlight substantive and practical methods of navigating this new and often challenging program. Vital components of completing a DNP program include finding a scholarly project, selecting an advisor, selecting a mentor, ensuring quality and rigor of the scholarly final project, writing the manuscript, and disseminating scholarship. Tips focusing on these vital and unique aspects of a DNP program are provided.

Results: The implication for nursing practice and nursing education are extensive. The DNP student is in an excellent position to complete a scholarly project that provides value to the organization and meaning to practice. As the number of DNP students and programs increase, there is greater potential for DNP graduates to improve health care and optimize patient outcomes. Thus, fostering the potential of DNP graduates is necessary in a time of extraordinary change and uncertainty in health care. Additionally, in an era of growing concerns for a widening faculty shortage and faculty with DNP experience, strategies to foster student success are pivotal. These strategies may also serve as a guide for new DNP faculty and advisors, as they direct graduate student scholarship in DNP programs of study.

Conclusion: Providing clear and practical tips to improve DNP students' chances for a successful, organized and coordinated doctoral journey helps to fill a void in graduate nursing education and expert practice. As DNP programs continue to grow in numbers, strategies for successful completion are timely and relevant. Strategic planning with structured guidance for optimizing doctoral student program outcomes are valued by faculty and students.

Title:

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Keywords:

Final DNP scholarly project, doctor of nursing practice and student-centered

Abstract Summary:

This presentation outlines strategies that current and future Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students may use towards a successful and organized doctoral program. Clear and practical tips are included that were used by the authors (DNP graduates) during completion of a DNP program, and addresses a need in the literature.

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