Title:
National Survey of Opinions and Preferences About the Required Culminating Project of DNP Programs

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Session Title:
Issues Affecting Educators
Slot:
F 03: Saturday, April 9, 2016: 2:45 PM-4:00 PM
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3:05 PM

Keywords:
Culminating DNP program scholarship, DNP education and Doctoral nursing education

References:

Abstract Summary:
This study was a national opinion survey completed by a diverse sample of 849 respondents from 49 states, Canada and Puerto Rico, about what they thought DNP program culminating scholarship should be and should be called. The results differed between DNPs and non-DNP doctoral faculty.

Learning Activity:

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<th>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE</th>
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<td>The learner will be able to describe the culminating scholarship expectations of</td>
<td>1. Overview of doctoral education in nursing.</td>
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<td>doctoral education in nursing.</td>
<td>2. Overview of doctoral program culminating scholarship in DNP and PhD nursing programs.</td>
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<td>3. The AACN DNP Essentials expectations of DNP program culminating scholarship.</td>
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<td>4. Overview of the controversy, discussion, and debate about DNP program culminating</td>
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<td>scholarship.</td>
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<td>The learner will be able to discuss the results of a national opinion survey about</td>
<td>1. Survey methodology. 2. Demographics of survey respondents. 3. Survey results by</td>
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<td>what DNP program culminating scholarship should be and what it should be called.</td>
<td>question. 4. Survey results by demographics and region. 5. Survey limitations. 5.</td>
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<td>Comments on survey results.</td>
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Abstract Text:
The growth and maturation of Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs has prompted continuing curricular discussion and debate, especially regarding the required culminating program scholarship.
which has taken on a variety of forms and designations. There has even been argument that any sort of final project should not be required in practice-focused education. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 2006) describes the final scholarship of DNP education as “...a practice application-oriented “final DNP project,” which is an integral part of the integrative practice experience” (p. 4), allowing individual programs to delineate this application-based product.

A 10 question online survey was administered anonymously via Survey Monkey from June to October 2014 to examine the opinions and preferences of DNPs and academics involved in doctoral nursing education about the required DNP program final product. The survey collected demographic information; opinions about the necessity and rigor of a final project, and the use of the term “dissertation” for the project; and preferences for what a final project should be called. An invitation to participate and a link to the survey were posted on a national DNP online community blog, and e-mailed to the leadership and DNP faculty of DNP programs across the country with an attempt to invite individuals from as many DNP programs as possible to complete the survey.

A diverse sample of 849 respondents from 49 states (except South Dakota), Canada and Puerto Rico completed the survey. DNPs accounted for 54.9% (465) of the sample, 24% (203) were DNP students, 15.1% (128) were not DNPs but taught in DNP programs, and 2.2% (19) were doctoral nursing educators who were not DNPs and did not teach DNPs. Academia was reported by 48.75% (411) of the respondents as their primary employment, 32.45% (2730) reported practice employment, and 9.6% (81) identified themselves as administrators. The average age of the respondents was 51.4 (SD 9.5), 90.6% (765) were female and 9.4% (79) were male. The average numbers of years in nursing was 26.3 (SD 11). As a whole the sample represented experienced academics and clinicians.

Seventy six percent (642) of the respondents felt that a culminating scholarly project should be required in DNP education, with 78.9% (662) reporting that if a culminating project was required that it should have the same expectations of rigor as other doctoral nursing education culminating projects such as PhD dissertations. Over half (53.4%; 450) felt that the term “dissertation” should not be restricted to designate only the culminating projects of nursing PhD programs. Slightly less than a third (31.1%; 253) felt DNP culminating projects should be called “dissertations,” 29.1% (237) felt they should be called “capstones,” 25.5% (207) chose “projects,” 3.9% (32) chose “thesis, and 10.3% (84) “other.”

Subgroup analyses demonstrated age-based, regional, and degree-based variation in responses. Many unsolicited comments were collected via the blog page and direct e-mails to the researchers. The comments represented a wide variety of passionate opinions about the final DNP project and the future of DNP education.