



# Innovation in Doctoral Nursing Education: One University's Response to the IOM Recommendations

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## Background

The Institute of Medicine in conjunction with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report of 2010 recommended:

1. The number of BSN-prepared nurses should be 80% by 2020.
2. The number of doctorally-prepared nurses double by 2020.

In 2010, the state of Mississippi (MS) lagged the nation in nursing educational attainment.

- BSN-prepared: MS 28% vs. US 50%
  - Doctorally-prepared : MS 0.7% vs US 1.7%
- SACS accreditation requires doctorally-prepared faculty teach at least 25% undergraduate classes and 100% of graduate classes in MS. The low number of doctorally-prepared nurses limited the state's ability to increase enrollment at all educational levels.

## Plan

Nursing leadership recognized an opportunity to impact the state's nursing workforce with a new PhD program, building on the strength of pre-existing MSN and post-master's programs in nursing education. Administrators and faculty worked to:

1. Identify student and faculty barriers to doctoral degree enrollment and completion.
2. Design a new program to eliminate or reduce identified barriers and achieve desired educational outcomes.
3. Obtain university and accreditation approval for new program.

### Barriers Identified

### Features of New PhD Program

<i>Student Time</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of time to degree completion</li> <li>• Class scheduling / conflicts</li> </ul>	Accelerated program with 4 terms per academic year. Degree completion in 2 yrs FT or 3 yrs PT. Hybrid classes meet 1 weekend per month on published annual schedule.
<i>Student Money</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial burden</li> <li>• State funds limited to 2 yrs of doctoral study</li> </ul>	Competitive graduate tuition rates. Grant-funded scholarships from Robert M. Hearin Foundation. Accelerated program can be completed with state funding limits.
<i>Student Dissertation Concerns</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of dissertation</li> <li>• Experience of inconsistent communication with dissertation committee</li> <li>• Perceived lack of support and isolation</li> </ul>	A guided dissertation process embeds research and writing in doctoral course work. Students participate with committee in monthly meetings to keep dissertation on track. Dedicated faculty and peer support through process.
<i>Faculty Workload</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissertation service not included in job description.</li> <li>• No specific compensation or release time for dissertation work.</li> </ul>	Dissertation committee work is assigned for academic year, and compensated with workload credit. Faculty participate in monthly class meetings, and adhere to student communication standards for message replies (2 days) and assignment feedback (2 weeks).

## Do

The first cohort for a PhD in Nursing Education and Administration was admitted in August 2012.

## Check

The first cohort graduated in August 2014, with 21 of 23 students successfully completing coursework, comprehensive exams, and dissertations. Program evaluation and curriculum revision began immediately, and continues with each cohort.

## Act

The PhD program has improved each year based on student, faculty, and community feedback. Class meetings were streamlined from 12 to 4 weekends per year. Individual courses were modified. The guided dissertation process was refined, and a university-based statistician was added to each dissertation committee.

In 2016, a DNP to PhD program was added to prepare clinicians for educational roles.

### PhD Graduates in Mississippi



References available on request.  
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