Problem

The culmination of academic programs of study that lead to the doctor of nursing practice (DNP) degree is the scholarly project. Doctoral curricula in schools of nursing typically include a series of courses designed to facilitate development, implementation, and dissemination of the project. DNP projects focus on clinical practice changes that impact health outcomes. Planning, implementation, and evaluation are three components that must be addressed (AACN, 2015). The project is an evidence-based practice (EBP) approach to problem solving. While the DNP project is not a research endeavor, attention to available research is essential. The goal is the translation of current research into practice for the purpose of improving quality of care (Shirey et al., 2011). It is also important that projects reflect DNP graduates’ achievement of required skills for advanced practice. The structural basis for demonstration of the advanced knowledge and skills consistent with a practice-focused doctorate is provided with the Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice (DNP Essentials) (AACN, 2006).

Background

The DNP faculty at a school of nursing at a small, private, liberal arts university admitted its first cohort of students with a bachelor of science in nursing (BSN). Faculty recognized that the BSN to DNP student may have minimal experience with leadership and organizational processes and may be considered a novice with regard to the expected leadership role of a doctoral scholar. Novice behaviors are likely rule-governed and may be limited to only one aspect of a situation (Benner, 2001). Focused direction is needed to assist the baccalaureate prepared nurse to alter thinking processes in a manner that facilitates effective use of available knowledge to impact patient health outcomes. Multiple ways of thinking encourage students to take ownership and to seek opportunities to influence practice situations (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2010). Expansion of a novice’s way of thinking can be accomplished by providing guidelines and expert assistance (Dreyfus, 2004) in situations that are unfamiliar or beyond one’s level of experience. Benner (2001) discussed the importance of coaching and providing assistance as an important aspect of teaching students and patients.

Schools of nursing that offer the BSN to DNP have reported that assistance on how to develop guidelines for the scholarly project is needed (Auerbach et al., 2014). In addition, the concern that current doctoral faculty may be unfamiliar with the EBP process as opposed to the research process has also been reported (Zelenikova, Beach, Ren, Wolff, & Sherwood, 2014). Therefore, concise guidelines to assist students and faculty in the process of project development are critical.

Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss our school’s revision of the guidelines for the DNP project. Revisions reflect current recommendations from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 2015). Updated terminology and clarification of the scope of the project are included in the revised guidelines. Attention to achievement of the DNP Essentials (AACN, 2006) is also evident as a required outcome.

Methodology
After students complete the core doctoral curriculum and specialty courses, two courses comprise the proposal and implementation phases of the DNP project. Faculty developed a separate rubric for each phase to guide students through the process. The first course is the project proposal; and the revised guidelines detail development of the topic, identification of project framework, review of literature, and description of the plan for intervention. The rubric for the second course provides structure for project implementation, evaluation, and dissemination.

The revised SQUIRE guidelines provide the foundation for project proposal writing and for the implementation and dissemination phases. The conciseness and clarity of the items in SQUIRE 2.0 (Ogrinc et al., 2015) are consistent with the aims of our revised DNP project guidelines. Consistent with SQUIRE 2.0, each rubric provides detailed, step-by-step directions for each component of the project.

**Results**

The revised guidelines are currently in use for the first time. DNP projects will be implemented and evaluated during spring semester of 2018, and comments in relation to usability and appropriateness of the revised guidelines will be solicited. Faculty and student comments will be reviewed for needed adjustments before any subsequent use of the guidelines.

**Significance to nursing**

Translation of evidence into practice is dependent upon the clinician’s ability to effectively demonstrate multiple ways of thinking in relation to clinical practice. Clear guidelines during the DNP project process support the development of robust projects that impact nursing practice and health outcomes.

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**Title:**
Guidelines for Development and Implementation of the DNP Scholarly Project

**Keywords:**
BSN to DNP project, DNP project guidelines and DNP scholarly project

**References:**


**Abstract Summary:**
Guidelines for development, implementation, and dissemination of the DNP scholarly project are presented. The DNP Essentials, recommendations of the DNP Task Force, and SQUIRE 2.0 are utilized to design detailed rubrics that guide students in the DNP project process.

**Content Outline:**

**DNP Scholarly Project**

- Clinical practice issue that impacts health outcomes
- Evidence-based practice approach to problem solving

**BSN-DNP Student**

- Rule-governed behaviors
- Minimal leadership experience
- Require focused direction

**Structured project guidelines**

- Encourage multiple ways of thinking
- Assist with unfamiliar organizational processes

**Foundation for project guidelines**

- AACN
- DNP Essentials
SQUIRE 2.0

Detailed project guidelines

   Project proposal

   Project implementation, evaluation, dissemination

Significance to nursing

   Rigorous scholarly project

   Innovative practice changes

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