

Frequently Asked Questions about the Doctor of Nursing Practice

Why a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)?

- A Doctor of Nursing Practice prepares nurses for advanced clinical practice, leadership, management of health care delivery systems, and to influence health policy.
- DNP education provides nurses with the knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex health care system.
- DNP educated nurses can help meet the need for more primary care providers, nurse faculty, and nurse leaders.

How is the DNP different from a PhD?

- A PhD prepares a nurse to be a nurse scientist and researcher who generates new knowledge.
- A DNP prepares a nurse for advanced practice and the application of research into practice.

What type of DNP programs do schools of nursing offer?

Programs educate advanced practice registered nurses practitioners (APRNs) including nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, nurse-midwives and clinical nurse specialists.

Programs educate nurses for enhanced clinical roles, leadership roles, management and teaching, health policy, and areas of specialization such as integrative health and healing.

How long does it take to earn a DNP?

- A post-master's DNP can typically be earned in one or two years full time.
- A post-BSN DNP degree can be earned in three or four years full time.
- Many DNP programs have part-time options that allow flexibility for nurses who continue to work.

Will master's programs for APRNs continue to exist?

- Some schools of nursing may only offer a master's degree program by choice or because they are unable to grant doctoral degrees.
- Some schools of nursing will offer both master's and doctoral education.
- Some schools of nursing will offer the DNP as the only option to become an APRN.

Will the DNP be required for licensure as an APRN?

- None of the state boards of nursing has changed rules to require a DNP for new applicants for licensure as an APRN.
- When state boards of nursing have changed rules to require a master's or graduate degree for licensure as an APRN, the requirement has not applied to already licensed APRNs.

Does the APRN Consensus Model require APRNs to have a DNP?

- The model does not require APRNs to have a DNP.
- The model does require that APRN programs be accredited and that graduates are eligible for national certification.

Does the DNP create a barrier to addressing the nursing shortage?

- Effectively addressing the nursing shortage requires a greater supply of well-educated registered nurses. There are some DNP programs that admit students who become registered nurses as part of the program.
- A DNP prepares highly skilled APRNs, faculty and other advanced practice nurses who can address the shortage of primary care providers, faculty and nurse leaders.
- Many students continue to work while enrolled in DNP programs.
- The additional time required for a student to complete a BSN-DNP program can be offset by increasing the number of DNP programs.

How many DNP programs are there?

- There are over 150 DNP programs with over 100 more programs in the planning stages.
- Based on a survey in 2010, there were just over 7,000 students enrolled in DNP programs and almost 1300 graduates that year.

Contact for Questions

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