



THE VALUE OF DNP PROJECTS THROUGH HOSPITAL PARTNERSHIPS

Bridgitte Gourley, DNP, CRNP, and Cathaleen Ley, PhD

While all who educate Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) are familiar with the national shortage of clinical sites for precepted experiences, many are now realizing that implementing Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) projects with post-bachelor's-to-DNP program students can present similar challenges. This is especially true in large universities with multiple APRN specialties in concurrent cohorts.

Identifying and implementing appropriate DNP projects requires close collaboration between students, faculty mentors and partnership agencies in order to reach each parties' desired outcomes. Historically, post master's students have focused on practice problems that are of personal interest, but which may be of little value or interest to partner agencies due to timing, finances and competing priorities. This often resulted in projects that did were not implemented, frustrating students, partners and faculty alike. Faculty and practice partners recognized post bachelor's DNP students would likely need more direction to bring projects to fruition. Further, that partner agencies have many identified needs and priorities and the key was to have the students focus on utilizing the DNP essentials to meet the needs of the partner agency.

The partnership the authors describe is a model for an academic and health care organization working together to reach mutually beneficial goals. The development of this framework for DNP student projects was spearheaded by the Family Nursing Practitioner specialty director and the director of nursing quality and research at a practice partner organization. Several lessons were learned through creating this partnership. Projects have recently completed the evaluation phase at the site and with this there are many encouraging results in outcomes such as readmission rates, falls and length of stay to name a few. Beyond these measures, there is real financial value to the projects and student work that has been calculated. This collaboration permitted the opportunity for 16 students to work on projects that are rigorous, appropriate for the DNP, and of value to the partner agency because they improve patient outcomes, safety, efficiency and quality of care.