

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

**RUTGERS**

**College of Nursing**



**D.N.P. Program in Nursing**

**Handbook for Students**

**Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
Graduate School-Newark  
and  
College of Nursing**

**1-2007**

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Welcome to the Rutgers' College of Nursing D.N.P. program. You have aspired to reach far in your career and that path has led you to achieving the highest practice degree in nursing. Congratulations! This handbook contains guidelines to inform you of the process and steps needed to accomplish your goal. Always check this information with the Graduate School-Newark catalog and your advisor; all are a source of current information.

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Director of the Graduate Program, and  
Associate Professor

November, 2006

## **GOAL, CURRICULUM AND PROGRESSION OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE D.N.P. PROGRAM IN NURSING**

### **Program Goal**

The goal of the program is to prepare advanced practice nurses who will possess the knowledge and skills for leadership in nursing and health care practice.

### **Program Outcomes**

1. Integrate biophysical, psychological, organizational, informatic, ethical, and legal knowledge with nursing science as a foundation for expert clinical nursing practice in a specific nursing clinical specialization.
2. Demonstrate accountability in specialty practice according to accepted standards of patient care and safety.
3. Translate research findings into evidence-based practice at the individual and health care system levels.
4. Use information technology to evaluate the delivery of health care to individuals and internal and community systems.
5. Effect desired change by developing and implementing policies at different levels of the health care system and with different constituencies.
6. Provide multidisciplinary leadership through analysis of critical indicators and/or health care delivery systems in order to provide optimal patient care and safety in a specific nursing clinical specialization.
7. Demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills in the planning and delivery of health and illness management in a specific nursing clinical specialization.

### **Expected Competencies of a D.N.P. Graduate**

The competencies expected of a DNP graduate from Rutgers follow the eight essentials of doctoral education for advanced practice in nursing as specified by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2006, pp. 8-17).

1. Scientific Underpinnings for Practice
  - a. Evaluate organization theories relevant to the changing health care arena
  - b. Describe knowledge acquisition and representation in decision support/expert systems, including how rules based on the best available evidence are acquired.
  - c. Critically appraise the literature and other evidence to establish the best evidence for practice.
  - d. Evaluate outcomes of practice, practice patterns, and systems of care in a health care setting or community against national guidelines/standards.
  - e. Apply health care systems theories to practice.
  - f. Apply statistical theories and formula as needed in project implementation and evaluation.
2. Organizational and Systems Leadership for Quality Improvement and Systems Thinking

- a. Analyze leadership styles within an organizational context emphasizing accountability.
  - b. Evaluate conflict resolution strategies within the practice environment.
  - c. Differentiate among types of strategic and tactical planning.
  - d. Analyze implications of cost savings on quality improvement.
  - e. Examine elements of cost accounting in a health care organization.
  - f. Analyze ethical principles in health care leadership.
3. Clinical Scholarship and Analytical Methods for Evidence-Based Practice
- a. Analyze quality improvement methodologies to promote efficient, effective, safe, and timely patient care.
  - b. Design best practice guidelines based on relevant research findings.
  - c. Use information technology and research methods to: collect accurate data, guide the design of databases, analyze data from practice, design evidence-based interventions, predict outcomes, examine behavior patterns, and identify gaps in evidence for practice.
  - d. Describe the role of the APN as a practice specialist/consultant in research.
  - e. Disseminate findings from evidence-based practice and research to improve healthcare outcomes.
4. Information Systems/Technology and Patient Care Technology for the Improvement and Transformation of Health Care
- a. Analyze and communicate critical elements of the selection, implementation, and evaluation of health care information systems and patient care technology.
  - b. Describe the key elements of project management and role requirements for members of a technology team.
  - c. Evaluate software applications according to criteria, including a computerized patient record.
  - d. Demonstrate leadership by proposing ways to evaluate and resolve ethical and legal issues within healthcare systems relating to the use of information, communication networks, and patient care technology.
  - e. Evaluate consumer health information sources for scientific merit, accuracy, timeliness, and appropriateness.
5. Health Care Policy for Advocacy in Health Care
- a. Evaluate the influence of health policy on nursing education, practice, research, and the health of populations.
  - b. Evaluate the role of the doctorally-prepared nurse leader in the development of health policy.
  - c. Analyze and synthesize the influence of contemporary issues critical global health problems, health care quality, shifts in population demographics, advances in informatics/technology, adequacy of the nursing workforce, the changing health care system, licensure requirements, politics, and national research priorities on the development of health policy.
  - d. Identify and discuss techniques by which doctorally-prepared nurse leaders can contribute to the development of evidence-based health policy

- to meet local, national, and international health needs of populations across the life span.
- e. Based on analyses of contemporary issues surrounding nursing education, practice, research and an identified health need or problem, propose strategies for influencing the development of evidence-based health policy to address the health need or problem.
6. Interprofessional Collaboration for Improving Patient and Population Health Outcomes
    - a. Design a program based on the Logic Model.
    - b. Strategize for a successful program based on a situational analysis, desired results/outcomes, inputs, and operational plans.
    - c. Applying leadership skills in accomplishing desired results through motivation, communication, collaborative skills, ethical management, and implementation of critical components.
  7. Clinical Prevention and Population Health for Improving the Nation's Health
    - a. Apply appropriate epidemiological and statistical information related to individual, aggregate, and populations to effect change in patient health and safety.
    - b. Examine pertinent concepts including cultural diversity, health promotion/disease prevention, health disparities, and health status/access patterns to effect optimal health for individuals, aggregates, and/or populations.
  8. Advanced Nursing Practice
    - a. Apply advanced systems, management, evidence-based practice, leadership, data management and informatics, and advanced practice knowledge and skills to effect change, provide strategic planning and program development, influence health and social policy for diverse populations, and influence positive health care outcomes.

### **Curriculum**

The online and blended curriculum requires a minimum of **41** credits beyond the master's degree. Of that total, 38 credits must come from nursing courses, including 6 credits for capstone projects leading to the development of a program and final clinical paper and 12 credits in clinical practica. An additional 3 interdisciplinary credits are required in healthcare management.

A tracking sheet for courses and other program requirements is presented in *Appendix A* for the student to monitor his/her progress.

### **Full and Part-time Study**

Students who meet the admission requirements of the Graduate School-Newark and the D.N.P. Admissions Committee of the College of Nursing are admitted as fully matriculated students into the doctoral program and may pursue either full-time or part-time study. The maximum time to complete the program is seven (7) years for full-time and eight (8) years for part-time students. Full-time students will complete the program in 5 semesters; it is expected that most part-time students will complete the program in 9 semesters. Students are admitted

only for a spring semester start. Prior to beginning in the spring semester, it is possible to take non-nursing courses on a credit- non-degree basis. Examples include health care management and management of health data. All regular courses taken on a non-degree basis can be transferred to credit once matriculation occurs.

### **Student Advisement**

Each entering student is assigned an academic faculty advisor who provides guidance in registration and developing a plan of study, monitors the student's progress, and assists in the selection of a capstone project topic and plan. Should it be necessary to make a change in the academic advisor, the change can be initiated by the advisor or advisee but must be coordinated with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, the Associate Dean of Student Affairs and the Director of the Graduate Program.

### **Clinical Residency Experience**

The D.N.P. degree signifies clinical nursing expertise. The clinical residency courses represent a synthesis practicum with a clinical coach and a clinical mentor in either the student's advanced practice specialization or practice/administration focus or both. The clinical coach is a nursing leader with a graduate nursing degree who will assist the student in the clinical setting to achieve their course objectives. The clinical mentor is preferably a doctorally-prepared nurse, but may not always be, who specializes in the student's area of interest and may be located anywhere in the country.

The clinical residency courses are planned jointly by the student, the faculty member, and/or the clinical coach and mentor. The plan must be approved in advance by the faculty member. A written letter of agreement, signed by the student, faculty member, clinical coach, and clinical mentor, specifies the objectives to be attained, experiences and activities for which the student is responsible, the time commitment, and the deliverable product(s). Upon completion of the clinical residency courses, the faculty member – with input from the clinical coach and clinical mentor – determines whether the objectives have been met satisfactorily. This documentation is filed in the student's record.

### **Program Milestones**

During the course of the program, the student must:

1. Develop a plan of study (see Appendix A for Worksheet) that is approved by the Advisor and given to the Director of Graduate Programs by the end of the second semester of matriculation. Major revisions to this plan of study must be given to the Director of the Graduate Program (i.e. significant changes in direction of cognate or of time lines),
2. Develop a capstone project proposal,
3. Secure committee approval of the capstone project proposal, and
4. Conduct and successfully complete the capstone project.

## **Guidelines for Graduate Assistants**

In order to maximize the research learning experience and provide faculty research support, 15 hours per week of each graduate assistant's (GA's) time will be devoted to working on faculty research projects.

The research project assignment will be conducted under the direction of the Assistant Dean for Research and Grants as follows:

1. Faculty will be notified of the availability of GAs and a call for requests will be announced at the beginning of September. Responses to this call should be submitted to the Assistant Dean for Research and Grants no later than September 5. The projects to be considered will be conducted by doctorally-prepared faculty who may or may not currently have research grants to support the graduate assistant.

Requests for GA assistance on projects should include the following information:

- Names and curriculum vitae (biosketch) of faculty involved and designation of principle investigator
  - Three to five page description of the project
  - Precise duties of the graduate assistant within the project (i.e., synthesis of literature, data collection, etc.) with specific reference to the learning opportunities available
  - Number of hours per week of graduate assistant involvement being requested number of weeks/months/semester being requested.
2. Notification of project assignment will be made by the third week of September each year. The Assistant Dean for Research and Grants will assign projects and/or distribute the work to maximize the learning opportunity for each graduate assistant.

Once graduate assistants are assigned a contract should be considered between the graduate assistant and the faculty as to mutual expectations, outcomes, and professional recognition. Copies will be distributed to: GA, Principal Investigator, Assistant Dean for Research and Grants, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and student's advisor. Graduate assistant involvement in each project will be evaluated by the graduate assistant, the project faculty and the Assistant Dean for Research and Grants on a semester by semester basis.

## **Teaching Assistants**

## **Overview**

The primary purpose of a teaching assistantship is to provide qualified doctoral students the opportunity to gain teaching skills and a knowledge base about the teaching/learning process. Teaching assistants are members of the bargaining unit represented by the AAUP.

## **Responsibilities**

Responsibilities require a maximum of fifteen (15) clock hours per week (10 hours teaching/5 hours research) and include guided experiences in aspects of the teaching/learning research process.

These are:

1. Use contemporary and innovative teaching methodologies in the course assigned
2. Provide an environment conducive to learning and for the development of a teaching/learning relationship with students
3. Communicate effectively with faculty mentor and course faculty in the instructive process.
4. Work effectively with a nursing faculty member currently conducting research

## **Selection Criteria**

Selection is competitively based on the following criteria:

- a) Fully matriculated student status in the doctoral program in nursing  
(*Master's student opportunities may be available*)

## **Procedure**

1. Applications can be obtained from the Director of the Graduate Program's Office or the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
2. Completed applications are to be returned to the Director of the Graduate Program, who will forward the forms to the Associate Dean for Faculty and Staff Affairs, who will in turn share with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.
3. Applications will be chosen by a joint decision of the Associate Dean and the Dean after review of the application and the student recorded. Applicants will be appointed by the Dean.
4. Appointees may register for 1-6 credits of 705:877 to bring academic load to 12 credits. Teaching assistants may not carry more than twelve (12) credit hours of graduate study per semester. Academic load must allow appointees sufficient time to fulfill the obligations of the position. Credits received for the teaching assistantship are reflected on the transcript but do not count toward degree credits. They may be used for the research experience which is a component of the doctoral program. Teaching assignments will be determined by the Assistant Dean for Research and Grants.

### **Compensation**

- Full Tuition and benefits
- Stipend
- Teaching Experience
- Research Experience

## **Capstone Project**

### **Overview**

The capstone project is an in-depth and integrative practice experience which results in a practice-related written product which is subjected to peer and/or professional scrutiny. The capstone project must be approved by the faculty committee of at least three members selected by the candidate and appointed by the Director of the Graduate Program.

### **Policy**

1. To constitute the capstone project committee, the candidate must file the Capstone Project Committee Form, available from the administrative assistant to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs and signed by all members of the committee. Once the committee is officially formed, the candidate cannot initiate changes in the membership; however, a faculty member may resign from the committee. In the latter case, the candidate must select another faculty member and this new member must be appointed by the Director of the Graduate Program. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs are to be informed in writing of the change.
2. Selection of the Capstone Project Committee:
  - a) Criteria for Capstone Project Chairperson
    1. Holds regular graduate faculty status in the College of Nursing and in the Graduate School-Newark;
    2. Has an earned doctoral degree with emphasis on translational research and/or practice; and
    3. Is available to the candidate on a regular basis during the academic year.
  - b) Criteria for Committee Members
    1. Two members selected in consultation with the capstone project chairperson;
    2. Members must have a doctoral degree with knowledge and/or expertise related to some important aspect of the capstone project. Whenever possible, the three members of the Committee should possess complementary areas of expertise to guide the content and methods of the capstone project; and, hold graduate faculty status in the Graduate School-Newark. Nursing or non-nursing faculty from outside Rutgers may serve but must have been appointed as Adjunct Graduate Faculty in

the Graduate School-Newark. The procedure for appointment of an Adjunct Graduate Faculty member is:

- The Capstone Project Chair submits a letter of nomination to the Director of the Graduate Program together with the curriculum vitae.
- The Director of the Graduate Program follows a procedure to achieve the appointment.
- The Capstone Project Chair is informed when the process is successfully completed.

c) Composition of the Committee

1. The Capstone Project Chairperson and one other member of the committee must be from the College of Nursing with Graduate Faculty status in the Graduate School-Newark (may be a nurse faculty member from outside Rutgers but with Adjunct Graduate Faculty status).
2. A third member of the committee must be from outside the program (college) in which the degree is sought and it is recommended that this individual is the clinical mentor. This person may be from outside Rutgers, but must have Adjunct Graduate Status in the Graduate School-Newark.
3. Only one (1) of the committee members may be from outside Rutgers University.

4. Role of the Capstone Project Committee:

a) Chairperson

1. The faculty member who is invited to become chairperson of the committee may defer acceptance until the candidate has submitted a specific area of inquiry or a beginning capstone project problem which the candidate has independently identified;
2. The faculty member who accepts the role of chairperson becomes the candidate's academic advisor;
3. The chairperson will assure IRB compliance (if needed), guide the preparation of the capstone project proposal, the project development, implementation, and evaluative process, and the final project write-up;
4. The chairperson is responsible for ensuring that the entire committee meets with the student at least once before the candidate's capstone project proposal is submitted for review and approval. It is advisable that there be at least two meetings of the entire committee, one early in the development of the capstone project proposal and one closer to the time the capstone project proposal is submitted for review;

b) Committee Members

1. Critique drafts of the developing capstone project proposal; participate actively in the committee meeting(s) on the capstone project proposal; review drafts of the final capstone project, and the final capstone project product; share critique and concerns with the student and the

- chairperson; and,
2. Participate actively in the conduct of the capstone project presentation.

## **CAPSTONE PROJECT PROPOSAL**

### **Overview**

Very rarely does competent doctoral research just evolve. For this reason, the candidate is required to submit a capstone project proposal for review, which should be developed under supervision of the Chairperson and members of the capstone project committee.

### **Policy**

1. Preparation of the Capstone Project Proposal
  - a) The capstone project proposal should include a needs assessment, rationale, and problem statement for the project. The capstone project proposal should also include objectives, project activities, project time table, necessary resources, and an evaluation plan. The capstone project proposal is characterized by logical progression of thought, good literary style, and acceptable practices of scholarly writing;
  - b) The capstone project proposal should adhere to the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA);
  - c) The capstone project proposal should not exceed 25 pages, double-spaced, exclusive of table of contents, references, and appendices; and
2. Capstone Project Proposal Review Meeting
  - a) The candidate, chairperson, and members of the candidate's committee must attend the proposal review meeting. The chairperson is responsible for recording basic points made during the meeting and the recommendations for revision, if any;
  - b) The candidate should be prepared to discuss the entire proposal;
  - c) At completion of the proposal review meeting, the chairperson will summarize the major points raised by the reviewers and ask for their recommendations;
  - d) The committee may choose to: 1) accept the proposal as is or with minor revisions and no re-review; 2) require minor or major revisions and re-review; or 3) reject the proposal. Examples of reasons for rejection include major safety or civil rights issues to participants; major theoretical or methodological flaws that would preclude valid or interpretable findings; or a non-feasible plan that cannot be implemented within a reasonable time frame;

- e) In the case of approval with minor revisions required, the candidate must submit notification of the completion of the revised proposal that has the approval of the Chairperson to the Director of the Graduate Program within one month of the proposal review. At this time the properly signed Capstone Project Proposal Approval Form must be given to the Director of the Graduate Program, and copies of the revised proposal will be sent to each Committee member in a timely fashion;
- f) If a candidate does not put forth a proposal that is considered acceptable by the committee after two tries, the candidate can be dismissed from the program; and
- g) In the case of major revisions required or approval denied, the candidate must develop a significantly revised or a new proposal. The Chairperson will work with the candidate. The Committee will review the new proposal and all prior steps will be repeated.

### 3. Required Procedures

- a) The student candidate obtains (from the Administrative Assistant to the Director of the Graduate Program), completes, and delivers the Capstone Project Proposal Approval Form after the committee has approved the proposal and affixed their signatures (sample in Appendix C). The Capstone Project Proposal Form is signed by all members of the committee, including any member from outside Rutgers and attests that the entire committee has met as a whole and approved the proposal. The completed form is given to the Director of the Graduate Program within 10 days of a successful proposal review meeting.
- b) Concurrent with submission of the capstone project proposal, the student must apply for IRB approval to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) if needed, and if appropriate, to the official IRB committee(s) at the site(s) of data collection. Approval from agency IRBs must be forwarded, along with the completed application form of the cooperating agencies, to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs of Rutgers University in a timely manner. No data can be collected until IRB approval has been obtained from Rutgers ORSP.

### 4. Protocol for Communication between Candidate and Chair re the Capstone Project prior to Graduation

- a) For the purpose of federal guidelines involving human subjects, the Capstone Project Chair is considered the Principal Investigator of the capstone project. In addition, any external communication or reporting about the capstone project reflects on Rutgers and the College of Nursing. Therefore, it is important that the candidate keep the Chair informed as follows:

1. Communicate with Chair of Committee before submitting any research grants to fund all or part of capstone project.
2. Communicate with Chair of Committee before submitting any abstracts for conferences or publications that will report findings.
3. Communicate with Chair of Committee before submitting to the public domain any materials that are an integral component of the capstone project.
4. Determine the appropriateness of copyrighting the capstone project with the inclusion of any instruments (e.g. in Appendix) authored by another (whether copyrighted or not).

## **FINAL ORAL PRESENTATION OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT**

### **Overview**

The final oral presentation of the capstone project culminates the D.N.P. program. Once all outstanding requirements have been met, the final oral examination is scheduled after filing the diploma form and submitting the necessary materials to the Office of the Dean, the Graduate School-Newark.

### **Policy**

1. The final draft of the capstone project should be prepared in strict adherence with APA guidelines.
2. The final public presentation shall be held under the auspices of the candidate's capstone project committee. The candidate may be questioned by members of the audience in advance of the private questioning by the Capstone Project Committee members.
3. The candidate must present the capstone project and otherwise satisfy the committee and other non-voting faculty in attendance that he or she is qualified to receive the degree of Doctor of Nursing Practice. The Capstone Project Committee will move to a private room to complete the questioning and will ask the candidate to leave during the voting process.
4. In the event of one or more negative votes, the candidate fails the capstone project presentation. The Committee must make recommendations to the chair regarding next steps. The Committee may recommend significant revisions of the capstone project or additional study/coursework in the area of the knowledge deficiency. A timeline will be set. The candidate will be given a second opportunity to successfully complete the oral presentation. In the event of two failures, the candidate will be dismissed from the program.
5. Once the Capstone Project Committee votes to confer the degree, the proper forms

must be signed and the candidate is responsible for returning them to the Office of the Dean, Graduate School-Newark on or before the published deadline date. (Signatures must be obtained on the Graduate School-Newark form, as well as on the cover sheet of the capstone project write-up). The GS-N form is the same form used for the Qualifying Examination. It must be obtained from GS-N by the candidate (Sample in Appendix B).

6. After the committee accepts the capstone project outcomes, the student files the original and one copy with the office of the Dean of the Graduate School by the deadline (see the Graduate Catalog – Newark). An additional copy is given to the College of Nursing where it will be filed in the Office of Grants and Research. It is also customary to give a copy of the capstone project write-up to each committee member.

## **APPLICATION FOR THE CONFERRAL OF THE DEGREE**

The candidate must file a diploma application according to announced deadlines specified in the Graduate School-Newark bulletin in order to receive a diploma at commencement. Diploma forms are available in the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School-Newark. For students completing the capstone project presentation at any time other than April/May, certification of completion is issued upon request. Awarding of diplomas and the hooding ceremony occur at the Graduate School-Newark graduation ceremony in May of each year.

## APPENDIX A

### D.N.P. PROGRAM PLAN

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 COLLEGE OF NURSING

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 CURRICULUM TRACKING SHEET

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 NAME:

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 DATE OF ADMISSION:

	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Semester/Year</u>
	<u>Towards DNP</u>	
<b>Nursing (Theory, Methods, Content)</b>		
26:705:570 Data Management and Hypothesis Testing	3	_____
26:705:679 Contemporary Issues in Nursing	2	_____
26:705:690 Program Development and Evaluation	3	_____
26:705:691 Leadership for Advanced Nursing Practice	3	_____
26:705:692 Foundations of Evidence-Based Practice	3	_____
26:705:693 Informatics for Advanced Nursing Practice	3	_____
26:705:694 Capstone Project I	3	_____
26:705:695 Capstone Project II	3	_____
26:705:696 Clinical Residency I	6	_____
26:705:697 Clinical Residency II	6	_____
26:705:698 Epidemiology	3	_____
	_____	
Sub-total	38	
<b>Support Course</b>		
Health Care Management	3	_____
	_____	
<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>	<b>41 (Minimum)</b>	

Date Capstone Project Proposal Review \_\_\_\_\_

Date Capstone Project Presentation \_\_\_\_\_

Program Plan Approved:

 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Student/Date

 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Advisor/Date

 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Initials

Date Received by the Director of the Graduate Program



