

## Introduction

### *I. Program Description and Relationship to System-Level Goals*

- A. Briefly describe within a few paragraphs the degree program under consideration, including (a) level; (b) emphases, including concentrations, tracks, or specializations; (c) total number of credit hours; and (d) overall purpose, including examples of employment or education opportunities that may be available to program graduates.*

The proposed Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) will prepare graduates with the advanced nursing knowledge and leadership skills to improve health care outcomes and to provide expert evidence-based nursing care across diverse health care settings and systems. The FGCU DNP program will have two entry points: post-master's and post-baccalaureate. The DNP program will include both full-time and part-time plans of study to meet the needs of working nurses in the FGCU service area. Approval of this proposal will result in the eventual inactivation of the current Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner major of the MSN program at FGCU.

The MSN to DNP is for students who have a master's degree in nursing, regardless of specialty practice, from programs accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) or Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). The MSN to DNP curriculum requires 39 hours of coursework that includes practice hours and the capstone project. The MSN to DNP builds upon the candidate's specialty practice area through a core that focuses on utilization of research in the practice setting, quality of care delivery, examination of health care outcomes, leadership in practice, and fundamentals of nurse education.

The BSN to DNP is for students who have a bachelor's degree in nursing from a program accredited by the CCNE or ACEN. The BSN to DNP curriculum requires 84 hours of coursework including (a) 72 credit hours of coursework that focuses on utilization of research in the practice setting, quality of care delivery, examination of health care outcomes, leadership in practice, fundamentals of nurse education, practice hours, and capstone project; and (b) 12 credit hours of coursework in the Family-Nurse Practitioner Concentration or the Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner Concentration.

Forecasts for employment of graduates from a DNP program are strong. Employment opportunities include medical practices, hospitals, community health agencies, primary care clinics, and schools of nursing. The Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011-2012 outlook forecasts that advanced practice specialties will be in high demand, particularly in medically underserved areas such as inner cities and rural areas. DNP graduates can also help relieve the national nursing faculty shortage. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) *2011-2012 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing* identified that two-thirds of the nursing schools responding to the survey pointed to faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into programs.

- B. Describe how the proposed program is consistent with the current State University System (SUS) Strategic Planning Goals. Identify which specific goals the program will directly support and which goals the program will indirectly support. See the SUS Strategic Plan at <http://www.flbog.edu/pressroom/strategicplan.php>*

The proposed DNP program is consistent with the State University System (SUS) 2012-2025 Strategic Plan of Florida goals related to teaching, research, and public service, and the mission of FGCU. The program will directly support the following goals of the SUS of Florida: 1) strengthen quality and reputation of academic programs and universities, 2) meeting statewide

professional and workforce needs, 3) building world-class academic programs and research capacity, and 4) meeting community needs and fulfilling unique institutional responsibilities. The proposed DNP program will increase the number of graduate nursing degrees conferred by FGCU. As the only SUS DNP program in Southwest Florida, the proposed FGCU DNP program will provide access to doctoral nursing education for advanced practice nurses who live in the FGCU five county service areas. Doctorally prepared advanced practice nurses can help alleviate the nursing faculty shortage that is a major factor in the on-going Florida nursing shortage. Moving advanced practice nursing education to the doctoral level will result in higher quality health care and an increased capacity for evidence-based practice needed by the nursing profession. DNP graduates are uniquely prepared to help alleviate shortages of advanced practice nurses in both practice and educational settings. Similar to the goals of the SUS, the mission of FGCU is to “fulfill the academic, cultural, social, and career expectations of its constituents.” Graduates of the DNP program will improve the quality of health care, increase the pool of potential nursing faculty members, nurse executive leaders, and provide graduates with multiple employment options as advanced practice nurses.

*C. If the program is to be included in an Area of Programmatic Strategic Emphasis as described in the SUS Strategic Plan, please indicate the category and the justification for inclusion.*

The Areas of Programmatic Strategic Emphasis:

1. Critical Needs:
  - Education
  - Health Professions
  - Security and Emergency Services
2. Economic Development:
  - Globalization
  - Regional Workforce Demand
3. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)

The SUS has designated several disciplines as critical to the service and infrastructure needs within Florida. One such discipline is Nursing. The current national shortage of nurses presents challenges to Florida’s institutions as they work to prepare qualified individuals to meet current and projected nurse shortages. One pivotal obstacle in preparing additional nurses to meet the growing state demand is the lack of qualified nursing faculty, especially in the area of clinical teaching. The proposed DNP program, by its very nature, is rich in clinical practice and can serve to provide graduates with a strong foundation for clinical teaching in nursing education. The creation of this degree is consistent with the SUS’s strategic plan as it will increase access to both graduate and baccalaureate nursing programs allowing the School of Nursing to eventually recruit graduates of the FGCU DNP program for clinical teaching and faculty positions. “Nurses prepared at the doctoral level with a blend of clinical, organizational, economic and leadership skills are most likely to be able to critique nursing and other clinical scientific findings and design programs of care delivery that are locally (Florida) acceptable, economically feasible, and which significantly impact health care outcomes (AACN, 2004, p. 3)”. Implementation of the recent Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is expected to increase demands on the health care workforce, nurse practitioner jobs are predicted to grow 94 percent from 128,000 in 2008 to 244,000 in 2025. The FGCU DNP Program plans to increase the workforce of nurse practitioners necessary to meet the demand.

*D. Identify any established or planned educational sites at which the program is expected to be offered and indicate whether it will be offered only at sites other than the main campus.*

The program will be offered on the main campus.

## INSTITUTIONAL AND STATE LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY

### **II. Need and Demand**

- A. Need: Describe national, state, and/or local data that support the need for more people to be prepared in this program at this level. Reference national, state, and/or local plans or reports that support the need for this program and requests for the proposed program which have emanated from a perceived need by agencies or industries in your service area. Cite any specific need for research and service that the program would fulfill.*

Currently, there is a great need for advanced practice nurses and graduates are able to choose from multiple employment opportunities. Positions for advanced practice nurses are projected to grow. At any point in time, considering FGCU's five county service area, there are a variety of advanced practice settings including hospitals serving in-patients and out-patients, primary care practices, long term care facilities, private clinics, home health, schools and health departments. Local students who completed our current MSN Nurse Practitioner program have tended to remain in the area following graduation and have begun to meet local workforce needs. However, there continues to be significant unmet need for advanced practice nurses in the communities surrounding FGCU.

The School of Nursing is surrounded by counties designated by the Florida Department of Health as having special populations including large numbers of minority or economically challenged individuals and families. These counties also have acute shortages of primary care providers. The School will play a pivotal role in educating and preparing advanced practice nurses to be comprehensive care providers with knowledge and skills necessary to provide fully accountable health care for patients across clinical sites and over time. The proposed DNP program will position the School of Nursing to continue its commitment to this area in providing competent, knowledgeable, and capable health care providers.

The FGCU DNP has been designed to meet the national recommendations and guidelines for preparation of advanced practice nurses. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) 2010 report recommended an increase in advanced practice nurses to meet the demand for safe, high quality, and effective services. In fact, the IOM advocates for "advances in the education of nurses across all levels, improvements in the practice of nursing across the continuum of care, transformation in the utilization of nurses across settings, and leadership at all levels so nurses can be deployed effectively and appropriately as partners in the healthcare team (IOM, 2010 p. xi)."

Further, the FGCU DNP will promote the development of evidence-based nursing practice. According to AACN (2006), "Scholarship and research are the hallmarks of doctoral education... which involves the translation of research into practice and dissemination and integration of new knowledge, which are key activities of DNP graduates. The scholarship of application expands the realm of knowledge beyond mere discovery and directs it toward humane ends (p.11)."

- B. Demand: Describe data that support the assumption that students will enroll in the proposed program. Include descriptions of surveys or other communications with prospective students.*

On average, Advanced Practice Nursing (APN) programs consistently experience higher numbers of applicants, fill their cohort groups, and enjoy a highly qualified applicant pool. The growth of DNP programs nationwide since it was first offered in 2000 further indicates there is a high demand for this level of education for advanced practice nurses (AACN, March 2010). The transition to the DNP will allow the FGCU Graduate Nursing Program to admit students to the capacity of the program, thereby better meeting the workforce needs of the clinical

community. Graduates of APN programs receive multiple employment opportunities. One-hundred percent of FGCU advanced practice graduates are employed once certified. Because of the tremendous employment opportunities for APNs, there is a significant demand for positions in APN programs. This demand is reflected by the increased number of applicants to FGCU's APN programs and the percentage of undergraduate nursing students expressing interest in the APN Program.

Nationally, the DNP is mandated by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) for all APNs entering certification programs by 2015. The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), the accrediting agency for the School of Nursing, will likely only give continuing accreditation to those programs that have moved to the DNP. The Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) has mandated that by 2025 all nurse anesthesia programs will award the doctoral degree for CRNAs entering certification programs as part of the certification process rather than a post-certification degree.

Currently, prospective graduate students are looking for the availability of programs that will allow a completion of the DNP after graduation from MSN programs. At present, there are no programs offering the DNP on-site in the five county area served by FGCU. Offering the DNP degree with both the MSN to DNP and the BSN to DNP entry options in 2015 will also put FGCU in a good position to meet the educational needs of advanced practice nurses in the local community.

The School of Nursing (SON) began planning for the transition to a DNP program in 2007. The Graduate Curriculum, Admission, and Progression Committee (GCA&P) conducted a needs assessment, using focus groups and survey approaches to determine perceptions and possible interest in pursuing an advanced practice doctoral degree (see Appendix B). A DNP survey was mailed or given to 150 employed APNs. Thirty-one surveys were handed in to facilitators and 54 were mailed to the SON. The majority of the APNs who completed the survey were over 40 years of age and Caucasian. Twenty-eight percent had a master's degree and 27% had been a nurse practitioner for greater than 10 years. When asked "Are you thinking about entering a DNP Program?" 20 (13%) stated "yes", 11 (7.3%) said "maybe", and 29 (19%) reported a "no". This most likely reflects the older age of the majority of APNs at the time of the survey as many were planning for retirement. This survey was repeated with graduate nursing students in September 2013 (n= 33). Sixty-one percent (20 out of 33) indicated they were thinking about entering a DNP. The major reasons given for returning to school or to begin a DNP program were to "expand my critical thinking and to grow as a clinician, ...to gain additional expertise in assessing the evidence for implementing current guidelines in an ever changing health care environment, and the most important, ...to be a part of my own professional development plan".

Facilitators (Nursing Student Association members) talking with baccalaureate students found an increased interest in BSN students wishing to continue their nursing education. Today, as more students, recent graduates, and currently practicing APNs are aware of and knowledgeable about the DNP degree there has been increased inquiries and interest expressed about the program being delivered at FGCU. This trend was confirmed in communications with the Associate Dean of one of the early DNP programs (personal communication, Dr. Patricia Howard, University of Kentucky, College of Nursing, January 29, 2011). Interestingly, five advanced practice graduates of the FGCU MSN program are currently enrolled in DNP programs.

Information was also sought in 2010 from prospective employers of DNP graduates. All were very enthusiastic and affirmative in regard to hiring the graduates when they completed the DNP program (see Appendix B). Several reported the need for "increased comprehension in scope and in-depth preparation for advanced practice ...as they believed the DNP would be critical in the ever-changing healthcare environment."



increased need for nurse practitioners in primary care. According to the IOM report, “for health centers to increase the number of patients served (for medical visits) from 16 million to 30 million, an additional 15,600 to 19,400 primary care providers are estimated to be needed. Using the current skill mix of clinicians, 36 percent of these additional providers—from 5,600 to 7,000—would be NPs/CNMs/PAs. In addition, health centers would require another 11,600 to 14,400 RNs. Assuming that 75 percent of the advanced practice clinicians would be NPs or CNMs, an additional 16,000–20,000 RNs would be required to meet this demand (IOM, 2012 p. 355, F-6).”

Prior to the development of DNP programs, specialization in nursing practice came at the master’s degree level. These programs prepared advanced practice nurses with specialization as clinical nurse specialists, nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, and nurse midwives. With the increased complexity of health care, the emphasis on quality outcomes in health care, and the explosion in health knowledge, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 2004) and the Institute of Medicine (IOM, 2010) provided recommendations stating the current preparation of nurses at the advanced practice level needed to be transformed. As a result, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (ANCC, 2010) redefined nursing education for leadership and direct care roles emphasizing the doctoral level of education for the advanced practice role. In 2004, AACN published a position paper advocating development of the DNP as the appropriate level of education for advanced practice nurses. Moving advanced practice nursing education to the doctoral level is consistent with the education of other health care professions that has either historically been at, or have moved, to the doctoral level: medicine, dentistry, physical therapy, and pharmacy. Furthermore, it is in keeping with the guidelines for preparation of advanced practice nurses at the doctoral level (AACN, 2006).

- C. *If substantially similar programs (generally at the four-digit CIP Code or 60 percent similar in core courses), either private or public exist in the state, identify the institution(s) and geographic location(s). Summarize the outcome(s) of communication with such programs with regard to the potential impact on their enrollment and opportunities for possible collaboration (instruction and research).*

The Council of Academic Vice Presidents’ Academic Coordinating Workgroup reviewed the DNP pre-proposal on December 6, 2012. No concerns were noted; the addition of this program to the SUS Academic Program Inventory for FGCU will not result in unwarranted duplication.

Seven universities in the State University System of Florida (Florida Atlantic University, Florida International University, Florida State University, University of Central Florida, University of Florida, University of North Florida, and the University of South Florida) and four private universities (Barry University, Jacksonville University, Nova Southeastern University and University of Miami) in Florida have opened DNP programs.

<i>Florida Universities Offering Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Programs</i>				
University	MSN to DNP	Minimum Credit Hours	BSN to DNP	Required Credit Hours
<b>FGCU Proposed</b>	Yes	39	Yes	84
<b>Barry University</b>	Yes	38	Yes	80
<b>FAU</b>	Yes	41	Yes	80
<b>FIU</b>	Yes	36	No	-
<b>FSU</b>	Yes	48	Yes	90
<b>Jacksonville University</b>	Yes	39	No	-

Nova Southeastern University	Yes	36	No	-
UCF	Yes	40	Yes	82
UF	Yes	48	Yes	93
UM	Yes	38	Yes	Anesthesia track only 147
UNF	Yes	48	Yes	82
USF	Yes	52	Yes	82

The recommendation to move advanced nursing practice to the doctoral level has now been endorsed by a majority of the national nursing organizations (AACN, 2010). Nationally, of the 388 nursing programs offering advanced practice nursing (APN) programs, 217 have opened DNP programs and 97 are in the process of planning a DNP program. Student enrollment has gone from 392 students in 2000, to 5,165 in 2009, and to 9,094 in 2011 (AACN). DNP programs in Florida have experienced similar growth. For academic year (AY) 2009-2010 to AY 2010-2011, DNP enrollment in Florida grew 358 percent, which includes an increase of 162 enrolled students (Florida Center for Nursing, 2012). Nationally for 2011-2012, student enrollment in DNP programs increased from 9,094 to 11,575 (AACN, 2013 Fact Sheet).

- D. Use Table 1 in Appendix A (A for undergraduate and B for graduate) to categorize projected student headcount (HC) and Full Time Equivalents (FTE) according to primary sources. Generally undergraduate FTE will be calculated as 40 credit hours per year and graduate FTE will be calculated as 32 credit hours per year. Describe the rationale underlying enrollment projections. If, initially, students within the institution are expected to change majors to enroll in the proposed program, describe the shifts from disciplines that will likely occur.

The projections for student HC and FTE are conservative (see Table 1-B). These projections assume that in year one the average number of students who entered the FGCU MSN program in academic year 2009/2010 through 2013-2014 (n= 8) will enter the BSN to DNP. It is anticipated that two students will enroll full-time in the MSN to DNP and six students will enroll part-time in the MSN to DNP for a total of 8 students in the MSN to DNP. By year five, the number of students enrolled the DNP program is projected to have grown from 16 students to 94 students and these will be a combination of full-time and part-time students. These enrollment projections are comparable to enrollment in programs nationally (AACN, 2010; personal communication, Dr. Patricia Howard, University of Kentucky College of Nursing, January 29, 2011).

- E. Indicate what steps will be taken to achieve a diverse student body in this program. If the proposed program substantially duplicates a program at FAMU or FIU, provide, (in consultation with the affected university), an analysis of how the program might have an impact upon that university's ability to attract students of races different from that which is predominant on their campus in the subject program. The university's Equal Opportunity Officer shall review this section of the proposal and then sign and date in the area below to indicate that the analysis required by this subsection has been reviewed and approved.

To ensure the desired outcome for student diversity, recruiting efforts will continue within the initial target population area (FGCU's five-county area: Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry, and Glades) and extend to other geographic regions having larger under-represented populations of prospective students. Outreach approaches may include personal contact with appropriate administrators at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) including Florida A&M University (Tallahassee, FL) and Bethune-Cookman College (Daytona Beach, FL), inviting currently enrolled students in the undergraduate level who could transition to the graduate level to consider this degree program; networking with the diverse student population to seek potential enrollees of similar background; contact with professional associations and affinity groups whose