Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Professional Mentor Policy

PURPOSE:
The purpose of the DNP Professional Mentor Policy is to detail the process to establish clinical or practicum experiences for post-master's DNP students as well as identify and approve professional mentors to facilitate clinical or practicum experiences. The Graduate Program faculty members recognize that a clinical or practicum experience with a professional mentor provides the DNP student an excellent opportunity to develop and participate in learning activities with an expert in a one-to-one relationship in the professional role.

REVIEW:
All policies in the Graduate Program Manual shall be reviewed by the Graduate Program Associate Dean/Department Chairs by December 1 of even numbered years in collaboration with the Graduate Program Council. Final approval of the Graduate Program Manual is by the Dean.

POLICY/PROCEDURE

1.0 Policy

To achieve student learning outcomes, and meet program clinical/practice hour requirements, various DNP courses require students to spend time in clinical/practice experiences working with professional mentors to guide and facilitate the students' advancement in a specific area and as a DNP leader. The purpose of providing students with the opportunity to work with professional mentors is to achieve course objectives through a meaningful educational experience with an individual identified as an expert in a particular area. The DNP faculty members recognize that post-master's DNP students are highly skilled practitioners and nursing leaders when they enter the program and thus benefit greatly from working with professional mentors to facilitate their advanced leadership and practice development in the DNP role.

Individuals who serve as professional mentors for the post-master's DNP students should meet the following qualifications:

a) Formal education and professional experience as required for the professional role and practice area; preferably an earned graduate degree or its equivalent in a specialty area of practice.
b) Clinical practice expertise derived from practical and theoretical preparation for individuals in clinical practice roles.
c) Administrative or management expertise derived from practical and theoretical preparation for individuals in administrative or public health positions.
d) Commitment to assist students to develop unique aspects of a particular role and meet defined learning objectives as established by the program of study.

Learning objectives are designed to guide the student’s clinical/practice experience while working with the professional mentor.

Clinical/practice experiences for students in the post-masters DNP program may include direct or indirect patient care experiences; observational experiences; interviews; participation in community events or local, state and national meetings relevant to the learning objectives; activities related to developing, implementing and completing the DNP Project; or other unique learning opportunities from which the student can achieve defined learning objectives. Clinical/practice experiences may take place in the student’s place of employment if the experience clearly provides an opportunity to achieve specified
learning objectives and/or to develop, implement and complete the DNP Project. School of Nursing faculty may serve as professional mentors.

Course faculty must approve all professional mentors and student learning objectives for the clinical/practice experience. Faculty approve professional mentors based the criteria identified in this section as well as students’ learning needs and course and program objectives. The clinical/practice experience and professional mentor approval process is detailed in Section 2.0 below.

2.0 Procedure

1. The DNP student in conjunction with the course faculty and DNP Project Advisor identify potential professional mentors that will meet the student’s individual learning and development needs and who meet the qualifications for professional mentors described above.
2. The DNP student will document clinical/practice experiences, as guided by learning objectives, on the DNP Clinical/Practice Hour e-Log. Information regarding professional mentors will also be required and can be submitted via the DNP Clinical/Practice Hour e-Log.
3. The course faculty and/or the DNP Project Advisor maintain contact with the student’s professional mentor(s) as needed. Faculty members are available to the professional mentor via phone and e-mail.
4. The DNP Program Coordinator maintains a database of individuals who serve or have served as professional mentors for DNP students. The database of professional mentors includes name, title, credentials, highest academic degree and institutional affiliation.