

REVIEW OF THE DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE (D.N.P.)

Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) Code: 51.3818
Nursing Practice

OVERVIEW

The **D.N.P. in Nursing Practice** program at Illinois State University is housed in the Mennonite College of Nursing. The Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN) houses four degree programs: a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.S.N.) Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.), a Ph.D. in Nursing, and Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.). In addition, the College offers a Family Nurse Practitioner Post-Master’s graduate certificate, and a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Post-Master’s graduate certificate. This is the first review of the D.N.P. in Nursing Practice program.

The D.N.P. program prepares nurses with a blend of clinical, organizational, economic, health care improvement, and leadership skills to serve as clinical and/or administrative leaders in health care systems. D.N.P.-prepared nurses may also serve as educators in a variety of settings. As a practice-focused doctoral program, the D.N.P. program focuses on practice that is innovative and evidence-based, reflecting the application of credible research findings. Beginning in 2021 students enrolling in the D.N.P. in Nursing select from three sequence options: Post-Master’s sequence, Leadership and Management sequence, and Family Nurse Practitioner sequence.

Enrollment by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2014-2021
Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.), Illinois State University
First Majors Only

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
No Sub-plan	14	16	10	13	9	14	15	10
Family Nurse Practitioner sequence								21
Leadership sequence								14
Post Master’s sequence								8
Total	14	16	10	13	9	14	15	53

Table notes: Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2019 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018. The Post-Master’s sequence, Leadership and Management sequence, and Family Nurse Practitioner sequence all began in 2021.

Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study 2014-2021
Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.), Illinois State University
First Majors Only

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Enrollments	14	16	10	13	9	14	15	
Degrees			2	13		5	4	4

Table notes: The Post-Master’s sequence, Leadership and Management sequence, and Family Nurse Practitioner sequence all began in 2020.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

The program outcomes for the DNP program are congruent with expectations of the University and are derived from the College's mission and vision statements. The outcomes have been developed to reflect the professional nursing standards and guidelines presented in *The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice* (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2006).

Essential I: Scientific Underpinnings for Practice

Essential II: Organizational and Systems Leadership for Quality Improvement and Systems Thinking

Essential III: Clinical Scholarship and Analytical Methods for Evidence-Based Practice

Essential IV: Information Systems/Technology and Patient Care Technology for the Improvement and Transformation of Health Care

Essential V: Health Care Policy for Advocacy in Health Care

Essential VI: Interprofessional Collaboration for Improving Patient and Population Health Outcomes

Essential VII: Clinical Prevention and Population Health for Improving the Nation's Health

Essential VIII: Advanced Nursing Practice

Student learning outcomes

- Engage in organizational and systems leadership to create practice environments that improve health care outcomes
- Participate in evidence-based practice and clinical scholarship to improve health care practice and outcomes
- Synthesize scientific, theoretical, and technological data from a variety of disciplines to improve health care systems and health outcomes for individuals and populations
- Demonstrate leadership in development and implementation of health policy
- Collaborate with intra-professional and inter-professional teams to create change in health care systems

Program curriculum (2021-2022)

D.N.P. in Nursing Practice requires 34 credit hours. This includes 18 credit hours of core courses, 3 credit hours of applied data analysis, 6 credit hours of clinical residency, and 7 credit hours of scholarly project courses. Additionally, the program requires a minimum of 1,000 clinical hours post-baccalaureate degree.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus.
The program is delivered through online instruction.

Department faculty (Fall 2021)

21 tenure track faculty members (6 Professors, 4 Associate Professors, and 11 Assistant Professors)

63 non-tenure track faculty members (22 full-time, 41 part-time, totaling 34.5 FTE)

Specialized accreditation

The D.N.P. program at Illinois State University has been accredited by Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) since November 2015 and was most recently awarded continuing accreditation in April 2017. The D.N.P. program received the maximum 10-year term of accreditation and is scheduled to host an on-site evaluation in Spring 2027.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

A major external factor affecting the program was COVID-19. Many students enrolled in NUR 560 Advanced Nursing Practice Experience were restricted from obtaining clinical hours at facilities. This required innovative ways to obtain clinical hours. Faculty worked with students and preceptors to identify alternate ways to meet the course requirements. In the Spring 2020 semester, for example, a student was restricted from coming to an acute care facility. One of her objectives was “Attend meetings such as Magnet® Program meeting and Shared Governance.” Faculty worked with her preceptor to meet this objective. Several research articles related to Magnet® Designation were emailed to the student with an assignment to complete a literature synthesis. Additionally, readings on shared governance were also assigned. Another example was a student’s objective, “Become more familiar with Excel and required software used within the leadership role.” The student was given a demonstration on basic calculation formulas in Excel via Zoom. The student was then given an assignment to create a budget for a hospital unit, such as a nurse leader would complete.

A factor affecting the academic discipline is the recommendation that the D.N.P. degree be the entry level for advanced nursing practice by 2025 by the National Organization of Nursing Practitioner Faculties (NONPF); NONPF serves as a consultant in the area of D.N.P. education for American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), through which Mennonite College of Nursing is accredited via their Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) branch. The addition of B.S.N. to D.N.P.: Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) sequence will support MCN to meet the recommendations.

Responses to previous program review recommendations

The last program review was the three-year new program review. The response indicated the need to continue to increase enrollment in the program and support investigation of adding a B.S.N. to D.N.P. track. However, the program continually reviews the program through our Plan for College Assessment (PCA).

1. Increase enrollment. MCN supports recruitment of D.N.P. Students through a variety of strategies, including targeted digital advertising, print advertising, social media advertising, and email marketing. More recently, MCN holds D.N.P. program virtual open houses where students can learn more about the program and ask questions. Members of MCN's marketing and recruitment team and Post-licensure Programs Academic Advisor meet with students 1:1 if requested, and students are allowed to request a phone call from MCN's graduate program director or D.N.P. Program Leader.

2. Investigation of Adding B.S.N. to D.N.P. Track. Planning for the B.S.N. to D.N.P. track began in 2013, with the goal for program proposal in Spring 2014. MCN developed the B.S.N. to D.N.P. program with two sequences: Family Nurse Practitioner and Nursing Leadership and Management. Both sequences began in Fall 2021 and current enrollment is at 39 students. The higher enrollment in the new sequences for just this fall approximates the 41 graduated or projected to graduate over the past 8 years (students enrolled Summer 2013 to Summer 2020).

Major findings

Aspects of the program that are working well include:

- Positive feedback about course faculty
- Positive feedback from students about preceptors and clinical sites
- The online program provides flexibility for our students, many who work full-time or part-time
- CCNE accreditation for the full 10 years
- B.S.N. to D.N.P. sequences were approved to start Fall 2021

Aspects of the program that could be improved:

- Faculty advising, related to students wanting earlier assignment to scholarly project advisors and continued work on section III, 2a. D.N.P. Chat feedback
- Communication with students

Program review conducted 2021-2022. Report submitted to the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Fall 2022

- Potential issues dealing with larger cohorts
- Mapping to revised D.N.P. essentials

Resources needed to achieve improvements

- Need more faculty advisors, clinical sites, and preceptors to accommodate the planned increase in numbers in the B.S.N. to D.N.P. sequences
- Resources to continue D.N.P. faculty/advisor development
- Expert consultation to match revised or new course assignments to the revised D.N.P. essentials

Initiatives and plans

Program faculty plan to take the following actions during the next program review cycle to improve the program include:

- B.S.N. to D.N.P. program implementation - In Fall 2021, 39 B.S.N. to D.N.P. students will enter the program. Investigate feasibility of the FNP and NLM Sequence leads to reach out to each student early in their first semester to address concerns or answer questions
- Continue to improve communication based on feedback from students – the program faculty will continue to review course evaluations, course recommendation forms, surveys, chats etc. to obtain ongoing feedback from students and take action to address communication issues
- Assign scholarly project faculty advisor earlier in the program – currently, upon enrollment in the program, the D.N.P. Program Lead serves as faculty advisor for students. Prior to Scholarly Project I, students may be reassigned to a different faculty advisor with experience or interest in the student’s scholarly project. Based on feedback from students and advisors, reassignment earlier in the program is preferred. The program will begin this process in Spring 2022
- Continue to grow enrollment numbers and completion rate. Prepare faculty to mentor D.N.P. students with scholarly projects. Conducted an initial meeting in Spring 2021 for D.N.P. prepared faculty to review expectations of advisors. Will continue to reach out to DNP faculty to serve in this role
- Explore feasibility of admitting students outside Illinois
- Review MCN Plan for College Assessment for the D.N.P. program and revise as needed
- Map MCN D.N.P. program courses to the new AACN Essentials. This includes mapping to 8 concepts, 10 domains, including competencies and sub-competencies
- Monitor NUR 535 Applied Data Management and Analysis for improved student satisfaction after course changes
- Begin tracking percentage of D.N.P. student manuscripts accepted for publication

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome. The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.) program to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that many of the efforts and activities that led to the development of the self-report were accomplished during the time-period coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee thanks the program for a comprehensive and critical self-study report that included input from multiple stakeholders.

The committee notes that the program’s enrollment during the period covering the program review cycle has fluctuated with an average of 12 to 13 students (with a high of 16 in 2015 and a low of 9 in 2018). We commend the program’s development of a new BSN to DNP track that has increased enrollment numbers in 2021 (53 enrolled students). We commend the program for their well-developed recruitment plan that includes targeted digital, print, email, social media advertising, and holding virtual open houses. The committee also commends the program for annually awarding approximately 20 scholarships that financially support students. The committee notes that over the period of review the percentage of domestic graduate students from groups traditionally underrepresented

minorities was 24 percent. The percentage of students identifying as male, traditionally underrepresented in the discipline, was 10 percent over the period of review which is near national rates (9.1 percent in nursing overall, 13.4 percent in D.N.P. programs). The committee notes the program faculty for efforts to increase the gender and racial/ethnic diversity among its students, including the hiring of a director of marketing and recruitment.

The committee recognizes the program faculty's commitment to activities that support student success. The program is delivered as an on-line program to primarily part-time students. Students work with their Academic Advisor to individualize the plan of study when necessary. The committee commends the program on providing students access to the College Nursing Simulation Laboratory allowing for intentional opportunities to become competent practitioners in a safe environment as well as for preparation in the new era of telehealth and other non-traditional healthcare settings. Even though the program is delivered online to primarily part-time students, there are some co-curricular opportunities available to students (e.g., Sigma Theta Tau, Xi Pi Chapter). Over the period of review, the average time to degree is 32 months (2.6 years), with a range from 24-48 months. The committee commends the program for the variety of opportunities for direct community involvement both inside and outside of the classroom through their training at clinical sites (which include hospitals, clinics, a public health agency, a nonprofit agency, and other community organizations within a 75-mile radius of the Bloomington-Normal area). Additionally, all students are involved in scholarship designed to demonstrate identification and resolution of a practice-related problem through the scholarship of application. The primary objective of the project is the improvement of health care outcomes in the practice setting.

The committee commends the program for the creative and varied curricular options it provides students to meet their educational and career goals. The committee commends the faculty's work to revise the curriculum during the period of review based on feedback from multiple stakeholders (including input from current students during "confidential chats" conducted during D.N.P. Intensive Days). This included the development of a new NUR 539 Scholarly Project Design course offered during summer terms (including revisions to NUR 543 to help accommodate the new summer course) which allows students to begin obtaining their Institutional Review Board approval earlier. The Advanced Nursing Practice Experience course (NUR 560) was revised to assist students to complete more of their required clinical hours. Additionally, the committee commends the program faculty for the infusion of equity, diversity, and inclusion issues into their program curriculum. We further commend the Mennonite College of Nursing, and by extension this program, on their continued accreditation by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

The committee recognizes that the program faculty continue to work on the development and implementation of their plan for the assessment of student learning outcomes. The current assessment plan includes a well-developed curriculum mapping that explicitly links course assignments to program learning objectives. The plan provides for collecting evidence of student performance, especially with direct measures, and evaluating this evidence with rubrics. The self-study report provides ample evidence that evaluation and assessment findings continue to be used by faculty to design and implement program modifications. The committee commends the program faculty for developing comprehensive process for oversight and assessment of the instructional strategies and clinical work in a program that is delivered in an online format.

The committee recognizes the faculty members of the program for their scholarly contributions to the D.N.P. program. Faculty members draw on their research to mentor students with their own research and encourage their students to present their findings at external Faculty members are active researchers who publish peer-reviewed journals articles, and present at national and international professional conferences.

The committee commends the Mennonite College of Nursing and Milner Library for their continued collaboration to provide research resources and services in support of nursing students and faculty. The nursing librarian orients new students to nursing research resources and library services and teaches sessions in the research colloquium and scholarly communications courses in the program. Through the program review self-study process, the College and Milner Library have developed long-term space planning to further enhance this collaboration.

Finally, the committee commends the program faculty for their in-depth analysis of aspirational programs. As part of this analysis, the program faculty identified multiple institutions with similar programs that excel in ways that our

program may aspire to. The committee also recognizes that program faculty have developed specific action plans to implement similar initiatives as those to improve the program at Illinois State University.

Follow-up Report.

Comparator Analysis. The committee has included analyses of comparator and aspirational institutions in the self-study report outline to provide faculty members opportunities to consider the niche the program has among its peers and to gather information for program planning. The committee asks that program faculty return to this analysis to identify the program niche among comparator programs at Illinois public universities and to identify actions faculty could take to enhance the program with respect to the quality indicators faculty has prioritized. Accordingly, the committee asks faculty to revisit their discussions of comparator institutions and to summarize findings of those discussions in a report submitted to the Office of the Provost by May 15, 2023.

Recommendations. The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty and staff members of the Mennonite College of Nursing for the opportunity to provide input regarding the Doctor of Nursing Practice program at Illinois State University through consideration of the self-study report submitted by faculty. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with College faculty members. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2030, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Continue to focus on student success and retention. The self-study report indicates that 41 of 62 students were retained during the period of review and notes that those who departed did so for a wide variety of reasons. We recommend that the program faculty develop a plan for student success and retention. The plan should be used to increase transparency and communication around “student success” by defining the program’s goals for, assessment of, and actions towards supporting students enrolled in the program. The plan may provide an overarching structure for other initiatives (e.g., retention, curriculum, alumni engagement). As part of the plan, we recommend that the program faculty consider methods to assess entering students’ prior knowledge of statistics, clearly noting all clinical hour requirements clearly in the catalog and examining the impact of graduate assistant training for both teaching and research assistants. The committee recognizes substantial work by faculty members to review and update the program and its curriculum. The committee recommends continued periodic review of the program structure (especially with respect to course load and sequencing) and content to remain current with changes in the field and to support program retention and graduation rates. We encourage the program faculty to review the program’s mechanisms that support timely graduation of students. The committee encourages the program to continue developing opportunities for student scholarship and creative activities.

Continue to focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity. While the committee commends the College for its commitment to increase the gender and ethnic diversity of faculty and students within the program, the committee encourages the program to continue to pursue its goals related to further developing an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. The committee recommends that the College continue to refine and implement strategies for recruiting for diversity at the doctoral level and retaining those students once in the program. The College might look to its aspirational programs for guidance in developing such strategies. Furthermore, we encourage the program faculty to continue to examine ways to infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion into the curriculum.

Continue and broaden efforts to increase faculty diversity and support faculty success. The committee recognizes the challenges faced by the College in recruiting applicants for tenure track faculty positions and in recruiting applicant pools that are diverse with respect to race, ethnicity, and gender/sex given the paucity of doctoral-prepared nurses in the U.S. We also recognize that the pandemic has only increased this challenge. The committee encourages the College to continue those efforts despite the competition from other nursing programs for faculty applicants. The committee notes that getting closer to the ideal tenure track to non-tenure track ratio is particularly important given the need for mentoring and supervision of students’ doctoral scholarship. The committee concurs with the goal articulated in the self-study report of enhancing faculty mentorship through additional faculty development opportunities, which is especially critical to the success of the D.N.P. program.

Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. The committee encourages faculty to continue its implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in assessing student learning to identify any modifications to the plan faculty may deem necessary.

Continue the collaborative work with Milner Library. The committee recommends that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to examine and evaluate the library's journals and monograph collection related to nursing to aid in both the selection and deselection process of these sources. Given recent journal cancellations and expected increases in distance and hybrid courses, we encourage the College and the Library to further collaborate to increase awareness of alternative access to resources, such as Interlibrary Loan and I-Share lending, among faculty and students. We also recommend that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to develop a tiered approach for information fluency learning outcomes for the department, align those outcomes to the curricula, and integrate those outcomes into the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program.

Continue to refine a plan for alumni tracking and engagement. The committee recognizes the numerous strategies deployed by the College to track its alumni and to periodically seek feedback from them regarding the program, such as through administration of surveys of students immediately prior to their graduation and again within six months of graduation. The committee encourages the program faculty to continue to refine their plan for tracking program alumni and use this system to enhance alumni networking. These activities may become even more important in the years ahead as the program's alumni become more diverse. The program could benefit from increased involvement of its alumni in providing input regarding the program and in mentoring students.