Culminating Capstone Project

The major assessment of DNP student learning is the culminating capstone product. This project involves scholarly development, proposal defense, implementation, data collection and evaluation of an evidence-based change in an area of the DNP residency, or practice work -- whether in direct advanced nursing practice one-to-one with individual patients, patient groups or communities; or in indirect advanced nursing practice as a nurse administrator or informatics nurse. A sample outline for the capstone project content is found on page 35. The phases of this project correspond to the required residency/capstone courses designed to guide, instruct, and keep the student moving forward with project progress:

Phase I (NR 800): Proposal identification – at the completion of this course, students will have a clearly stated, measurable, evidence-based practice (EBP) question supported with a thorough literature review and project framework.

Phase II (NR 801): Proposal development – this course is designed to guide DNP students in developing the proposal for their capstone projects to include: EBP question/purpose/specific aims, review of literature, project framework, methods (sample, instruments, measures, intervention, data collection procedures) and an evaluation plan. At the completion of the course, students will defend their proposals to their appropriate capstone project committees and seek institutional review board approval. The proposal defense will also serve as an oral examination to establish doctoral candidacy. Success with the proposal defense and candidacy exam denotes that the student has successfully achieved doctoral level knowledge and learning.

Phase III (NR 802): Project implementation – this course is designed to guide DNP students with the implementation of their capstone projects. At the completion of the course, students will have implemented the project and collected data for evaluating the project. Writing for dissemination will progress.

Phase IV (NR 803): Project evaluation/dissemination – this course is designed to assist DNP students with the evaluation and dissemination of their capstone projects. At the completion of the course, students will have evaluated the projects based on their established evaluation plans and completed the writing of a publishable paper for dissemination of project outcomes.

Content Outline of Capstone Project

I. Title
II. Executive Summary
   a. Brief description
   b. Goals
   c. Major points of cost/benefit analysis
III. Project Description
   a. Brief project description of activities
   b. Location
   c. Timeframe (length of project)
IV. Background Information/Statement of Problem
a. Statement of problem/question for evidence-based practice (statistics)
b. Review of literature: evidence to support problem and resolution
c. Theoretical foundation for development of problem/question resolution

V. Project Detail
a. Goals and objectives
b. Patients/clientele served by the project
c. Primary methods for achieving goals, objectives, solving practice problem, answering practice question
d. Resources
   i. Personnel
      1. Staff/Administration
      2. Volunteers
   ii. Building/space/facilities
   iii. Equipment
   iv. Supplies
e. Marketing
   i. Assessment
   ii. Strategies
f. Budget
   i. Personnel
      1. Salaries
      2. Benefits
   ii. Facilities
   iii. Equipment
   iv. Supplies
   v. Marketing budget
      1. Materials
      2. Advertising
      3. Mailings
g. Time line

VI. Evaluation Plan
a. Formative evaluation
   i. Clarification of program/project goals
   ii. Plan for monitoring goal/objective accomplishment
   iii. Plan for performance improvement of problems encountered during implementation
   iv. Meetings; informal interactions during implementation
   v. Relations between process and progress toward outcomes
   vi. Implications for program practices and specific changes in operations/implementation
b. Summative evaluation
   i. Documentation of final program/project outcomes
   ii. Analysis of final data addressing outcomes
   iii. Formal final reports
   iv. Implications for future practice, policy, and administration