Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program

CAPSTONE HANDBOOK
Fifth Edition
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Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Capstone Project
Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS)

Purpose of the Capstone Project in the DNP curriculum:

All students in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program in the Beth-El College of Nursing & Health Sciences must complete a Capstone Project Proposal and Final Defense, NURS 8030. The primary purpose of the Capstone Project is to focus the student on the development, implementation, and evaluation of a clinically applicable, evidence-based program. The goal of the project is to inform the methods the student will use for program implementation and evaluation within a population/community. Students are supported by a Capstone Project Advisory Committee.

The Capstone Project seeks to demonstrate the student’s application of DNP concepts and knowledge in the clinical setting. This project offers the student an opportunity to demonstrate innovative leadership and practice at a doctoral level. The student is required to integrate the following skills:

- **Expertise in Reflective Practice**
- **Expert practice** in a specialty area related to the student’s interest
- **Independent practice inquiry (using Reflective Practice)** to identify existing problems/needs in nursing practice and health care systems
- The ability to **critically evaluate, translate and utilize evidence, knowledge, and research** to improve quality of care and health outcomes
- **Organizational and systems leadership skills using Reflective Practice/informatics/entrepreneurship** to develop, implement and evaluate interventions to improve clinical care and health care outcomes for diverse populations/communities
- **Using Reflective Practice within diverse, rural, underserved and/or vulnerable populations** to improve quality of care and to affect systems of care
- **Knowledge of advanced health care policy, ethics and law** to inform human rights, program ethics, risk/benefit and cost assessment guidelines and develop a population-based program based on best available and current evidence
- **Create a business/finance/entrepreneur environment** that focuses on patient/community/organizational/systems outcomes moving the practitioner into a global model of health care
Some questions to ask while determining and designing your Capstone Project (INCLUDE IN PROJECT PROPOSAL*):

1. Does my Capstone Project focus on individuals, communities, populations, systems, etc.?
2. What are the problems and/or issues my project will address?
3. Is my Capstone Project grounded in clinical practice and designed to solve practice problems or to directly inform my practice (AACN Position Statement on the Practice Doctorate in Nursing, 2004, p. 5)?
4. How will my project demonstrate achievement of the competencies outlined in the AACN’s The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice?
5. What existing literature provides evidence for my project or supports the need for my project?
6. Does my project improve practice or patient outcomes?
7. Does my project provide a foundation for future scholarship in nursing?

Ethical and Privacy Concerns:

- It is recommended that the DNP student discuss the required process of the UCCS Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) with their Capstone Project Chair to familiarize themselves with the process and begin to anticipate/set goals.

- View the UCCS IRB website at: http://www.uccs.edu/osp/research-compliance/research-involving-human-subject-irb.html

- Student must consult the Capstone Project Chair before beginning an IRB application. The entire Capstone Committee must approve the proposal and IRB application before the IRB application is submitted.

- It is incumbent on students to ascertain whether institutional IRB (clinical practice area) approval is necessary for their projects and notify their Capstone Project Chair of the institutional response.

- The student must not begin work on the Capstone Project (including project components unrelated to human subjects) until all appropriate IRB approvals have been obtained.

- Students are expected to know and follow the Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA) throughout the Capstone Proposal/Project process.
Capstone Project Advisory Committee

The Capstone Project Advisory Committee must be established before the student begins the Capstone Project Proposal.

The role of the Capstone Project Committee is to mentor the student in the development and implementation of the Capstone Project Proposal, Capstone Project and Scholarly Manuscript. This will be accomplished by a series of meetings designed to develop, critique, and focus student work. The Capstone Project Committee is expected to provide guidance throughout the process, and to assist the student to prepare for the Capstone Project Defense and final draft of the scholarly manuscript. Committee Members are expected to communicate with each other and attend (in person or via teleconference) the Defenses of the Capstone Project Proposal and Capstone Project.

The committee consists of three (3) advisors:

a. Chair - One Capstone Project full-time faculty member from the Nursing Faculty of Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

b. Committee Member - One faculty member from the UCCS Graduate Faculty (nursing or interdisciplinary).

c. Committee Member - One member who is either a UCCS Graduate Faculty member or an outside member with a terminal degree in their discipline and who has clinical expertise in the Capstone Project topic area.

Capstone Project Chair

The Capstone Project Chair must have a terminal degree (i.e., academic or practice doctorate) in the discipline and have a regular full-time graduate appointment in the UCCS Graduate School and be a Nursing faculty member from the Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences. The Capstone Project Chair serves as the academic advisor and Chairperson of the DNP student’s doctoral Capstone Project. Students must initiate contact with the faculty member they are considering as the Chair for their Capstone Project Advisory Committee as soon in the program as feasible. Once an agreement has been reached between both student and faculty member, the student must submit a Capstone Project Chair Agreement Form and a Capstone Project Declaration Form to the DNP Program Coordinator.

Students may wish to utilize the suggested Capstone Project Chair Interview Questions.

Two Capstone Project Committee Members

One of the Capstone Project Committee Members must be from the UCCS Graduate Faculty (nursing or interdisciplinary) and have a doctoral degree. The remaining Committee Member may be a UCCS Graduate Faculty member or an outside member with a terminal degree in their discipline (i.e., academic or practice doctorate) who has been appointed as an Associate Graduate Faculty member by the Graduate School at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. This committee member should have clinical expertise in the area chosen for the Capstone Project and will serve as the local clinical advisor of the DNP student’s doctoral Capstone to facilitate access to resources required for the student to complete the project. If students choose an outside committee member who does not hold an Associate Graduate Faculty Appointment, they must
contact the Graduate Nursing Program Assistant to have this individual be appointed as an associate member of the Graduate School. Students may choose to work with interdisciplinary Capstone committee members provided they obtain preapproval from the Capstone Project Chair. Students must submit *Capstone Project Committee Member Agreement Forms* for both committee members and a curricula vitae for outside members to the DNP Program Coordinator.

**Capstone Project Committee Student Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility *of the student* to:

1. Initiate contact with the Beth-El College Nursing Faculty member who is under consideration as the Chair of the Capstone Project Committee.

2. Initiate contact with two people to serve as Capstone Project Committee Members: One Member from the UCCS Graduate Faculty (nursing or interdisciplinary), and one Member who is either a UCCS Graduate Faculty member or an outside member with a terminal degree in their discipline.

3. Complete and submit all required forms.

4. Communicate regularly with their Capstone Project Committee regarding progress, goals, plans, changes, questions, etc.

5. Schedule/coordinate meetings among Capstone Project Committee members (*including the Defenses of the Capstone Project Proposal and Capstone Project*).

6. Read and comply with all relevant policies and procedures as set forth by the Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences at UCCS for the DNP program, the Capstone Project, and the Graduate School.

7. Report problems that delay progress in completing the Capstone Project Proposal, Capstone Project, and/or scholarly manuscript to the Capstone Project Chair.
Capstone Project Proposal

All DNP students are required to complete and defend their Capstone Project Proposal and obtain IRB approval before beginning the Capstone Project. The grade for NURS 8030 will appear as “IP” (In Progress) on the student transcript until the student has successfully completed the entire DNP Capstone Project and Defense.

Preparation of the Capstone Project Proposal

Students and the Capstone Project Committee should refer to the *DNP Capstone Project Proposal Guidelines* for details regarding Capstone Project Proposal format and contents.

Capstone Project Proposal Defense

The student is responsible for coordinating/scheduling a Defense date and time appropriate for all members of their Capstone Project Committee. All Capstone Project Committee members must attend (in person or via teleconference) the Defense of the Capstone Project Proposal.

Capstone Project Defense

The student is responsible for coordinating/scheduling a Capstone Project Defense date and time appropriate for all Capstone Project Committee members and Beth-El College IT Department. This date and time must be approved by all committee members prior to reporting the final date and time to the DNP Program Coordinator.

The Capstone Project Defense is a formal presentation of the DNP Capstone Project followed by a question and answer period between the student and the Capstone Project Committee. The Defense of the Capstone Project serves as the final examination for the DNP student. The student must meet all the requirements of the DNP program and have completed a clinically applicable, evidence-based project reflective of doctoral-level practice. The final defense of the Capstone Project must be approved by the entire Capstone Project Committee before the student is eligible for graduation.

Each member of the Capstone Project Committee must attend the student defense in person or via audio or video teleconference. Capstone Project Committee members will complete a Defense Evaluation Form and meet privately at the end of the Defense to reach consensus on the outcome of the oral presentation of the Capstone Project, final Capstone Project, and scholarly manuscript.

Grading

Students receive a grade for NURS 8030 at successful completion the Capstone Project Defense. The final Capstone Project grade is determined by:

- The quality of the work determined by the Capstone Project Committee
- A final evaluation report from the Capstone Project Committee
**Scholarly Manuscript**

The final product of the student Capstone Project will be a scholarly manuscript in APA format.

A final draft of the scholarly manuscript must be submitted to the Capstone Project Committee no later than two weeks *before* the scheduled Capstone Project Defense. The manuscript will be discussed and evaluated during the Capstone Project Defense. Any revisions to the scholarly manuscript are due to the Capstone Project Committee no later than one week after the Capstone Project Defense. The scholarly manuscript must be successfully completed prior to graduation. Students are strongly encouraged to submit their scholarly manuscript for publication.

**Clinical Residency Hours**

Post MSN Students are required to spend a minimum of 630 clinical residency hours completing their DNP Program. This includes 45 hours in NURS 7100, 45 hours in NURS 7070, 45 hours in NURS 7030, 45 hours in NURS 7090 and 450 hours for NURS 8030.

BSN to DNP students are required to spend a minimum of 1260 clinical residency hours completing their DNP Program. This includes 450 clinical hours for NURS 8030.

- Clinical residency hours may be distributed based on time spent performing: practice inquiry, Reflective Practice, literature reviews, project research, program development, and program implementation.
- It is the responsibility of the student to distribute the 450 clinical residency hours for NURS 8030 between Capstone Proposal and Project the way they see most effective in agreement with the Capstone Project Advisory Committee.

**Tracking Clinical Residency Hours**

Students will find an electronic spreadsheet for tracking clinical hours for the DNP Capstone Project. This tracking sheet should be used to document all clinical hours spent completing the Capstone Project Proposal and Capstone Project. Students should submit tracking sheets in the NURS 8030 course or as arranged with the Capstone Chair.
Complete this document and submit to the DNP Program Coordinator.

STUDENT NAME:

CAPSTONE PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

SIGNATURE OF DNP STUDENT: ___________________________________________ DATE: ____________

Signature of Faculty Chair: ___________________________________________ Date: ____________

DEPARTMENT APPROVAL: YES ☐ NO ☐

COMMENTS:

SIGNATURE OF DNP PROGRAM COORDINATOR AT BETH-EL COLLEGE OF NURSING AND HEALTH SCIENCES:

_________________________________________ DATE: ____________
DNP Capstone Project Chair Agreement Form

DNP STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Name:__________________________________
Address:______________________________________________
Phone:_________________________ Email:_________________________

ADVISOR INFORMATION

Faculty Chair Name and Credentials:
________________________________________________________________________
Phone: _______________________ Email: __________________________________________________________________

CAPSTONE PROJECT CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program requires completion of a minimum of ten credit hours (450 residency hours) of NURS 8030. The culmination of this course is a completed Capstone Project and scholarly manuscript. The DNP student will implement and evaluate course requirements as set forth in the DNP Capstone Proposal Guidelines. The identified Capstone Project Chair serves as the academic advisor and facilitates access to resources required for the student to complete the required learning objectives as set forth in the applicable course syllabus and the DNP Capstone Handbook. The Capstone Project Chair:

1. Assists the DNP student in defining realistic and specific goals that support the framework and objectives of the Beth-El College DNP program.

2. Guides the DNP student in the development and acquisition of key leadership skills required of the applicable DNP course, core DNP courses and specialty cognate courses.

3. In collaboration with the Capstone Project Committee Members, meets with the DNP student on a regular basis, sets meeting protocol and provides feedback accordingly.

4. Facilitates completion of the course requirements and communicates as needed with the Capstone Project Committee Members.

5. Provides Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences with a current curriculum vitae and facilitates institutional processing of any required clinical contract or memorandum of understanding.

6. Serves as the UCCS IRB Faculty Advisor.

7. Chairs student Capstone Project Defense.
I agree to serve as the Capstone Project Faculty Chair.

Signature of Faculty Chair: ___________________________ Date:____________

Signature of DNP student_________________________________ Date:____________

Approval: Yes [ ] No [ ]

Comments:

Signature of DNP Program Coordinator at Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences:

_____________________________________________________ Date:________________

1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway • Colorado Springs, CO 80918
FAX 719-255-4496 • www.uccs.edu/bethel • LAST REVISION: 02/18/2010
Before interviewing Beth-El College of Health and Nursing Sciences Graduate Nursing Faculty to decide on your Capstone Project Faculty Chair it is important to assess your needs and expectations.

- Do you require regular contact and constant guidance or would you prefer an advisor who leaves you alone until you have something to discuss?
- Are you looking for a mentor or do you want a clearly defined and structured relationship?
- Do you absolutely need to work with someone who specializes in your area of interest?

Once you have identified realistic expectations, the next step is to contact Beth-El College Nursing Graduate Faculty members to discuss your Capstone Project ideas, obtain a better understanding of their scholarly and clinical interests, communicate your expectations and determine if there could be a positive experience for both student and faculty member. Listed below are some suggested questions to ask while interviewing a potential Beth-El College Capstone Project Faculty Chair.

1. What is your clinical certification? What/where are you currently practicing?
2. What are your current/future research and clinical interests?
3. What is your nursing practice and teaching philosophy?
4. What is your schedule like? How often would you be available to meet/talk? Do you prefer meeting in person? Phone? Email?
5. Have you advised doctoral students in the past?
6. What specific strategies do you use to help students focus their interests, refine their scholarly/clinical skills, and develop independence?
7. Have you had clinical experience working with diverse, rural, underserved, and/or vulnerable populations?
8. How do you use Reflective Practice in your clinical practice?
9. Describe how you personally integrate new research (your own or other’s) and/or new programs/procedures/ideas/policies into your practice.
10. What are your expectations in advising DNP students?
11. Are you willing to advise on a Capstone Project not directly in your area of expertise?
12. Are you planning to be on sabbatical? What arrangements are made for mentoring your students when you are on sabbatical?
13. In reference to the AACN’s Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice, how would you evaluate my Capstone Proposal and Project based on those standards?
DNP Capstone Project Committee Member Agreement Form

DNP STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Name:______________________________________________________________

Address:____________________________________________________________________

Phone:_________________________ Email:_______________________________________

Attach a copy of the DNP Capstone Project Declaration Form

COMMITTEE MEMBER INFORMATION

Requested Member:__________________________________________________________

Academic Credentials/Degrees:________________________________________________

Agency:____________________________________________________________________

Address:____________________________________________________________________

Phone:_________________________ Email:_______________________________________

Associate Appointment to the Graduate Faculty at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs: ____________________________ Date of Appointment:______________

CO-ADVISOR (MEMBER) RESPONSIBILITIES

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program requires completion of a minimum of ten credit hours (450 residency hours) of NURS 8030. The culmination of this course is a completed Capstone Project and scholarly manuscript. The DNP student will implement and evaluate course requirements as set forth in the DNP Capstone Proposal Guidelines.

The Capstone Project Committee Members:

1. Assist the DNP student in selecting realistic and specific goals that support the framework and objectives of the Beth-El College DNP program.

2. Guide the DNP student in development and acquisition of key leadership skills required of the applicable DNP course, core DNP courses and specialty cognate courses.

3. In collaboration with the Capstone Project Chair, meet with DNP student on a regular basis and provide feedback accordingly.

4. Facilitate completion of the course requirements and communicate as needed with the other committee members.

5. Provide Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences a current curriculum vitae and facilitate institutional processing of any required clinical contract or memorandum of understanding.
6. Attend (in person or via teleconference) student Capstone Project Proposal and Defense.

I agree to serve as a Capstone Project Committee Member to the DNP student named in this agreement.

Signature of Committee Member: ___________________________ Date:____________

Signature of DNP student: ___________________________ Date:____________

Approval: Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments:

Signature of DNP Program Coordinator at Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences:

_________________________________________ Date:_______________________

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The DNP Capstone Project Proposal must be reviewed and approved by the Capstone Project Advisory Committee before the student may proceed with the Capstone Project.

**Project Title:**

____________________________________________________________________

**Student:**

____________________________________________________________________

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capstone Title/Overview</th>
<th>Items Evident in Proposal?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concise and accurate/ Provides direction for project</td>
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<tr>
<th>Problem Statement/Background of the Problem</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. Introductory materials with brief evidentiary statement to justify the topic</td>
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<td>b. Background and Significance of problem.</td>
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<td>c. Project population and/or stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Purpose statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Clinical questions to be answered through the Capstone project</td>
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<td>f. Objectives of project with measurable outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<th>Review and Synthesis of Literature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Literature search strategy and databases used</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Thorough review and critical analysis of the literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Synthesis of the evidence supporting the clinical question and project</td>
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<tr>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Description of model or framework to be used to guide the project</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Justification and relevance of the framework to the clinical question</td>
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Revised 3/5/15
### Design and Methodology

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<td>a.</td>
<td>Project Design</td>
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<td>b.</td>
<td>Setting</td>
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<td>c.</td>
<td>Population/Sampling</td>
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<td>d.</td>
<td>Outcome measures</td>
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<td>e.</td>
<td>Implementation plans</td>
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<td>• Thorough description of implementation process</td>
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<td>• Psychometric properties of any instruments used (Reliability and Validity)</td>
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<td>• Procedures for data collection</td>
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<td>f.</td>
<td>Project evaluation <strong>including</strong> type of data analysis</td>
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<td>g.</td>
<td>Time line for project</td>
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<td>h.</td>
<td>Plan for sustainability</td>
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<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Nursing implications for practice</td>
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### * Organizational Assessment & Cost Effectiveness Analysis*

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<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Assessment of the organization in which the project will be carried out</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Readiness for change,</td>
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<td>• Facilitators and barriers,</td>
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<td>• Risks and/or unintended consequences</td>
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<td>b.</td>
<td>Cost factors associated with the project</td>
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<td>a. Costs of the program</td>
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<td>b. Cost avoidance or savings associated with implementation</td>
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### * IRB Approval (as applicable)*

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<td>a.</td>
<td>Institutional IRB (if applicable)</td>
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<td>UCCS IRB</td>
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### * Timeframe*

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<td>a.</td>
<td>Reasonable and comprehensive</td>
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<td>b.</td>
<td>Negotiate due dates</td>
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### * Project reflects and demonstrates the AACN Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Articulate specific essentials that are met with the proposed project</td>
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</table>

### References, APA Format, Title Page

* Item is required at the project defense but is not necessary in the written proposal.
Evaluation:  □ Approved as Presented  □ Approved with Recommendations  □ Not Approved

Additional Comments:

IRB Recommendation:  □ Exempt  □ Expedited  □ Full Review  □ No Human Subject Involvement

Capstone Project Chair: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Capstone Project Committee Member: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Capstone Project Committee Member: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Student Signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________

DNP Program Coordinator: ___________________________ Date: ____________

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### Capstone Project Defense Evaluation Form

#### Project Title:

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#### Student:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capstone Title/Overview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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### Design and Methodology

- **a.** Project design
- **b.** Setting
- **c.** Population/Sampling
- **d.** Outcome Measures
- **e.** Implementation
  - Thorough description of implementation process
  - Description and psychometric properties of any instruments used (reliability and validity)
  - Procedures for data collection
  - Project timeline
- **f.** Project evaluation *including* type of data analysis
- **g.** Plan for sustainability
- **h.** Implications for nursing practice

### Organizational Assessment & Cost Effectiveness Analysis

- **a.** Assessment of the organization in which the project will be carried out to include readiness for change, facilitators and barriers, risks and/or unintended consequences
- **b.** Cost factors associated with the project to include costs of the program and cost avoidance or savings associated with implementation

### IRB Approval

- **a.** Institutional IRB (if applicable)
- **b.** UCCS IRB

### Results/Outcomes

- **a.** Quantitative data (if applicable)
- **b.** Qualitative data (if applicable)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Significance of findings/outcomes</td>
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<td>b. Comparison with previous literature (if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>c. Limitations (if applicable)</td>
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<td>d. Strengths (if applicable)</td>
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<td>e. Conclusion/Clinical Application</td>
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| Program reflects and demonstrates the AACN Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice |                                                                 |
| a. Articulate specific essentials met by implementation and completion of the project |                                                                |

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<tr>
<th>APA Format</th>
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<td>a. Title Page</td>
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<td>b. In-text Citations</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. References</td>
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☐ **PASSED, unconditional**  Date:___________________

Meets or exceeds all criteria for Defense.

☐ **PASSED, provisional**  Date:___________________

The Capstone Project requires minor to moderate, non-trivial revision(s). The Capstone Project Chair or other designated member of the advisory committee will be responsible for communicating to the student, in detail, the revisions necessary for completion of the Capstone Project and the deadline for the completion of the revisions. If, after that length of time, the capstone has not been accepted, the candidate will be considered as having failed the examination.

**Members of the examining committee who will certify completion of the revisions:**

___________________________________

___________________________________

___________________________________

**Committee member who will notify the candidate of the required revisions:**

___________________________________

**Revisions received on:**

_____/_____/_______

**Capstone Project PASSED on:**

_____/_____/_______

Revisions must be complete by:

_____/_____/_______
Failed

Date:___________________

Does not meet criteria for Defense and contains significant deficits.

Additional Comments:

Capstone Project Chair Signature:_____________________________  Date:__________________

Committee Member Signature: _________________________________  Date:__________________

Committee Member Signature: _________________________________  Date:__________________

Student Signature: ________________________________________  Date:__________________

DNP Program Coordinator:____________________________________  Date:__________________