



Helen and Arthur E. Johnson  
Beth-El College of  
Nursing and Health Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **COLORADO SPRINGS**

# Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)

## DNP PROJECT HANDBOOK

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# **Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Project**

## **Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS)**

All students in the Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Beth-El College of Nursing & Health Sciences' Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program must complete a DNP Project before they graduate from the program. The DNP Project reflects the synthesis of knowledge, Reflective Practice, and skills developed during the DNP program while demonstrating competency in the AACN *Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice*. DNP Projects are classified as practice change projects and may include program development, implementation, and evaluation.

### **I. DNP Program Outcomes**

1. Use translation science, theoretical frameworks, and scientific methods to describe, develop, implement and evaluate health care practice to create new models of care to improve health care outcomes.
2. Provide leadership to strategically transform the healthcare system; creating ethical, cost-effective, safe, culturally competent, evidence based, patient-centered care.
3. Participate as a practice scholar to analyze, create, implement and evaluate how adjustments to healthcare systems can foster safe, effective, efficient, equitable, patient-centered outcomes.
4. Demonstrate independent reflective practice skills, in complex evidence-based settings using systems thinking and clinical reasoning to provide care it individuals, families, communities and populations.
5. Collaborate on inter-professional teams to create safe, effective, health care systems that promote health and improve population outcomes.
6. Participate in the critical analysis and translation of knowledge into the practice setting and the construction of policies that decrease health disparities, increase access to care, honor cultural differences, and promote social justice and equality for all people.
7. Critically analyze data, technology and information systems to determine how best to incorporate this knowledge to improve patient outcomes, healthcare programming and healthcare systems.

### **II. Purpose of the DNP Project in the DNP curriculum:**

The primary purpose of the DNP Project is to focus the student on practice change, identifying a clinical problem, the development of an intervention to solve the problem, implementation of the intervention, and evaluation of the intervention. The project will typically be implemented within the student's practice setting. The goal of the project is to provide the student with beginning expertise in implementing and evaluating practice change in a clinical setting, with a unique population. Students are supported by a DNP Project Advisory Committee to translate research/theory into evidence-based practice change.

The DNP Project seeks to demonstrate the student's understanding of DNP essentials/knowledge and the ability to lead and practice at the highest level of professional, clinical practice. This project offers the student an opportunity to demonstrate skills as an innovative leader and self-determining practitioner at a doctoral practice level. The student is required to integrate the following skills:

1. Expertise in Reflective Practice
2. Expert practice in a specialty area related to the student's interest
3. Independent practice inquiry (using Reflective Practice) to identify existing problems/needs in nursing practice and health care systems
4. The ability to critically evaluate, translate and utilize evidence, knowledge, and research to improve quality of care and health outcomes
5. 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
6. Using Reflective Practice within diverse, rural, underserved and/or vulnerable populations to improve quality of care and to affect systems of care
7. 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
8. Knowledge of healthcare economics and organizational systems, how healthcare systems are funded, providers secure payment and patients engage in the healthcare system to create new, cost effective models of healthcare

### **III. DNP Project Process:**

1. Review the DNP Project Resource Page in Blackboard. Pay particular attention to the project forms and examples of past proposals and projects.
2. Identify a clinical problem that you would like to address and create a concise inquiry question.
3. Choose a Chair for you DNP project. The DNP Coordinator will contact the student with suggestions for a DNP Project Chair during the first DNP Project Seminar. Contact the UCCS faculty to determine if they are willing to serve as your chair. If you are unable to find a faculty member who is willing to serve as your DNP Project Chair, please contact the DNP Coordinator for help in this process.
4. Choose 2 other committee members, typically another UCCS faculty member and an outside expert on the topic you have chosen to study. For any outside experts that agree to serve on your committee, a copy of their CV must be sent to Diane Busch at

[dbusch@uccs.edu](mailto:dbusch@uccs.edu) and the DNP coordinator. The PDF form for the committee member must also be completed, signed by the outside committee member and returned to the DNP coordinator.

5. Fill out the information on the PDF forms for the chair and committee members and send them to the chair and committee members to sign. Once the forms are completely filled out and signed they should be sent to the DNP coordinator.
6. Work with your DNP Project Chair to finalize the DNP Project Declaration (a brief project outline, synopsis of the problem, brief review of the literature) for your clinical change project.
7. Complete the DNP Project Declaration and send it to the DNP project chair to sign. Ask your chair to then send this on to the DNP coordinator.
8. Work on your DNP Project Proposal with your chair's assistance. When your chair feels that the proposal is ready to defend you will work with the committee members and IT support (Sharley Kurtz at [skurtz@uccs.edu](mailto:skurtz@uccs.edu)) to set up a time to defend your proposal via an on-line platform. Please also notify the DNP Coordinator and Diane Busch ([dbusch@uccs.edu](mailto:dbusch@uccs.edu)) with the time and date of your on-line proposal defense. The proposal will consist of a written document that is sent out to all committee members **at least two weeks before** the proposal defense and a PowerPoint presentation that you will give on the day of your defense.
9. You will be provided feedback on the day of your defense and will likely have suggested recommendations for changes to your proposal. Work with you chair to set dates to complete these changes to your DNP project.
10. Your chair will complete the DNP Project Proposal Defense Evaluation Form and provide you will feedback on changes that you may need to make. This form is then signed by all the Committee Members and sent to the DNP Coordinator.
11. Upon successful defense of your proposal, you will work with your chair on the IRB application. You can't submit the application to the IRB by yourself and must work closely with your chair to complete the application.
12. **You may not start on any elements of your DNP Project until the IRB application has been approved.** If you are also working with an outside organization, you may need to get IRB approval from that organization. Typically, it is best to obtain approval from the external organization before applying to the UCCS IRB.

13. Once the UCCS IRB application has been approved, you may start to collect data, do interviews, and begin your intervention... as outlined in the IRB application and DNP Project Proposal. This must be followed exactly; any variances to the IRB protocol must be communicated with your chair and the IRB.
14. Work with your chair and other committee members when appropriate to complete the DNP project. When your chair feels that the project is ready to defend you will work with the committee members and IT support (Sharley Kurtz at skurtz@uccs.edu) to set up a time to defend your project on-line. **The defense must be scheduled at least 3 weeks before the end of the semester.** Please also notify the DNP Coordinator and Program Assistant (Diane Busch at dbusch@uccs.edu) of the time and date of your defense, **a minimum of 3 weeks** before the defense is scheduled. The project will consist of a written manuscript that is ready to be sent to a journal for publication and a PowerPoint presentation that you will give via an on-line platform on the day of your defense. The manuscript will be sent out to all committee members at least **2 weeks before** the defense, along with the author guidelines for the Journal the student is writing the manuscript for.
15. You will be provided feedback on the day of your DNP project defense and will likely have suggested recommendations for changes to your manuscript. Work with you chair to set dates to complete these changes to your manuscript.
16. Your chair will complete the DNP Project Defense Evaluation Form and provide you will feedback on changes that you may need to make and a time frame to complete the changes. This form is then signed by all the Committee Members and sent to the DNP Coordinator. Only when you have completed all the required recommendations and graduated from the program can you begin to use the title, Doctor of Nursing Practice.
17. Complete the Project Permission Form and send this form to the DNP Coordinator if you are willing to share your work. This form gives the College permission to use your project as an example for accreditation purposes and/or to use your project as an example for other students.
18. It is the **student's responsibility** to contact the UCCS Office of Sponsored Programs to inform them that you have completed data collection and defended your project. The student will ask them to close the IRB file on their DNP project.

## IV. DNP Project Committee

The DNP Project Committee must be established *before* the student begins the DNP Project Proposal.

The role of the DNP Project Committee is to mentor the student in the development and implementation of the DNP Project Proposal, DNP Project and Scholarly Manuscript. This will be accomplished by a series of meetings designed to develop, critique, and focus student work. The DNP Project Committee is expected to provide guidance throughout the process, to assist the student to prepare for the DNP Project Defense and provide feedback on the 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 DNP Project Proposal and DNP Project.

The committee consists of three (3) advisors:

1. **Chair** – a full-time faculty member from the Nursing Faculty from the Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences.
2. **Committee Member (UCCS)** - faculty member from the UCCS Graduate Faculty (nursing or interdisciplinary).
3. **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 DNP Project topic area.

### a. DNP Project Chair

The DNP 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 Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences. The DNP Project Chair serves as the academic advisor and Chairperson of the DNP student's doctoral DNP Project. The DNP Program Coordinator will assign potential Chair matches from the UCCS faculty for each student. **Students must initiate contact with the faculty member they are considering as the Chair for their DNP Project Committee.** Once an agreement has been reached between both student and faculty member, the student must submit a completed and signed *DNP Project Chair Agreement Form* to the DNP Coordinator. The DNP Project Chair will also discuss with you the possibility of working with you to publish your manuscript once you have completed the program. Due to the large amount of work and intimate knowledge that the DNP Chair has regarding your DNP project, it is typical for the DNP Chair to be cited as the second author on any publication.

### b. Two DNP Project Committee Members

One of the DNP 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 Colorado

Springs. This committee member should have clinical expertise in the area chosen for the DNP Project. If students choose an outside committee member who does not hold an Associate Graduate Faculty Appointment, they must complete the section on the DNP Project Committee Form where appropriate and send a curricula vitae of the outside committee member. This form and CV must be sent to the DNP Program Assistant (Diane Busch – [dbusch@uccs.edu](mailto:dbusch@uccs.edu)) and the DNP Coordinator. This is required in order to have the individual be appointed as an associate member of the UCCS Graduate School. Students may choose to work with interdisciplinary DNP committee members provided they obtain preapproval from the DNP Project Chair. Students must find and negotiate with the two DNP committee members of their choice and submit *DNP Project Committee Member Agreement Forms* to DNP Program Assistant and DNP Coordinator as mentioned above.

### c. Student Responsibilities

It is the responsibility *of the student* to:

1. Initiate contact with the Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Beth-El College Nursing Faculty member who is under consideration as the Chair of the DNP Project Committee.
2. Initiate contact with two people to serve as DNP 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 to the DNP Program Coordinator and DNP Program Assistant along with a curricula vitae for all outside DNP Project Committee members.
4. Communicate regularly with their DNP Project Chair regarding progress, goals, plans, changes, questions, etc.
5. Schedule/coordinate meetings among DNP Project Committee members (*including the Defenses of the DNP Project Proposal and DNP Project*).
6. Read and comply with all relevant policies and procedures as set forth by the Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences at UCCS for the DNP program, the DNP Project, and the Graduate School.
7. Report problems that delay progress in completing the DNP Project Proposal, DNP Project, IRB variances, and/or scholarly manuscript to the DNP Project Chair.
8. If publishing, discussing authorship with your DNP Project Chair.

## IV. DNP Project Proposal

All DNP students are required to complete and defend his/her DNP Project Proposal and obtain IRB approval *before* beginning any work on the DNP Project. The grade for NURS 8030 will appear as "IP" (In Progress) on the student transcript until the student has successfully

completed NURS 8030. In the event that the student does not make any progress while taking a DNP project course, their DNP project chair may give them a failing grade. If a failing grade is earned by the student, then the student must register for the same number of credits they were taking while failing to progress the next semester.

### a. Preparation of the DNP Project Proposal

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

### b. Some questions to ask while determining and designing your DNP Project **(INCLUDE IN YOUR PROJECT PROPOSAL\*):**

1. Does my DNP project focus on individuals, communities, populations, systems, etc.?
2. What are the problems and/or issues my project will address?
3. Is my 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?
8. Is it feasible for me to complete my project in the designated time frame?

### c. DNP Project Proposal Defense

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

The DNP Project Proposal Defense is a formal presentation of the DNP Project Proposal. This is followed by a question and answer period between the student and the DNP Project Committee. The student must meet all the requirements of the DNP Project Proposal Defense Evaluation and have completed a project reflective of doctoral-level clinically focused project proposal. The DNP Project Proposal must be approved by the entire DNP Project Committee and receive a PASS before the student is eligible to continue work on their DNP Project.

Each member of the DNP Project Proposal Committee must attend the student Defense in person or via audio or video teleconference. DNP Project Proposal Committee members will complete a *DNP Project Proposal Defense Evaluation* form and meet privately at the end of the Defense to reach consensus on the outcome of the oral presentation of the DNP Project Proposal.

The student must receive a grade of "B" or better in NURS 8041, NURS 8042, NURS 8043 and NURS 8044 in order to defend the DNP Project Proposal. If the student is unable to complete

NURS 8044 and/or defend the DNP Project Proposal by the agreed upon defense date, the DNP Project Chair will assign one of the following grades\*:

1. Unforeseen problems (Graduate Student Handbook): The student receives a grade of "I" (Incomplete) and is ineligible to register for NURS 8044 DNP Project Seminar IV. The student must negotiate a plan of action with the DNP Project Chair and NURS 8044 instructor to retake NURS 8044 the next semester as an independent study. The "I" will be regarded as "F" if not completed within a maximum of one year.
2. Unacceptable work or time management issues: The student receives a failing grade and must wait one year to reregister for and retake NURS 8044 DNP Project Seminar IV or negotiate an independent study with their DNP Project Chair. The student will be dismissed from the program if a second failing grade is received.

\* Students must speak with their DNP Project Chair regarding extenuating circumstances (i.e., illness, family emergency, etc.) that affect the progression of the DNP Project Proposal and/or DNP Project. Each situation will be evaluated on a case by case basis with individual plans of action being developed.

#### **d. Ethical and Privacy Concerns:**

1. It is recommended that the DNP student discuss the **required** processes of the UCCS Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) with their DNP Project Chair. This discussion should occur early on in the process to familiarize themselves with the requirements and begin to anticipate/set goals. View the UCCS IRB website at: <http://www.uccs.edu/~osp/>
2. Students must successfully defend their DNP Project **before** beginning an IRB application. The entire DNP Committee must approve the project proposal before the IRB application can be submitted.
3. It is incumbent on the student to ascertain whether institutional IRB (clinical practice area) approval is necessary for their projects and notify their DNP Project Chair of the institutional response.
4. The student must **not** begin work on data collection for the DNP Project (including project components unrelated to human subjects) until all appropriate IRB approvals have been obtained.
5. Students are expected to know and follow the Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA) throughout the DNP Proposal/Project process.

## V. DNP Project Defense

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

The DNP Project Defense is a formal presentation of the DNP Project. This is followed by a question and answer period between the student and the DNP Project Committee. The Defense of the DNP Project serves as the final examination for the DNP student. The student must meet all the requirements of the *DNP Project Defense Evaluation Form* and have completed a project reflective of doctoral-level clinically focused project. The final Defense of the DNP Project must be approved by the entire DNP Project Committee and the student must receive a PASS before the student is eligible for graduation.

Each member of the DNP Project Committee must attend the student Defense in person or via audio or video teleconference. DNP 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 DNP Project, final DNP Project, and scholarly manuscript.

### a. Scholarly Manuscript

The final product of the DNP Project is a scholarly manuscript. This document should be in a publishable format. To determine the manuscript format (i.e., length, font, etc.), **students must identify and use the journal guidelines where they intend to submit their work.** Students are required to submit a copy of these guidelines along with their DNP Project documents.

A final draft of the scholarly manuscript must be submitted to the DNP Project Committee no later than **three weeks before** the scheduled DNP Project Defense. The manuscript will be discussed and evaluated during the DNP Project Defense. Any revisions to the scholarly manuscript are due to the DNP Project Committee no later than one week after the DNP Project Defense. The scholarly manuscript must be successfully completed prior to graduation. Students are encouraged to submit their scholarly manuscript for publication. Authorship discussions with your DNP Chair should occur early on in the DNP Project Process. **In the event that a student decides that they do not want to publish their manuscript, the rights to this manuscript will transfer to the DNP Chair, 6 months after a successful DNP Project Defense. This means that the DNP Chair could publish the work as first author and the student would be recognized as the second author.**

### b. Grading

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

1. The quality of the work determined by the DNP Project Committee

2. A final evaluation report of the *DNP Project Defense Evaluation Form* with input from the DNP Project Committee
3. A review of the scholarly manuscript

## **VI. Examples of Possible DNP Projects**

- Visit the following NONPF website: [NONPF Position Statements and White Papers](#)  
Click on “Criteria for Scholarly Projects” to get a .pdf with examples.
- DNP Project Blackboard Site – Provides examples of former students work

## VI. DNP Project Deadlines (subject to change)

Assignment	Due Date	Document/s to be Submitted	Submit Documents to:
Confirm your DNP Project Chair	November	<i>DNP Project Chair Agreement Form</i> : signed by Chair	DNP Program Coordinator
Confirm your two (2) DNP Project Committee Members	November	<i>DNP Project Committee Agreement Form</i> : (2) each form signed by committee member  CV for each Outside (Non-UCCS) Committee Member	DNP Program Coordinator
Review DNP Project Permission Form to Retain	November	If you agree: <i>DNP Project Permission Form to Retain</i>	DNP Program Coordinator
DNP Project Declaration	April	<i>DNP Project Declaration Form</i> : signed by DNP Project Chair	DNP Program Coordinator
Prepare to Defend your DNP Project Proposal	Proposal Defense date set by student, DNP Committee and IT support	DNP Project Proposal document and Powerpoint slides, at least 2 weeks before proposal defense  Notify Sharley Kurtz ( <a href="mailto:skurtz@uccs.edu">skurtz@uccs.edu</a> ) IT support to schedule your defense date.  Notify Diane Busch ( <a href="mailto:dbusch@uccs.edu">dbusch@uccs.edu</a> ) and the DNP Coordinator of your defense date and time	DNP Project Committee: Proposal document and Powerpoint presentation  Sharley Kurtz: Powerpoint presentation
DNP Project Proposal Complete and Defended	After Proposal Defense	Completed Final Proposal  <i>DNP Proposal Defense Evaluation Form</i> signed by ALL DNP Project committee members	Chair submits signed <i>DNP Proposal Defense Evaluation Form</i> & Final Proposal to DNP Program Coordinator

Assignment	Due Date	Document/s to be Submitted	Submit Documents to:
IRB Application Submitted	After Proposal Defense & Chair approval	UCCS IRB Application Project site IRB	Appropriate IRB(s)
Prepare for DNP Project Defense  <b>Date scheduled at least 3 weeks before the end of the semester</b>	DNP Project Defense date set by student, DNP Committee and IT support	DNP project defense manuscript, author guidelines from the journal the student plans to submit their scholarly manuscript and Powerpoint slides, <b>at least 2 weeks before project defense</b>  Notify Sharley Kurtz ( <a href="mailto:skurtz@uccs.edu">skurtz@uccs.edu</a> ) IT support to schedule your defense date, 3 weeks before  Notify Diane Busch ( <a href="mailto:dbusch@uccs.edu">dbusch@uccs.edu</a> ) and the DNP Coordinator of your defense date and time, 3 weeks before	DNP Project Committee: Manuscript, author guidelines and Powerpoint presentation  Sharley Kurtz: Powerpoint presentation
DNP Project Defended	Defense date	<i>DNP Project Defense Evaluation Form</i> signed by ALL DNP Project committee members	Chair submits signed <i>DNP Proposal Defense Evaluation Form</i> to DNP Program Coordinator
Scholarly Manuscript	Final manuscript with any revisions suggested by DNP Project Committee during Defense <b>due one week after Defense</b>	Scholarly manuscript	DNP Project Committee and DNP Program Coordinator
Contact UCCS Office of Sponsored Programs	After the final revisions have been accepted	None / Call OSP and let them know to close your IRB file on your DNP project	UCCS Office of Sponsored Programs

## **VIII. Clinical Residency Hours**

Post MSN Students are required to complete a minimum of 540 clinical residency hours completing the DNP program. This includes 45 hours in the following two courses: NURS 7100 and NURS 7030 and 450 hours between the DNP Project Seminars (I-IV) and NURS 8030 DNP Project.

BSN to DNP students are required to complete a minimum of 1170 clinical hours completing the BSN-DNP Program. This includes a total of 630 clinical practice hours as a NP student and 540 clinical residency hours in the DNP program.

- Clinical practice hours are typically completed in an outpatient office setting, with a clinical expert guiding the student and involve direct patient care.
- Clinical residency hours typically do not involve direct patient care. These hours may involve time spent with policy experts, healthcare leaders, practice inquiry, literature reviews, project research, data collection, program development, and program implementation.

### **a. Tracking Clinical Residency Hours**

Starting in the summer of 2016, students are required to use Medatrax, an online tracking tool, for documenting clinical hours in the following online courses: NURS 7100, NURS 7030, NURS 8030, NURS 8041, NURS 8042, NURS 8043 and NURS 8044. Medatrax will be used for all clinical residency hours and all hours devoted to the DNP Project.