DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE (DNP)

What is the DNP?
The DNP builds on traditional master’s degree programs by providing education in evidence-based practice, quality improvement, and systems leadership, among other key areas. The DNP is designed for nurses seeking a terminal degree in nursing practice and offers an alternative to research-focused doctoral programs. DNP-prepared nurses are well-equipped to fully implement the science developed by nurse researchers prepared in PhD, DNSc, and other research-focused nursing doctorates.

Why the DNP?
The changing demands of the nation’s complex health care environment require the highest level of scientific knowledge and practice expertise to assure quality patient outcomes. The Institute of Medicine, Joint Commission, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and other authorizers have called for reconceptualizing education programs that prepare today’s health professionals. Some of the many factors building momentum for change in nursing education at the graduate level include:

- the rapid expansion of knowledge underlying practice;
- increased complexity of patient care;
- national concerns about the quality of care and patient safety;
- shortages of nursing personnel which demand a higher level of preparation for leaders who can design and assess care;
- shortages of doctorally prepared nursing faculty; and
- increasing educational expectations for the preparation of other members of the health care team.

In a 2005 report “Advancing the Nation’s Health Needs: NIH Research Training Programs,” the National Academy of Sciences called for nursing to develop a nonresearch clinical doctorate to prepare expert practitioners who can also serve as clinical faculty. Nursing is moving in the direction of other health professions in the transition to the DNP. Medicine (MD), dentistry (DDS), pharmacy (PharmD), psychology (PsyD), physical therapy (DPT), and audiology (AudD) all offer practice doctorates.
The mission of the Rutgers School of Nursing–Camden is to prepare professional nurses who are critical thinkers, and knowledgeable and competent providers of health promotion, disease prevention, and care of sick and dying patients across the life span in this region, nationally, and globally. DNP graduates will be prepared to become executive leaders in health care organizations, develop and provide evidence-based nursing care that will benefit the adult and older adult populations, and advance the science of nursing practice. The School of Nursing–Camden is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education and approved by the New Jersey Board of Nursing.

The DNP program provides advanced nursing education to prepare professional nurses who are critical thinkers, and knowledgeable and competent providers of health promotion, disease prevention, and care of sick and dying patients across the life span in this region, nationally, and globally.

### Program Format

The format of the program is hybrid, which means that course delivery incorporates a variety of innovative teaching/learning strategies such as a combination of in-class and online learning environments, global learning whereby students can interact with international students via the internet, and scheduling courses in a compressed time period (e.g., over several weekends) to meet the needs of adult learners.

Coursework can be completed on a full- or part-time basis.

### Required Courses

Core courses in the DNP program include:

- Epidemiology and Biostatistics
- Interdisciplinary Ethics for Advanced Practice
- Foundations of Nursing Science for Advanced Practice
- Information Health Systems and Technology
- Building Evidence for Health Promotion, Prevention, and Practice
- National and Global Health Policy
- Financial Management in Health Care
- Leading Interprofessional Teams in Health Care Organizations
- Advanced Health/Physical Assessment
- Advanced Physiology (Pathophysiology)
- Advanced Pharmacology
- Best Educational Practices
- Advanced Practice
- Adult Gerontological Primary Care
- Adult Gerontological Complex Care

### Graduation Requirements

Graduation requirements for all tracks include:

- A total of 66 graduate credits in the post-baccalaureate portion of the DNP program.
- A total of 1,000 graduate clinical residency hours, and completion of a capstone project and 500 clinical hours.

In addition, 33 undergraduate credits are automatically included for admission based on the quality of their essay, interview, and recommendations. Following notification of admission and enrollment in the DNP program, students in the RN cohort will begin substituting selected undergraduate nursing courses in the baccalaureate curriculum with required graduate nursing courses in the DNP curriculum as outlined in the DNP curriculum plan.

Students who are enrolled in Rutgers’ baccalaureate nursing program can apply for admission to the DNP program after completing the spring semester of their junior year. Eligible applicants will be selected for admission based on the quality of their essay, interview, and recommendations. Once enrolled in the DNP program, early-entry students will begin substituting selected undergraduate nursing courses in the baccalaureate curriculum with required graduate nursing courses in the DNP curriculum as outlined in the DNP curriculum plan.

Graduates of accredited baccalaureate nursing programs can apply for admission to the DNP program at any point following the registered nurse license. Once enrolled in the DNP program, post-baccalaureate students must complete three prerequisite graduate nursing courses (nine credits) if equivalent courses have been successfully completed. Following completion of prerequisite courses, students in the post-baccalaureate cohort will complete 57 graduate credits toward the DNP degree over two years of full-time study, including four summer sessions, a minimum of 1,000 graduate clinical residency hours, and completion of an evidence-based clinical project that culminates with a scholarly presentation, and the production of a scholarly paper that is suitable for publication.

Graduates of an accredited MS/MSN program who are holding a bachelor’s degree in nursing after four years of study and prior to the NCLEX-RN exam to obtain licensure as a registered nurse before continuing with DNP courses. The length of the entire program for full-time students in this cohort is six years, including four summer sessions, a minimum of 1,000 graduate clinical residency hours, and completion of an evidence-based clinical project that culminates with a scholarly presentation, and the production of a scholarly paper that is suitable for publication.

In addition, 33 undergraduate credits are automatically awarded for previous nursing courses and passing the NCLEX-RN exam. Thirty of the 124 credits required for the baccalaureate degree must be earned at Rutgers University–Camden.

Students in the RN cohort of the DNP program, 12 of these 30 credits are taken in the form of three-graduate-level DNP courses and applied toward both the baccalaureate and DNP degrees. After completing requirements for the baccalaureate degree, the length of the DNP program for full-time students in the RN cohort is two years (37 credits), including four summer sessions, a minimum of 1,000 graduate clinical residency hours, and completion of an evidence-based clinical project that culminates with a scholarly presentation, and the production of a scholarly paper that is suitable for publication.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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