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DNP degree: Is it producing the graduates we intended?

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The DNP was introduced in the United States in 2004 as the terminal degree for advanced practice nurses. The goal was to educate nurses to meet the AACN essentials and thereby effectively lead across complex health care environments. In 2016, using their own words, how do DNP graduates describe themselves in relationship to the AACN essentials? Ten DNP graduates from seven schools across the U.S. were interviewed either in person or over the phone. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and subjected to inductive content analysis. For each of the eight DNP essentials, at least eighty percent of participants provided supportive exemplars from their current practice. The overarching theme was, "Becoming more: Re-envisioning self as an agent of change". Sub-themes included (1) "Belonging at the table", (2) "Acting from an engaged sense of agency", and (3) "Leading with and through others". Results support the claim that doctoral education prepares advanced practice nurses for effective leadership across complex health care systems. Enactment of the DNP essentials is realized when graduates perceive themselves as equal to other leaders and capable of driving change through the use of evidence and effective collaboration.

Biography

Bonnie H Bowie is an Associate Professor at Seattle University, College of Nursing where she served as the Chair of the Community Psychosocial Nursing Department from 2011 to 2015 and is currently the Track Lead for the DNP program. He graduated from the University of Washington with a PhD in Nursing in 2007. She holds dual Master's degree in Nursing and Business from the University of San Diego (1986). Her research centers around creating partnerships with stakeholders to create healthier communities and health care systems.

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