STATEMENT CONFIRMING RECEIPT OF THE DNP STUDENT HANDBOOK:

I, _________________________ (print name) acknowledge that I have received a personal copy of the Samuel Merritt University Doctor of Nursing Practice Student Handbook 2013-2014. Furthermore, I understand that it is my responsibility to become familiar with the contents of this handbook, and to abide by the policies, procedures, and educational objectives contained herein during the course of my matriculation in the program.

I accept the fact that policies and procedures may be revised and added at the discretion of the program administration and that, when notified in a timely and appropriate manner by the Program Director, I will hold myself accountable to those new directives.

_________________________________________   _____________
Signature (First name, Last name)                         Date

After signing this statement, please remove the page from the handbook and return the document to the Program Director. Please scan and e-mail to mhampton@samuelmerritt.edu or fax to 510 869-6677 Attention: Jamillah Sabry. Thank you!
Spring 2014

Dear DNP Student,

Welcome to the Samuel Merritt University Doctor of Nursing Practice Program! Your educational experience at SMU will serve as the foundation for your DNP professional future. Given the challenges of both doctoral study and distance learning, one of your many challenges will be to navigate your way through the systems and processes of both our academic institution and the practice setting for your Capstone Project.

The faculty has prepared this handbook to ease your transition period into our graduate program and provide guidance throughout your entire period of enrollment. Included are the academic policies of the DNP Program. In addition to this document, you should be familiar with the *Samuel Merritt University Catalog and Student Handbook*, as we refer to it frequently throughout this handbook. An electronic copy can always be accessed via the University website at: [http://www.samuelmerritt.edu/academic_affairs/catalogs](http://www.samuelmerritt.edu/academic_affairs/catalogs). Please familiarize yourself with the contents of this program’s student handbook, as it contains the behavioral and educational objectives upon which you will be evaluated.

We trust that your time with us will be well spent as you pursue your doctoral degree. Our expectations of your abilities and performance are high because you represent the best of the nursing profession. Your expectation of us should be equally high, as we represent members of a highly respected profession and university charged with the development of a new generation of nursing practice leaders.

Again, the faculty welcomes you to our program. We are eager to be your partners in this educational experience and remain firmly committed to your success.

Sincerely,

Cecily D. Cooney, PhD, FNP
Professor and Director
Doctor of Nursing Practice Program
DNP Student Pre-Orientation Checklist

Did you....

____ Check the technology requirements (computer specifications, etc.) and obtain the necessary computer and software? (See Appendix A).

____ Forward your SMU email to your personal email account? All email communication from the School of Nursing and the DNP Program will be sent using your SMU email address.

____ Register for classes?

____ Purchase or rent any required course textbooks?

____ Purchase Excel and complete installation on your laptop?

____ Complete the online learning module?

____ Return the signed confirmation of the DNP Student Handbook receipt?

Note:
Immunization records and other clinical/practice related documents are NOT required for DNP distance-based students. Students are expected to keep all practice-related documents current and accessible.

If you have questions, please contact Jamillah Sabry, DNP Administrative Assistant at jsabry@samuelmerritt.edu or Adriane Kiefling, Online Teaching Specialist at akiefling@samuelmerritt.edu.
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Welcome from the Program Director

Welcome to Samuel Merritt University and the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program!

We are excited to have the opportunity to work with you as you take this next step in your professional development! We understand what a significant impact doctoral study can have on existing work and family commitments. Thank you for choosing Samuel Merritt University. We are committed to your success.

Introduction

This student handbook is designed for graduate students enrolled in the Samuel Merritt University (SMU) Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program. The DNP Program provides master’s and bachelor’s prepared nurses with opportunities for practice-based doctoral education. The program is taught by highly accomplished and experienced faculty, both from SMU and other institutions.

DNP Program Faculty and Staff

The Director of the DNP Program for the 2013-2014 academic year is Michelle DeCoux Hampton, RN, PhD while Dr. Cecily Cosby, PhD, FNP-C is on sabbatical. Dr. Hampton can be contacted directly at mhampton@samuelmerritt.edu or 510.869.3873.

SMU Didactic Faculty

Patricia Brennan, PhD, MSN
Sylvia Fox, PhD, MSN
Michelle Hampton, PhD, MS
Pamela Minarik, PhD, CNS
Karen Wolf, PhD, MS

N702 Advanced Health Policy & Advocacy
N706 Advanced Informatics
N714 Educational Innovations
N700 Evidence-Based Research Methods
N715 Outcomes Management & Evaluation
N705 Organizational & Systems Leadership
N703 Epidemiology & Population Health
Adjunct Faculty
Nancy Oliva, PhD, MHA, MPA, RN
N710 Health Care Economics & Financial Analysis
Pat Oliver, MS
N704 Biostatistics

Capstone Committee Chairpersons

The following are additional key staff persons in the DNP Program:
  o Adriane Kiefling, Online Teaching and Learning Specialist: akiefling@samuelmerritt.edu or 510.869. 6511 x4421
  o Jamillah Sabry, Graduate Administrative Professional: jsabry@samuelmerritt.edu or 510.869.8926

Additional information and updates about the DNP Program can be found at the following location: http://www.samuelmerritt.edu/nursing/dnp.

Doctoral Education in Nursing
The Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program opened at Samuel Merritt University in the spring of 2011. The National Academy of Science in 2005 stated that "the need for doctorally prepared practitioners and clinical faculty would be met if nursing could develop a new non-research clinical doctorate, similar to the M.D. and Pharm.D. in medicine and pharmacy respectively." The American Association of Colleges of Nursing issued a position statement stating that it has as a goal to transition all advanced practice nursing programs from the master's to the DNP by 2015.

New models for education and practice in nursing are necessary due to many factors including new areas of knowledge such as genetics and environmental health, increasing chronicity in pediatric and adult populations, growing diversity, and the need for enhanced knowledge of the global health care system. The nursing profession is the critical link in the delivery of high quality, safe, effective, and patient-centered health care. Doctoral education in nursing (the DNP) will produce the leaders of the profession over the next decade. The vision and curriculum of the DNP program at SMU will empower and challenge the next generation of leaders from nursing to break through all of the old expectations, limitations, constraints, and barriers. The outcome will be better for nursing and it will be transformational for the US health system.
SMU School of Nursing Mission, Vision and Values
We are committed to educational innovation in theory and practice to prepare highly competent professional nursing leaders who are engaged in the advancement of nursing practice and the improvement of health for diverse populations/peoples.

Our Values
Social Justice: We believe in a fair, equitable, ethical, respectful, and dignified environment.

Evidence-based: We believe in the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in guiding nursing education and clinical decisions about the care of individuals, groups, and communities.

Culture: We are committed to self-evaluation and self-critique to redress power imbalances and to develop and maintain mutually respectful and dynamic partnerships with individuals, groups, and communities. We recognize that culture matters in clinical care and in the educational environment. Culture comprises multiple variables and is a process of meaning-making in which faculty and students are engaged with others.

Lifelong Learning: We are committed to life-long, continual self-assessment and the conscientious and diligent pursuit of excellence.

Compassion and Caring: We treat those we serve and one another with concern, kindness, and respect.

Collaboration and partnership: We continually seek to collaborate with a focus on merging the insights of persons with differing perspectives and recognition of other’s concerns and expertise with a high degree of assertiveness and cooperation to jointly develop integrated solutions.

Student Opportunities for SoN Committee Participation
DNP students have opportunities to participate in any of the following SoN Governance Committees: Curriculum, Evaluation, Student Affairs, and Scholarship and Service. Student representatives will be selected by the Student Body Association (SBA). If the SBA fails to select a student, the respective committee chairperson will select a student representative. Student representatives are voting members. Student representation is a vital component of the SoN, either as a designated participating representative, or as an interested attendee. For additional information about these opportunities, or if you are interested in participating in any of these committees, please contact Dr. Cecily Cosby.
**Student Feedback and Suggestions**

The DNP faculty, staff, and Program Director welcome your feedback and suggestions. There are opportunities to provide this anonymously by way of the annual student and alumni surveys, as well as both mid-course and end of course evaluations each semester. Course concerns should first be addressed to the respective faculty of record, then to the Program Director if not resolved. On-line feedback can be submitted via the following link: https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/nursing/feedback.

**Transfer Credit Policy**

Transfer of doctoral level courses into the student’s program of study can include coursework that substitutes for required courses or meets the requirements of elective coursework. Consistent with the SMU institutional policy, all coursework to be considered for transfer into the DNP Program must be at the doctoral level from nationally accredited academic institutions and must be completed after the student is enrolled in the DNP Program. Students are allowed to transfer in up to 9 units of equivalent doctoral level coursework. The transfer credit petition can be submitted to the DNP Program Director for consideration and found at: http://www.samuelmerritt.edu/files/registrar/Transfer_Credit_Petition.pdf.

**Dispute Resolution**

In the case in which students and faculty have a difference of opinion on educational matters, such as when a student disagrees with the substance or conclusion of a faculty member’s educational assessment; it is expected that the informal resolution of this dispute be completed using the School of Nursing chain-of-command prior to invoking the University-wide grievance policies and procedures. In all circumstances, professional communication is expected.

- Resolution procedure begins at the most basic level of the dispute between two parties. Advisors, university staff, other faculty, and higher authorities will not hear a complaint unless the person(s) bringing the dispute have made every effort to reach resolution with the other involved party. Students are encouraged to consult with Academic Support Services or the university counseling service for assistance with preparing effective communication strategies.

- Should the issues involve multiple members of the same class or course section, students will name one to two class representatives who will meet with the faculty to communicate discussions and decisions to the class.

- Although initial contact may be made by phone or e-mail, a face-to-face meeting (when possible) may be necessary to ensure that all issues are completely addressed and documented adequately. Written documents may be provided only to those with a direct need-to-know.

- Faculty and students(s) must meet to discuss the issues. Either party may request that another person be present as a witness, but not a participant. Faculty will document the communication in a counseling note. The document will include the resolution reached or a list of next steps, responsibilities, and timeline.
o On-line course disputes: Physical meetings between parties may be difficult due to physical location constraints. Parties may choose the most appropriate method of communication.

o If the issue is unresolved with the faculty member, the student should next present to the Program Director and then to the Associate Dean or Dean.

o In the case of failure to reach consensus, the decision regarding final action will be made by the Associate Dean/Dean unless substantial evidence supports a claim of arbitrary or capricious treatment of the student(s) warranting escalation to the university grievance process as described in the Student Handbook.

**Doctor of Nursing Practice Program Goals**
An individual with a DNP doctoral level education will be able to:

- Design programs of care delivery that are locally acceptable and economically feasible.

- Significantly impact health care outcomes.

- Critique clinical scientific findings.

- Transform health care delivery by providing the best possible clinical care to individuals, families, and communities.

- Develop needed advanced competencies for increasingly complex clinical and leadership roles, global health care, genetics, and biomedical advances.

**Program Outcomes & Competencies**
The competencies expected of a DNP graduate follow the eight essentials of doctoral education for advanced practice in nursing as specified by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2006, pp. 8-17) (See Appendix B).

1. Scientific Underpinnings for Practice
2. Organizational and Systems Leadership for Quality Improvement and Systems Thinking
3. Clinical Scholarship and Analytical Methods for Evidence-Based Practice
4. Information Systems/Technology and Patient Care Technology for the Improvement and Transformation of Health Care
5. Health Care Policy for Advocacy in Health Care
6. Interprofessional Collaboration for Improving Patient and Population Health Outcomes
7. Clinical Prevention and Population Health for Improving the Nation’s Health
8. Advanced Nursing Practice

**Cost and Financial Aid**
Tuition information for the DNP is provided at [http://www.samuelmerritt.edu/tuition](http://www.samuelmerritt.edu/tuition). Please refer to the SMU financial aid website at: [https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/financial_aid](https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/financial_aid) for additional information on financing the cost of your DNP program. The availability of scholarships and grants varies. Checking the following link from time to time can provide updated information: [http://www.doctorsofnursingpractice.org/studentfunding.htm](http://www.doctorsofnursingpractice.org/studentfunding.htm). Information received by the program related to any funding opportunities will be forwarded to you.

**Academic Requirements**

**Post-Master’s Program Overview**
The SMU Post-Master’s DNP Program is a 36-unit online terminal degree program in nursing practice. The DNP graduates will be prepared to practice at the highest level of advanced nursing practice, demonstrating leadership in their area of specialty practice and a commitment to improving health care outcomes via practice, policy change, and practice scholarship (AACN, 2006). It is intended to expand the focus of nursing leadership in complex systems of care for an increasingly culturally diverse patient population through collaborative and independent practice in a variety of health care settings. The idea of a practice doctorate is not new as practice doctorates are awarded in many fields from education to pharmacy. Practice hours are generally done in the student’s employed practice setting, in collaboration with a designated practice mentor and SMU academic advisor.

**Post-Baccalaureate Program Overview**
The SMU Post-Baccalaureate DNP Program is a 79-unit terminal degree program in nursing practice delivered in a blended learning format. The FNP-DNP graduates will be prepared to practice at the highest level of advanced nursing practice in primary care and to demonstrate leadership in their area of specialty practice. Practice hours will consist of 630 mentored clinical hours in FNP practice and 370 focused on the Capstone Project. The Capstone Project hours will be completed under the supervision of a designated practice mentor and the SMU academic advisor.
The DNP offers an alternative to research focused doctoral programs, providing graduates with the knowledge and skills essential to accountability for advanced nursing practice and leadership. The PhD in nursing by contrast has traditionally prepared nurses for research for the purpose of knowledge or theory generation. The program includes education components that are central to both education and practice. In addition, the student may elect to include an education focus in the capstone project that is part of the curriculum.

**Accreditation**
The SMU DNP Program is fully accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

**Curriculum**
See Appendix C for the course listings and course descriptions/objectives. The DNP courses and sequencing here represent the full-time schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N704</td>
<td>Biostatistics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N703</td>
<td>Epidemiology &amp; Population Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N710</td>
<td>Health Care Economics &amp; Financial Analysis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N700</td>
<td>Evidence-Based Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N715</td>
<td>Outcomes management and evaluation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N706</td>
<td>Advanced Informatics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N720</td>
<td>Capstone Seminar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N705</td>
<td>Organizational &amp; Systems Leadership in Complex Healthcare Sys</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N702</td>
<td>Advanced Health Policy &amp; Advocacy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N721</td>
<td>Capstone Development</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N714</td>
<td>Educational Innovations in Health Care</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N730</td>
<td>Capstone Residency</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N723</td>
<td>Capstone Presentation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Units</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(36)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Course #</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Units</td>
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<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N601</td>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N672</td>
<td>Professional Role Development for Advanced Practice Nursing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N600</td>
<td>Theoretical Foundations for Advanced Practice Nursing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N619</td>
<td>Advanced Pathophysiology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N670</td>
<td>Family Centered Advanced Practice Nursing</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>N706</td>
<td>Advanced Informatics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N677</td>
<td>Advanced Pharmacology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N703</td>
<td>Epidemiology &amp; Population Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N704</td>
<td>Biostatistics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N700</td>
<td>Evidence-Based Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N710</td>
<td>Health Care Economics &amp; Financial Analysis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N715</td>
<td>Outcomes management and evaluation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N671</td>
<td>Advanced Health Assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N720</td>
<td>Capstone Seminar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N674</td>
<td>Health Protection, Promotion, and Screening</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N702</td>
<td>Advanced Health Policy &amp; Advocacy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N678</td>
<td>Clinical Practicum</td>
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<td>YEAR 3</td>
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<td>N721</td>
<td>Capstone Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>N675</td>
<td>Care of Acute and Episodic Conditions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N679</td>
<td>Clinical Practicum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N679</td>
<td>Clinical Practicum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N676</td>
<td>Care of Chronic and Complex Conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N705</td>
<td>Organizational &amp; Systems Leadership in Complex Healthcare Systems</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N680</td>
<td>Clinical Internship</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>N714</td>
<td>Educational Innovations in Health Care</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N673</td>
<td>Professional Advocacy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N680</td>
<td>Clinical Internship</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N730</td>
<td>Capstone Residency</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N723</td>
<td>Capstone Presentation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Units</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(79)</strong></td>
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**Full and Part-Time Study**
Both full-time and part-time study options are available for the Post-Master’s program. The part-time curriculum requires a total of three years for completion instead of the 2-year full-time option. See Appendix D for the part-time schedule.

**Advisement and Faculty Roles**
Over the course of the program, students will have the opportunity to work with a variety of faculty members, mentors and content experts in a variety of roles.

The Samuel Merritt University School of Nursing offers programs at the undergraduate, Master’s, and doctoral levels. The School seeks to recruit a diverse, qualified group of faculty to develop and deliver its instructional programs at these various levels. Generally, faculty will teach across programs if qualified to do so. However, recognizing that doctoral education and teaching in an online modality requires exceptional qualifications of faculty, the School has determined that faculty selection for the DNP program will typically require the following qualifications:

- An earned terminal doctoral degree (DNP, PhD, DNSc, EdD, DNP or comparable credential. In rare cases, an MS degree with other exceptional qualifications may be considered for appointment to the doctoral faculty.)
- An ongoing record of scholarship as evidenced by a record of peer reviewed publications or presentations.
- Evidence of exceptional practice expertise and recent practice activity sufficient to guide students at the highest level of clinical inquiry. National certification in a nursing specialty is highly desirable.
- Prior teaching at the graduate and preferably the doctoral level.
- Active involvement in nursing leadership within a national or international nursing organization.
- Demonstrate proficiency in instructional approaches appropriate for distributed education including asynchronous and synchronous teaching and learning online.
**SMU DNP Advising Roles**

**Initial DNP Academic Advisor:**
Upon admission to the DNP program, each student will be assigned an initial advisor. The initial DNP academic advisor may be a graduate program director, the DNP program director, an instructor in the DNP program, or another graduate faculty member. All initial DNP academic advisors will be familiar with the DNP program, will have clinical expertise, and will be a member of the graduate faculty. The initial DNP academic advisor will generally provide student direction during the first several semesters of the program and until the DNP Capstone Project Chair and the DNP Capstone Project Committee have been identified and constituted.

**DNP Capstone Project Chair:**
Before beginning N720, the Capstone Seminar course, the Program Director will identify the students' DNP Capstone Project Chair. The Project Chair may be the student's initial DNP academic advisor or another faculty member and will guide the student through the scholarly project. The DNP Capstone Project Chair will be doctorally prepared and may or may not have specific experience in the student's Capstone Project topic or field. If the Capstone Chair is not an expert in the student's area, additional content experts may be included. The DNP Program will have a list of graduate faculty members available to serve as DNP Capstone Project Chairs. The list includes the faculty members' area of scholarly interest and practice expertise.

**DNP Capstone Project Practice Advisor/Facilitator:**
The DNP program requires completion of nine semester units of practice/capstone project work. During this time, the student will develop, implement, and evaluate a project approved by both the Capstone Chair and Practice Advisor/Facilitator. The facilitator serves as the student's practice site mentor and facilitates access to resources required to complete the project. Specific responsibilities include:

1. Assisting the student in selecting realistic and specific goals within the framework of both the practice site and the objectives of the DNP program.
2. Guiding the student in the development, implementation and completion of the capstone project.
3. Providing feedback to the student and the student's Capstone Chair throughout the project.
**DNP Capstone Project Committee:**
The DNP Capstone Project Committee should be constituted prior to entry into N720, the Capstone Seminar course. The Committee is comprised of a minimum of two (2) members. The DNP Capstone Project Chair must be from the home institution and the other member will be the DNP Capstone Practice Advisor/Facilitator.

The student is free to add additional members to the DNP Capstone Project Committee. Additional members may include a faculty member from outside the institution, or other individual(s) with specialized knowledge and expertise relevant to the DNP Capstone Project.

**DNP Faculty Progression Committee**
The purpose of the progression committee is to ensure that each DNP student is evaluated based upon the same criteria and meets the same standards of quality and rigor in the development and completion of the Capstone Project. The Progression Committee will consist of a minimum of three participants including: the Program Director, an appointed DNP faculty member, and the student’s Capstone Chair.

The Progression Committee will review all Capstone Proposal and Final presentations and papers. Each will be evaluated based upon a detailed rubric that is provided to each student in N720 and N723. Students who receive an approval may proceed with the next steps of the Capstone Project or graduation for those in the completion phase. Students who are asked to revise and resubmit must address each of the committee’s concerns satisfactorily prior to proceeding. For this reason, it is recommended that students begin to work on Capstone ideas early in the program with feedback from course faculty and the Capstone Chair.

If a student makes a substantive change in the Capstone Proposal or plan after receiving the approval of the Progression Committee, the student is expected to resubmit the proposal after any such change. A substantive change includes, but is not limited to a change of:

- Setting
- Project focus
- Design
- Intervention
- Population

If you are uncertain if a change you made to your project constitutes a substantive change, please contact the Program Director.
Grades
A grade of "B-" is the minimum passing grade for each letter graded course.

Grading Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>93-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-86%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Grades will be rounded to the nearest whole number using the "0/5" rounding rule. For example: 89.5 will be rounded to 90.0 and 92.2 will be rounded to 92.0. Students must achieve an 80% to pass the course.

Capstone courses are scored as either pass or fail. Rubrics are provided in the syllabi for each course including specific criteria and expectations for 'pass'.

Technical Standards
For additional information related to the ADA Guidelines, definitions, affective learning skills and psychomotor skills required by the University and academic programs (including the DNP Program), please visit the following web site: http://www.samuelmerritt.edu/nursing/dnp/technical_standards or the SMU Student Handbook: http://www.samuelmerritt.edu/academic_affairs/catalogs.

Computer Requirements and Support Services
Please refer to Appendix A for the DNP technology requirements. Assistance is available from the DNP online learning specialist, and the Information Technology web site: https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/information_technology.

Scholarly Writing in Graduate Nursing
The expectations of doctoral study include scholarly and rigorous written communications. If you have concerns related to your writing abilities, seek assistance early in the program and develop a plan to address deficient areas.

Scholarly writing varies by discipline; however a few general observations can be made:

- Scholars write with evidence and particular types of evidence are more acceptable in particular communities and situations.
- Scholarly writing tends to have a more transparent organizational structure and to be more explicit that other types of writing.
Scholarly writing tends to be formal.
Scholarly communities have conventions, which are more comparable to etiquette than law.
Scholars use reading and writing to think.

Scholarly writing is the product of thought and analysis, and the act of writing can often uncover unanticipated insights and analysis that make a writer’s work unique and valuable. This section discusses graduate writing expectations, emphasizing the challenges and opportunities that graduate level writing presents.

Exemplary papers tend to have the following characteristics:

- They fully address the related research, potential arguments inherent in the issue, and the assigned task.
- They have a well-developed position with key ideas that are fully illustrated with specific examples. The exemplary essay presents a coherent whole—thereby complementing the writer’s personal and professional experiences with the research provided. Exemplary papers go beyond a simplistic restating of the research provided.
- The writing demonstrates a variety of sentence structures, strong and precise word choice, and no errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure. The essay’s structure relies on the writer’s key ideas and examples rather than a trite or predictable composition structure (which might include, but is not limited to a formulaic five-paragraph essay).
- They analyze and critique the issue by examining the issue’s contexts in addition to the writer’s personal biases. In other words, these papers ask difficult questions of commonly accepted research and assumptions about specific educational issues.
- They identify complex implications that follow logically from the key ideas that the writer offers.
- The writers of exemplary papers clearly communicate their own perspective through a strong, confident, and distinctive voice.

See Appendix E 1

APA Format
The SMU DNP program requires students to use APA, 6th edition style in their written work. The style requires a mix of in-text citations, rather than footnotes, and a reference list at the end of the document providing detailed author and publication information. The APA textbook as well as related web sites are useful guidelines.
DNP Degree Requirements

In addition to the successful completion of the coursework, students must have 1000 practice hours in their academic program completed by the end of their DNP program, (this includes hours completed as part of the student’s MSN program).

Petition for Graduation

Students will submit a 'petition to graduate'. The form will be sent out by the registrar with instructions and must be submitted in order to have one's name included in the commencement program and to receive the diploma on time. See Appendix F.

The DNP Capstone Project

Overview

The DNP Capstone Project is designed to demonstrate the student's achievement in meeting the DNP learning objectives. The capstone project must:

- Be related to advanced practice nursing (nurse practitioner, nurse anesthetist, nurse midwife or clinical nurse specialist), or advanced nursing practice (executive level nurse leader).
- Be a solo endeavor; however, when appropriate and with advisor approval, collaborative projects may be submitted.
- Benefit a group or population rather than an individual. Such a group or population must be identified as part of the project proposal.
- Address or modify a specific healthcare need or issue and be supported by evidence-based literature.
- Be reproducible;
- Be conducted in an ethical manner.
- Involve complex decision-making skills, systems theory, and collaborative teamwork models.
- Use current healthcare informatics technologies.
- Have a budget that is feasible.
- Have specific outcomes that are systematically measured by standard data collection methods with emphasis on safety, cost effectiveness, and quality improvement.
- Be disseminated in a professional, public, and peer-reviewed manner.

See Appendix G for the description and objectives of each of the Capstone Courses and how the Capstone Project progresses.
Practice/Clinical Hours Requirement
At the conclusion of the DNP program, a student must have obtained 1,000 clinical practice hours. These hours must be from a supervised educational environment (e.g., the clinical hours completed during your MSN together with the clinical hours in the DNP program).

Implementation of the capstone project will require a minimum of 270 hours. More hours may be required depending upon how many hours were completed in the student’s advanced practice nursing/Master’s program. A total of at least 1,000 precepted clinical hours must be documented in order to meet the DNP requirement. Each DNP student will be required to keep a log of precepted clinical hours during the DNP program to be submitted with the completed DNP Capstone Project. The clinical log must be signed off by the Practice Advisor/Facilitator.

DNP precepted clinical hours are those hours in which the student is working on the capstone project. If the project is to be completed within the student’s place of employment, the precepted hours may not include those hours in which the student performs his or her usual work, but rather the hours for which the student is engaged in work that informs or is directly related to the project.

See Appendix H for the DNP Program Capstone Project Timeline Checklist. See Appendix I for the DNP Capstone Project Advisors Capstone Chair and Practice Advisor/Facilitator Information Form.

Final DNP Project (ANCC, 2006)
Doctoral education, whether practice or research, is distinguished by the completion of a specific project that demonstrates synthesis of the student’s work and lays the groundwork for future scholarship. For practice doctorates, requiring a dissertation or other original research is contrary to the intent of the DNP. The DNP primarily involves mastery of an advanced specialty within nursing practice. Therefore, other methods must be used to distinguish the achievement of that mastery. Unlike a dissertation, the work may take a number of forms. One example of the final DNP product might be a practice portfolio that includes the impact or outcomes due to practice and documents the final practice synthesis and scholarship. Another example of a final DNP product is a practice change initiative. This may be represented by a pilot study, program evaluation, quality improvement project, evaluation of a new practice model, consulting project, or an integrated critical literature review.
Additional examples of a DNP final product could include manuscripts submitted for publication, systematic literature reviews, research utilization projects, dissemination of practice topics, substantive involvement in a larger endeavor, or other practice project. The theme that links these forms of scholarly experiences is the use of evidence to improve either practice or patient outcomes.

The final DNP project produces a tangible and deliverable academic product that is derived from the practice immersion experience and is reviewed and evaluated by an academic committee. The final DNP product documents outcomes of the student’s educational experiences, provides a measurable medium for evaluating the immersion experience, and summarizes the student’s growth in knowledge and expertise. The final DNP product should be defined by the academic unit and utilize a form that best incorporates the requirements of the specialty and the institution that is awarding the degree. Whatever form the final DNP product takes, it will serve as a foundation for future scholarly practice.

**On Campus Visits**

In December each year students will participate in a 2-3 day on-campus session where the Capstone Proposal (when enrolled in N720) and the final Capstone Project (when enrolled in N723) will be presented to faculty, peers, and invited guests. This is an opportunity for students across the program to meet and exchange ideas and to share their projects.

**Online Education**

A few final words related to online education: There are extensive data indicating that online education can no longer be viewed simply as an alternative to traditional education. Online programs deliver high-quality and academically rigorous programs that represent a new academic gold standard. See Appendix J-1, J-2, and J-3 for references supporting the value and efficacy of online education at: