The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) is the terminal practice degree in Nursing. This degree builds upon the student’s current knowledge of clinical practice. The DNP will prepare students to practice at the highest clinical level and provide leadership in our dynamic healthcare systems. Graduates of the program will be able to analyze systems of care and provide high-level leadership to improve patient safety and quality of care and to implement evidence-based, culturally competent care practices.

The School of Nursing at Western Carolina University (WCU) and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) offers a post-masters DNP consortium program. As a student, you will have access to expert faculty from both universities.
Degree Requirements

The DNP program requires 42 post-master's graduate semester credit hours and completion of 1,000 clinical practice hours (includes 500 hours from master's program). All students will be required to complete the following curriculum:

Theoretical Base (15 semester credit hours)
- NSG 822 Healthcare Policy & Ethics
- NSG 826 Leadership & Healthcare Systems
- NSG 816 Global Health & Social Justice
- NSG 823 Economic & Financial Aspects of Healthcare System
- NSG 827 Technology for Communication & Transforming Healthcare

Methodological Issues (15 semester credit hours)
- NSG 815 Healthcare Program Evaluation & Quality (3)
- NSG 814 Foundations & Applications of Evidence-Based Practice (3)
- NSG 818 Leadership & Project Planning (3)
- NSG 802 Community Epidemiology (3)
- NSG 817 Applied Biostatistics (3)

Elective Courses (3 semester credit hours)
One elective in a chosen area of interest selected mutually with the advisor

Clinical Residency & Project (9 semester credit hours)
- NSG 883 Clinical Residency & Project Development I (2)
- NSG 884 Clinical Residency & Project Development II (2)
- NSG 885 Clinical Residency & Project Development III (3)
- NSG 886 Clinical Residency & Project Development IV (2)

The Clinical Residency and Project

Students will complete a DNP Scholarly Project during their clinical residency courses. The DNP Scholarly Project is a project that brings together the practice and scholarship aspects of the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree. It is designed to address complex practice issues that affect groups of patients, health care organizations, or health care systems while utilizing informatics, technology, and in-depth knowledge of the clinical and behavioral sciences. The clinical scholarship required in the DNP Scholarly Project reflects mastery and competency in a student’s area of expertise.

The DNP Scholarly Project begins in the first semester of study and continues throughout the program, culminating in a scholarly public defense and manuscript prepared for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The DNP Scholarly Project requires students to demonstrate expert practice, the use of evidence-based practice, translational research, and use of skills necessary to lead interdisciplinary teams to improve patient/client outcomes and health status individually, organizationally, or within a community.

Students may choose to complete the required 500 clinical practicum hours in a private practice, clinic, inpatient unit, hospital system, or other institution or community. These hours will be a component of the assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of outcomes of the DNP Scholarly Project.

Admission Requirements

- Earned master’s in nursing in an advanced nursing practice specialty* from a nationally accredited program
- An overall GPA of at least 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale) in the MSN program
- Current RN licensure in the U.S. at the time of application with eligibility for NC licensure
- Evidence of a satisfactory national standardized test score (e.g., GRE, MAT, GMAT)
- Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) must provide evidence of current national certification and meet the state requirements for practice in their state of licensure
- Evidence of 500 supervised clinical hours. Students with less than 500 hours must meet with the DNP program director to develop a clinical plan.
- Submit a completed application to Graduate School. Apply online at grad.wcu.edu.
- For complete application details and instructions, visit nursing.wcu.edu.

*The DNP Program invites applications with master’s degree in nursing fields such as nursing administration, nursing anesthesia, nurse practitioner, community health and clinical nurse specialist. Students with a master’s degree in more education are encouraged to explore programs that offer a PhD or EdD.