

# HIRING INTENTIONS OF DIRECTORS OF NURSING PROGRAMS RELATED TO DNP- AND PHD-PREPARED FACULTY AND ROLES OF FACULTY<sup>☆,☆☆</sup>



MARILYN H. OERMANN, PhD, RN, ANEF, FAAN<sup>\*</sup>, MARY R. LYNN, PhD, RN<sup>†</sup>, AND CHARLOTTE A. AGGER, MA<sup>‡</sup>

This study surveyed administrators of associate degree in nursing (ADN) and bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) programs across the United States to identify hiring intentions and describe the roles and responsibilities of DNP- and PhD-prepared faculty members. The final sample included 253 ADN and 229 BSN programs. ADN programs were neither intentionally hiring nor looking to hire doctorally prepared nurse faculty. Deans and directors of BSN programs reported an average of 3 openings for the next academic year, 2 projected for new PhD-prepared faculty and 1 for a faculty member with a DNP. Schools have made varying decisions regarding the type of appointment (tenure or nontenure track) for DNP-prepared faculty members. Challenges that DNP-prepared faculty members encountered in meeting the role and promotion expectations in their schools focused predominantly on scholarship. (Index words: Doctor of nursing practice; Doctor of philosophy; Nursing education; Nursing faculty; Roles) *J Prof Nurs* 32:173–179, 2016. © 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

**T**HE NURSE FACULTY shortage continues to impede the ability of schools of nursing to increase student enrollment to meet the current and future demand for registered nurses. Schools of nursing in the United States (US) are unable to accept many of the qualified applicants to their baccalaureate and graduate programs because of a lack of faculty, clinical practice sites and preceptors, space, and funding (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2014a). Among these reasons, the faculty shortage is the main factor that inhibits schools from accepting more students into their prelicensure

programs (AACN, 2014a; National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, 2010).

In addition to the need for more faculty to meet student demand, there is a limited pool of doctorally prepared nurse educators, a problem anticipated to worsen with projected faculty retirements in the next few years (AACN, 2014a). A recent survey on vacant faculty positions found that most of the vacancies (57.5%) were for faculty with doctoral degrees (AACN, 2014b). Schools reported that the main issues related to faculty recruitment were the limited pool of doctorally prepared faculty (68.2%), finding faculty with the specialty they needed (63.0%), and noncompetitive salaries compared with positions in the practice setting (59.7%; AACN, 2014b). Those doctorally prepared nurses in short supply have been primarily doctor of philosophy (PhD)-prepared faculty members (AACN, 2014a), educated in a research-based degree program, who are generally expected to maintain a strong research role while also teaching and providing service to their institution and the wider profession (Chase & Pruitt, 2006).

Although the advent of the practice doctorate in nursing has its roots in the early 1970s (Chase & Pruitt, 2006), it was the AACN position statement of 2004 that created the

<sup>\*</sup> Thelma M. Ingles Professor of Nursing, Director of Evaluation and Educational Research, Duke University School of Nursing, Durham, NC.

<sup>†</sup> Professor, School of Nursing, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC.

<sup>‡</sup> Doctoral Student, School of Education, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC.

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Address correspondence to Dr. Oermann: Duke University School of Nursing, DUMC 3322, 307 Trent Drive, Durham, NC 27710. E-mail: [marilyn.oermann@duke.edu](mailto:marilyn.oermann@duke.edu)  
8755-7223

emphasis for the growth in doctor of nursing practice (DNP) degree programs in the US (AACN, 2014c). While the projected need for the practice doctorate in nursing was having a better educated nurse practitioner to address the myriad of patient safety needs, as these programs have developed, the definition of practice in some programs has been extended to include education and nursing administration/systems. In addition, one of the employment settings of DNP graduates is schools of nursing (Chism, 2010). Despite the rationale for and foreseen employment of nurses with practice doctorates being clinical practice, they have sought roles as nurse educators.

In recent years, the number of DNP graduates and programs has continued to grow. From 2012 to 2013, the number of students enrolled in DNP programs increased from 11,575 to 14,688. During that same period, there were nearly 2,500 graduates of DNP programs (AACN, 2014c). In 2014, there were 243 DNP programs across the US with an additional 59 in the planning stages (AACN, 2014c). This growth is even more phenomenal when compared with the 131 research-focused nursing doctoral programs in the US (AACN, 2013). Although there has been an increase in student enrollment, the number of graduates does not meet current demands for nursing faculty. Nurses with PhD degrees are needed to conduct research and develop the science of nursing and nursing education (Broome, 2012; Smeltzer et al., 2014). As noted earlier, the need for additional PhD-prepared nurse faculty is further exacerbated by the projected retirements of faculty.

Little is known about the perspectives of deans and directors of nursing programs related to the hiring of DNP- versus PhD-prepared graduates. While there seems to be consensus that increases in DNP graduates will likely expand teaching capacity, particularly with respect to clinical teaching, several concerns exist related to integrating these nurses as faculty in nursing programs (Edwardson, 2010). The key concerns include potential conflict between DNP and PhD faculty as a result of status differentials, concerns about academic rigor in newly emerging DNP programs, and diminishing research activity in nursing if DNP-prepared faculty are hired rather than PhD-prepared faculty (Agger, Oermann, & Lynn, 2014; Dreher, Glasgow, Cornelius, & Bhattacharya 2012; Edwardson, 2010).

Graduates of both DNP and PhD in nursing programs who choose academic careers need to be prepared for their role as educators (Agger et al., 2014; Minnick, Norman, & Donaghey, 2013). This includes essential knowledge and competencies for teaching in nursing and an understanding of the academic nurse educator role (Frank, 2015).

## Purpose

The specific aims of this study were to (a) examine nursing program administrators' hiring intentions regarding DNP and PhD graduates, (b) describe the roles and responsibilities of DNP- and PhD-prepared faculty members, and (c) explore administrators' perspectives in

regard to DNP- and PhD-prepared faculty fulfilling their responsibilities as faculty members.

## Methods

### Design and Sample

Administrators of associate degree in nursing (ADN) and baccalaureate and higher degree (bachelor of science in nursing [BSN]) programs across the US were surveyed to identify their hiring intentions and describe the roles and responsibilities of DNP- and PhD-prepared faculty in their schools of nursing. The sampling frame for this survey included the AACN member schools and ADN programs listed by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission. The survey was sent to a stratified random sample of the total sampling frame with the strata dictated by percentage of programs of each type of preparation (degree offered), program size, geographic location, and ownership (public vs. private). The final sample included 253 ADN programs out of 554, for a response rate of 45.7%, and 229 BSN programs out of a possible 455, response rate of 50.3%. Only surveys that were at least 90% complete were included in the data analysis. The institutional review boards of the authors' universities approved the study.

### Instrument

The survey instrument was developed based on current literature concerning the hiring and utilization of DNP and PhD faculty members and intensive interviews with deans and directors of ADN, BSN, and graduate nursing programs across the US. Fifteen deans and directors were interviewed, including seven from ADN and eight from BSN programs. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by the investigators to identify key themes related to factors influencing intentions to hire doctorally prepared faculty, roles and responsibilities of DNP- and PhD-prepared faculty members, and perspectives and experiences related to doctoral faculty members fulfilling their responsibilities in the school (Agger et al., 2014). The survey was pre- and pilot tested for clarity, usability, and comprehensiveness and revised.

The survey collected background information on the school of nursing, programs, faculty, and students. Other sections collected information about intended hiring preferences, roles and responsibilities of DNP- and PhD-prepared faculty (such as teaching, research, service, etc.), appointments, and preparation for the faculty role. About a quarter of the items allowed for the respondent to explain an earlier answer, with the text responses categorized for ease in analysis. For example, for the item *Do you have any practices or strategies in place in your school/department of nursing to advance the education of your faculty*, the response options were yes and no. A text box that followed allowed respondents to explain their practices or strategies. Some of the categories derived from this item were financial assistance, workload release, mentoring/faculty development program, having a culture of advanced faculty education, and being affiliated with a doctoral degree-granting university.

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