Guidelines for Planning a DNP project across cultures

- **The final scholarly project should demonstrate clinical scholarship**
- **Focus on a change that impacts health outcomes directly or indirectly**
- **Include planning, implementation and evaluation components**
- **Clinical significance is important, similar to statistical significance in evaluating research**

The following is a brief list to guide your proposed project. Please note that projects involving travel outside the U.S. need to be vetted by the Global Health Committee and need to follow University travel policies listed below. Keep in mind that the College of Nursing does not fund projects. The goal of preparing your project is for student safety and success.

General Overview of DNP Projects

The purpose of this document is to orient you to the unique preparation required for a global DNP scholarly project. Keep the following in mind as you consider a project proposal:

- Many projects implement a guideline or promoting a change in practice.
- You are not allowed to teach peers
- A project may include some curriculum development but this, by itself, cannot be the goal of the project.
- All projects need to be presented and approved by faculty including your specialty track director before implementation.

Know the Setting and the Participants

Before proposing and planning a project in a different culture, you will need some essential information. You will want to know all you can about the participants (e.g., Who are the participants? What language do they speak? Do you need an interpreter? What is the literacy level of the participants?)

A good project stems from knowing the community. We do not let students go alone for their first time to a site that does not have an established presence or guidance from a known and trusted person at the site or from someone who has interacted with the site, preferably from the University of Utah (See Safety details below). You will want to know if there are health and Quality Improvement (QI) programs in place. It is best to connect with an established project that would welcome your help with local training or some type of quality improvement project.

In general, components of the project include an identified problem, how you aim to address the problem, specific objectives to reach the aim, evaluation of how your project addresses the need and the processes involved including clinical implications and conclusions. The project process takes on some added considerations when working in another culture than your own.

Aim of the Project

The aim of the project is to address a verified need. The need or problem should be clearly established by a needs assessment and data gathered from a literature review and health data sources.

Problem and Needs Assessment

Many projects establish the problem from the literature and other health data sources. In a community setting, the problem is also described from a community needs assessment. The community can include all of the stakeholders that your project will affect. For example if you hold an educational session to improve nursing skills, this may also influence the ancillary hospital staff and specialty physicians who relate to the nurses.

You need to assess if there has been a community needs assessment for the problem you want to address. Important components of the needs assessment include <u>when it was done</u> (i.e. is the need still relevant?), and <u>if it included the opinions and desires of the participants</u> in your project (did the proposed participants agree to the training or did they identify their own needs for education/training?).

Most projects include a specific assessment of the participants prior to implementation. Even with a good literature review and a prior identified need, an assessment of the participants is usually warranted. An assessment can include participant baseline knowledge, attitudes or skills. An assessment in an unfamiliar location will take time, as you will need to develop trust and observe the setting and participants.

Objectives

Your objectives for a project need to be clear and measurable. The objectives need to address the problem and are the map of your project. The objectives need to fit into the time constraints of the DNP scholarly project class. Slight modifications can be made to your project timeline if you need to travel twice to the site. You cannot implement your project until the faculty of your DNP project (this includes your specialty track director) approves it. All students present their projects before implementation. You will need to figure out how many times you will need to visit this site to accomplish your objectives. Most students in a cross-cultural unfamiliar setting have needed two visits.

Ethics

Ethics involve several components. In a community project, one should always ask how the project might affect the participants and stakeholders, and those nearby who may not have participated. A social survey will help address the impact your project may have on the community, the workforce, and others like Medical Assistants (MAs), ancillary hospital/clinic help, administration, physicians, and Community Health Workers (CHWs.

Ethics also involve a process of checking in with Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University and possibly at the project site. You may need IRB in two locations. If your project is part of an on-going project at the University, you may be added to the project's IRB. If you are part of an unestablished project, you will need to go through the IRB approval at the U and possibly at the site. You may need to complete research ethics training and provide evidence of completion to the IRB.

Evaluation

DNP projects need an evaluation component. Evaluation defines if you have met the objectives of your project. You may be evaluating the process of implementation and get feedback from participants and stakeholders or you may be measuring participant skills or knowledge. Participant feedback on the process of implementation is as valuable as knowing how your project was received. The process and outcome of your project includes components of usability, sustainability and feasibility. Many students

use a pre and post-test to describe a change in knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviors of the participants.

If you are measuring a measurable outcome (change in attitude or level of depression, etc.) you will want to use a validated tool. A validated tool will have psychometric properties that have undergone statistical analysis to determine if the tool (such as the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale - EPDS) measures what it is intended to measure. Many published screening tools have not been validated by psychometric analysis, but you can search the literature and see if a validated tool exists for what you are measuring. Keep in mind validation of a tool does not transcend languages; so if a tool is validated in English, it may not be validated for Spanish speakers. If you create a pre and post-test survey or questionnaire, it is best to use validated questions. If you do not have a validated tool to use, you will need to test your questions before you use them. If you have modified or created questions for participants in your project you will need to trial the questions on people who are like your participants before implementing them in the project. This allows for an informal evaluation of the questions. Are the questions measuring what you intended? Your conclusions are only as good as your data and your data is only as good as your tool (questionnaire). Most projects have a handful of participants so this will severely limit the validity of the findings and their generalizability. Keep in mind that the goal of your project is not to prove anything or change the world – it is a tool for learning the process.

Safety

All projects abroad will need to be vetted through the College of Nursing Global Health Committee. There is a form to fill out as you finalize your ideas.

All projects need to follow University travel guidelines (see link below). You need to complete the process at least 3 weeks prior to travel. You are advised to start on this much earlier.

The steps you take through the Office of Global Engagement will guide you through the process to obtain travel insurance and to assess if the place you are going has travel restrictions.

You will also need to check if a visa is required for your passport. All travelers need to comply with safety regulations in the region. You will need to verify if there are any security alerts from the State Department for the area where your project is located.

You will be required to have passed the IPE Preparing for Global Engagement course prior to implementing your project.

See Office of Global Engagement and Study Abroad. Global Health site.

https://uofuhealth.utah.edu/globalhealth/

https://global.utah.edu/global-resources/global-learning-resources.php

https://learningabroad.utah.edu/