Continuous Improvement in an Online Doctor of Nursing Practice Program at a Midwestern State University

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Introduction

This DNP program started in 2015 as a hybrid post-master's program for FNPs. After initial accreditation by CCNE in 2016, the program sought input from students as well as from alumni, employers, and faculty. Feedback focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the DNP program to increase enrollment while maintaining the quality of the program. It was revealed the main challenges facing the program included:

- Maintaining academic integrity in assessment

- Providing students with online learning experiences that relate to real-world advanced practice nursing

- Proficiency with the learning management system

- Retaining students due to work and family obligations while traveling to campus for classes

Interventions

The School of Nursing evaluated the feedback and implemented the following changes:

- Expand admission criteria to include all board-certified advanced practice registered nurses (not just nurse practitioners)

- Use of a lock down browser with webcam to increase security and integrity of exams

- Use of online simulated clinical experiences to work through patient scenarios

- Orientation to the learning management system in the introductory DNP program course

- Conversion of the program from hybrid to online

Evaluation

Since implementing these changes, enrollment in the DNP program has steadily increased and program evaluation surveys have been positive.

Conclusion

Regular assessment of the DNP program is crucial for continuous improvement. Feedback from the communities of interest is critical to provide a quality program that meets their needs.