

## **Valparaiso to Offer Doctor of Nursing Practice**

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The Valparaiso University College of Nursing is revising its advanced degree programs and will begin offering a doctor of nursing practice, a degree that will prepare nurses for the highest level of nursing practice and leadership.

Dr. Janet Brown, dean of the College of Nursing, said offering the DNP puts Valparaiso at the forefront of a new national movement in nursing education.

“The changing demands of this nation’s complex health care environment require the highest level of scientific knowledge and practice expertise,” Dr. Brown said. “Research has established a clear link between higher levels of nursing education and better patient outcomes.”

By 2015, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing will require its members to raise the level of preparation necessary for advanced practice nursing roles from the master’s to the doctoral level. Approximately 30 DNP programs currently exist in the United States, and Valparaiso will become only the second university in Indiana to offer the degree.

“Valparaiso’s graduate nursing program is very well respected and our graduates are in great demand, which makes us well-equipped to offer the DNP degree,” Dr. Brown said.

Valparaiso’s DNP program will be implemented in phases, starting with a post-master’s DNP program designed for advanced practice nurses who are already certified, which will be implemented next fall. A DNP program for those who have completed their bachelor’s degree in nursing will begin admitting students in fall 2009.

Nurses who complete the DNP program will fill practice-leadership roles in a variety of health care organizations, Dr. Brown said, and help improve the efficiency, effectiveness and delivery of health care.

The DNP program will build upon Valparaiso’s current graduate nursing programs through additional coursework in areas such as managing complex health conditions and health care leadership. Full-time students can complete the DNP in three years, including coursework during the summer.

“Many nurses want to pursue the clinical route in earning their doctorate,” Dr. Brown said. “They don’t want to go the Ph.D., research route, because they are more interested in studying how to apply research in the patient care environment.”

Before Valparaiso begins offering the DNP in 2009, the College of Nursing is first revising its graduate program in nursing education, with changes to go into effect next fall. The new program is more streamlined, Dr. Brown said, and is designed for those

who desire to take on an educator role at a nursing school or in a health care facility.

Valparaiso has a partnership with Ivy Tech Community College that provides financial support to registered nurses who have earned their associate of science degree in nursing at any Ivy Tech and want to earn their master of science in nursing education. Nurses interested in becoming educators also are eligible for financial support through a grant the College of Nursing has received from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Human Resources and Services Administration.

For more information about the College of Nursing's new DNP and master's in nursing education, call (219) 464-5289 or visit its Web site.