

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF NURSE PRACTITIONERS: A ROADMAP TO CLINICAL REASONING, CERTIFICATION READINESS, AND CLINICAL EXCELLENCE

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Learning Objectives

1. Describe the components and structure of a mentoring program for graduate nurse practitioner students to improve clinical readiness.
2. Explain the role of diagnostic readiness testing in bridging knowledge acquisition and clinical application.
3. Identify effective learning strategies for certification readiness and clinical reasoning development.
4. Discuss the impact of mentorship on student success, clinical confidence, and professional development.
5. Evaluate strategies for fostering peer engagement, collaborative learning, and sustainable professional networking among NP students.

“It takes a village”.



The Role of the Nurse Practitioner



NP workforce trends



Growing complexity of care



Certification as a milestone



Preventable Adverse Events

(Rogers et al., 2023)

The Readiness Gap

Importance of Addressing the Gap:

- Essential for achieving clinical success and preparing for certification.

Common Issue for NP Students:

- The gap between classroom learning and real-world clinical expectations.

(Richard-Eaglin, 2017)

Diagnostic Reasoning: A Core Competency

- Diagnostic Reasoning/Problem-Solving:
 - Critical skill
 - Essential for safe and effective clinical practice.
 - Positive patient outcomes
 - Independently manage patients
 - Complex patients

(Hampton et al., 2024; Rogers et al., 2023)

Certification Readiness: Why It Matters

Importance of Certification Readiness:

- Certification readiness is crucial for NP students.

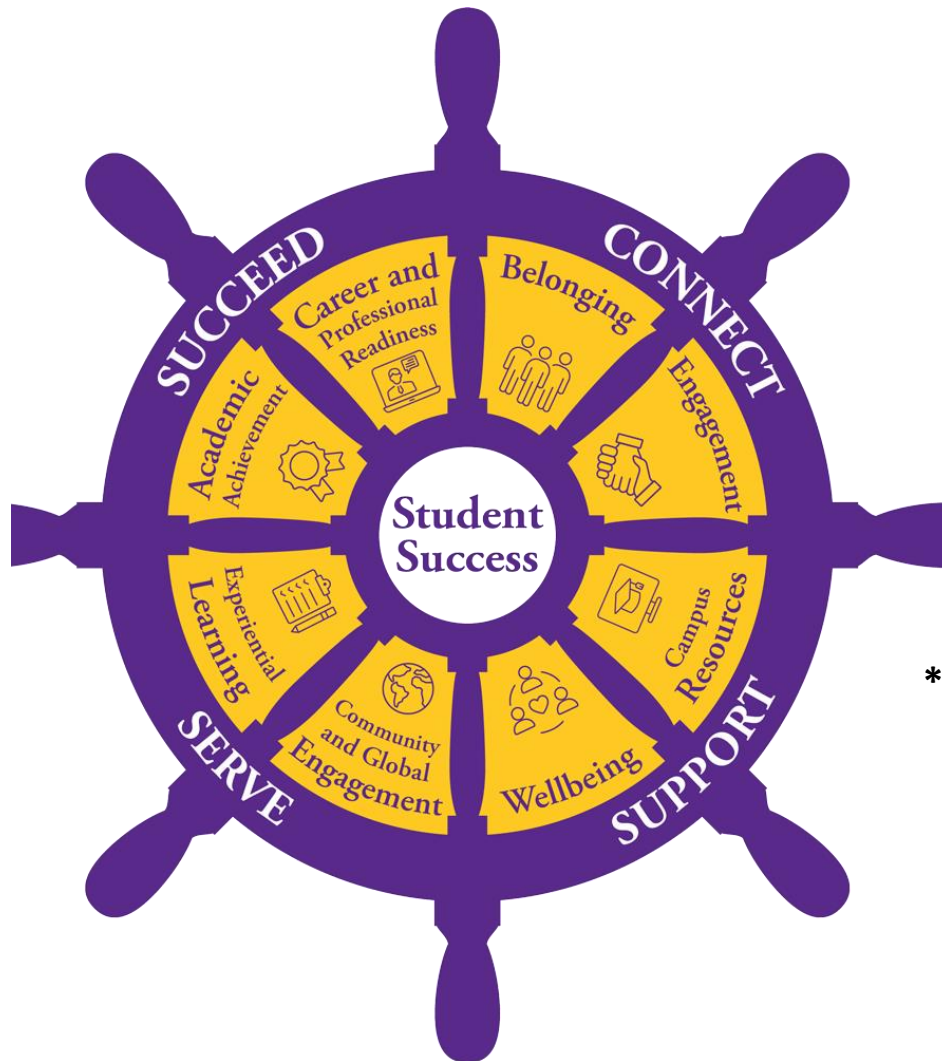
Impact of Anxiety and Poor Preparation:

- Anxiety and lack of preparation can negatively affect performance.

Benefits of Structured Programs:

- Structured programs can boost confidence and improve pass rates.

Holistic Student Success Model



Connect
Support
Serve
Succeed

Student Academic Success Services (SASS)



Connect

- Reinforcing a sense of belonging
 - Student Organizations
 - *American Association for Men in Nursing*
 - *Multicultural Student Nurse Association*
 - Networking with peers and professionals
- Establishing engagement with peers, staff, and faculty.

Support

- Focused efforts on student wellbeing
- Establishing connections to resources
 - IT Services
 - Library Liasson
 - Student Support
 - Counseling Services
- Faculty Advising

Serve

- Increasing campus involvement, campus service, employment and volunteer opportunities.
- Professional organizations
- Health Policy

Succeed

- Supporting student academic achievement professional readiness.
- Remediation Plans for identified weaknesses
- Clinical Progression CARE Plan
- NP Role Transition (CPA agreement preparation, negotiating contracts)

The Role of Clinical Faculty in Prep Success

What is Prep Success

- Structured mentorship with clinical faculty during 3rd clinical rotation

Prep Success in NP Education:

- Supports confidence in test taking and provides a level of mastery for individualized study plans

Core Components

Diagnostic readiness testing

Case study reviews & simulations

Individualized study plans

Guided Clinical Reasoning/Feedback

Strategic Certification Preparation

Peer and Professional Support

Clinical & Diagnostic Readiness Testing

3 Ps Exam (Pathophysiology, Pharmacology, and Physical Assessment)
before Clinical Rotation #1 and Clinical Rotation #4 for comparison

Pre-test/Post-test (Time 1 and Time 2)

To assess students' strengths and weaknesses in diagnostic knowledge.

Helps tailor students' preparation.

Individualized Study Plans



Customized learning objectives based on testing results, clinical strengths, and future goals.



Examples of content areas

Case Study Reviews & Simulations

- Develop clinical reasoning in safe environments.
- Apply knowledge in the application of clinical judgment
- Take action to mitigate adverse events
- Recommend evidence-based care for specific patient populations and demographics

Clinical Reasoning in Action

- Standardized Patients (SPs)/OSCE
- Lab simulations
- Virtual Clinic

DNP Immersion (Content Sessions/Clinical Skills)

- Ensuring content relevance
- Clinical Skills/Procedures
 - Newborn physical exam
 - IUD insertions
 - Splinting & Casting
 - Suturing



Creative Learning Activities

Global Health: Belize Medical Clinic

Adolescent/Transgender Care

Oral Health

Geriatric Care (Virtual Dementia Tour)

AgroMed Training (Caring for Farmers)

Disaster Management/Preparedness

Interprofessional Activities



- Microscopy Lab
- Substance use disorder treatment
- Driving Evaluations for Elderly

Student Role & Engagement

- Expectations for Distance Education Courses
- Active participation/Professionalism
- Academic Integrity
- Required precepted clinical hours
- Strategies for active learning

(Pearson & Hensley, 2019)

Supporting Student Wellness

- Managing anxiety
- Promoting balance and confidence
- Structured feedback



Program Logistics

- Timeline/Plan of Study Deviations
- Curriculum Integration: Competency-Based Learning
- Canvas: Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

(Hampton et al., 2024; Schumacher & Risco, 2017)

Evaluating the Program

- Student Satisfaction and engagement
- Clinical performance data
 - Improved confidence in clinical judgment
 - Reduced anxiety in patient care settings
 - Stronger clinical evaluations and preceptor feedback
- Faculty Outcomes
- Alumni data
- Continuous quality program improvement

Certification Success Rates

Correlating preparation and success
100% certification pass rates



Student Feedback



I would like to recognize the following instructors at ECU CON for their compassion, guidance, and support while I have been enrolled in the post-doctorate FNP certificate program: Drs. Brittany Baker, Julia Watkins, Heather Helton, Michelle Skipper and Anna Bell. When I started the spring semester, I had just recovered from AFIB RVR requiring cardioversion and eventual ablation in May 2025. To say I was overwhelmed and exhausted would be an understatement. However, these incredible instructors (true advanced nursing heroes) have been instrumental in my success and have been a source of support that I will never forget. The semester is almost over, and I would not have been able to continue my educational goals and aspirations without them. Their dedication to nursing and all the students at ECU CON is unparalleled. I truly believe if I was attending another school, my outcome would not be as favorable. I am forever thankful and grateful for all they have done for me!!



Michael Tipton, DNP AGNP-C, ECU post-doctorate FNP certificate student



Challenges and Lessons Learned

Preceptor
Availability

Student Work-Life
Balance

Natural Disasters/
Emergency
Preparedness

Adapting to
learners

Student lived
experiences

Student
accommodations

Implications for NP Educators

How can we maximize the NP program experience?

- Academic-Practice Partnerships
- NP Residency Programs
- Student involvement in Creative Activities/ Grants
- Student Representatives and presence on committees



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Questions

