



**Testimony for the Kansas House Health and Human Services Committee
House Bill No 2490
January 23, 2012**

Chairperson Landwehr and members of the House Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Jerry Farley, President of Washburn University. I am here on behalf of the School of Nursing to ask for your support for the proposed modifications to the statutory language describing Washburn University. The requested revision to the statute will allow Washburn University and the School of Nursing the opportunity to continue its educational mission at the graduate level.

Since 2005 Washburn University has offered a Master's degree for nurses in northeastern Kansas. Our Master's program has three tracks, including adult nurse practitioner, family nurse practitioner and clinical nurse leader. Our request today reflects the changing educational standards required by the national accreditation organization. By including the words, doctor of nursing practice, to K.S.A. 72-6508, Washburn can continue to offer needed programs for nurse practitioner preparation.

Advanced practice registered nurses provide essential primary health care services in Kansas. Currently there are six programs in Kansas that educate nurses at the graduate level for one of the four roles of advanced practice specialty nurses. Those schools are: Wichita State University, Fort Hays State University, Pittsburg State University, University of Kansas, Newman University, and Washburn University. In the past 16 years over 1,000 nurses have graduated from one of these six programs to work as a certified registered nurses anesthetist, a certified nurse midwife, a clinical nurse specialist or a nurse practitioner. We have experienced high interest in our nurse practitioner tracks, with 90 students currently enrolled in the family nurse practitioner or adult nurse practitioner programs.

Background

All across the country there is an acute shortage of doctorally prepared nurses. Less than one percent of the 3 million nurses in the US have a doctoral degree and about 10% has a master's degree. The DNP program will facilitate the preparation of doctorally prepared nurses who will assume leadership positions in health care and nursing education.

Doctoral programs in nursing are similar to those in other disciplines and are categorized into two distinct types: research-focused and practice-focused. The proposed DNP program is a practice-focused program that is analogous to entry level professional degrees offered in other disciplines such as Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD), and Juris Doctorate (JD). Practice doctorates in nursing have been offered by academic institutions since 1979. Preparation of nurses in the practice doctorate is a valuable counterpart to the doctorally prepared research-focused nurse. While the PhD prepared nurse conducts research to develop new knowledge, the DNP prepared nurse will use the research findings to develop evidence-based systems of care. DNP graduates design, implement, manage and evaluate health care delivery systems to affect the highest quality and safest patient outcomes.

In 2004 the American Association of Colleges of Nursing approved the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree as the educational preparation for advanced practice specialists, licensed by state as advanced practice registered nurses, effective 2015. Currently there are 153 DNP programs that are enrolling students nationwide, and there are an additional 106 DNP programs in the planning stages. There are DNP programs in 37 states plus the District of Columbia, with eight states who have five or more DNP programs operating in their state. From 2009 to 2010, the number of students enrolled in DNP programs increased from 5,165 to 7,034. During that same period, the number of DNP graduates increased from 660 to 1,282. It is important to remember that in 2002 there were two DNP programs in existence, so that in 10 years, there has been a 99% increase in the number of schools of nursing who are offering this degree.

Presently in Kansas, the University of Kansas and Wichita State University offer the DNP degree. We will be the third school to implement the new national accreditation guidelines. Nursing leadership at KU and Wichita State has provided written support of our program initiation. In personal communication with nursing leadership of these two schools, both schools have seen a steady growth in applications to their DNP programs and both were unable to admit all applicants. Our market research confirmed strong demand for this role with more students interested than spaces available. Upon completion of required approval processes, we plan to admit students to a MSN to DNP program in Fall 2012, with plans to begin a BSN to DNP program by 2015. Our five-year projection is to have 125 DNP students enrolled in the two curricular tracks by 2015.

We have the faculty and administrative support to offer this needed degree to nurses as they pursue their clinical leadership aspirations. Thank you for your attention to our request.