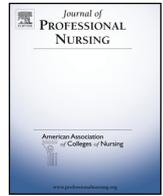




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Response to Guest Editorial on DNP-prepared Faculty

Response to Guest Editorial:

In response to the guest editorial by Dr. Gail Stuart, *Making the Grade*, in the January–February 2018, *Journal of Professional Nursing*, we believe it is critical to examine the purpose of tenure in higher education settings and the role and purpose of the DNP. According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the role and purpose of tenure in American higher education is to “protect academic freedom in order to promote the discovery and dissemination of knowledge and thus serve the common good”. Academic freedom, as stated by the AAUP, is a professor’s freedom “to teach, both in and outside the classroom, to conduct research and to publish the results of those investigations, and to address any matter of institutional policy or action whether or not [one is] a member of an agency of institutional governance” (AAUP Policy Documents and Reports Eleventh Edition, December 2014). The emphasis is on both academic freedom and discovery and dissemination of knowledge. Further, according to the National Conference of University Professors (NCUP), Tenure is a process designed to protect the professoriate. In a recent survey, the primary responsibility of the professoriate is “the promotion of research in their field of specialization” as well as “Professors are responsible for the prosecution and encouragement of original studies in the subject and for furthering the influence of the subject upon other fields of academic work” (National Conference University Professors, *The Role of the Professoriate*, May, 1991 [revised June, 2012]).

In summary the role of the professoriate is to generate research and new knowledge for the discipline and one of the roles of tenure is to protect academic freedom in order to promote the discovery and dissemination of knowledge.

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), the DNP “was designed to prepare experts in specialized advanced nursing practice. They focus heavily on practice that is

innovative and evidence-based, reflecting the application of credible research findings. The two types of doctoral programs differ in their goals and the competencies of their graduates. They represent complementary, alternative approaches to the highest level of educational preparation in nursing” (*The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice*, October, 2006). As a professional degree, unlike research doctoral programs, DNP programs are professionally accredited.

In the face of a national nursing faculty shortage, perhaps we have lost sight of these different purposes and, in an attempt to ensure there is sufficient faculty to teach the growing numbers of individuals interested in entering or advancing in the profession, have diverted the intended DNP role into full-time academic positions. Yes, we are a practice profession; yes, our students should be taught by faculty who maintain some level of currency in practice. Are we, however, doing a disservice to our DNP colleagues by pulling them from their intended purpose, to impact patient care as direct and indirect providers? We have an unfortunate pattern in nursing of using crises to veer from our intended course. Instead, perhaps our time would be better spent by doubling our efforts to prepare and attract more research focused faculty who will carry the responsibilities associated with tenure. Shouldn't we be focusing more on salary equity in comparison with clinical and/or other tenure track positions? Should we be looking for other forms of reward to attract and retain doctorally prepared nurses in academic settings?

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