

Doctoral Clinical Experience Promotes Chapter Revitalization

Debbie Cline, DNP, RN, OCN, NEA-BC, CNL, and
Nancy Manning Crider, DrPH, RN, NEA-BC

Doctorate of nursing practice (DNP) leadership students can help professional organizations achieve dramatic results in a short period of time. This article describes how an executive nurse leader can mentor DNP students and simultaneously improve organizational performance in any setting. During a 1-semester, 100-hour, clinical fellowship, a DNP student from the Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth worked with the president and regional director of the Texas Organization of Nurse Executives (TONE) to revitalize a local chapter of the organization.

Working at or leading a health care organization, where there are many competing priorities, results in many time management challenges. Many health care leaders, including nurses, feel stretched for time, and the thought of taking on an external voluntary leadership role can be challenging. Regardless of the concern for time, the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) executive competencies encourage nurse leaders to provide voluntary service beyond the organization they work for, contribute to professional organizations, and engage in academic partnerships to promote a qualified workforce for the future.¹ Additionally, being an active member or leader of a local, state, or national organization fulfills a personal and professional desire of nurses who have an internal drive to make a difference.

The Houston Organization of Nurse Executives (HONE) had not been active for over 2 years. After more than 40 years of robust leadership and visibility, there was a noticeable absence of a venue for nurse leaders in the greater Houston area to share research, quality improvement, and best practices. During the spring of 2018, Debbie Cline, a DNP student at the Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth (UTH), asked the nurse executive academic leaders to consider a clinical fellowship experience to work on re-establishing HONE. Simultaneously, the Texas Organization of Nurse Executives (TONE) board was contemplating how to revitalize the Houston chapter. Fortunately, one of the lead nurse executive faculty at the Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth, Dr. Nancy Crider, a past president of the HONE chapter and current District 4 director of TONE, was able to introduce the interested student to the incoming TONE president. She also expedited the process of obtaining an

affiliation agreement between the UTH and TONE. The introduction to Dr. Tim Howell, DNP, RN, CENP, the current president of TONE, was a critical step, and his agreement to be preceptor of the student experience was essential for success.

FELLOWSHIP EXPERIENCE

The DNP program fellowship, composed of 2 courses including a clinical practice requirement, is the culmination of the DNP experience. With previous experience as HONE secretary, the UTH faculty felt confident approving the student fellowship. Dr. Crider worked with the student prior to the start of the Fall 2018 semester to identify qualified candidates to serve on the HONE board and develop a ballot in alignment with the HONE bylaws. The candidates consisted of nurse executives from across the greater Houston area. Two weeks prior to the start of the semester, the ballot

KEY POINTS

- Professional nursing organizations should develop academic partnerships with DNP programs to promote a qualified workforce for the future and ensure the active involvement of emerging leaders.
- Faculty-supported fellowships can be strategically designed to advance and re-energize professional organizations.
- Fellowships can also facilitate the development of a long-term, sustainable, organizational structure relevant to both current and future nursing leaders.

was released for vote by the HONE membership. Utilizing the membership list provided by TONE, the ballots were sent to 26 active members. Nineteen of the 26 members voted, a 73% response rate, and the board was appointed in early September 2019.

Once the board was determined, a day and time was set for a strategic planning session. The 4-hour session allowed time for developing relationships among board members and established at team with shared accountability. The session included:

- Establishment of short- and long-term goals for HONE
- Agreement of board members to commit to once-a-month calls and following up on assignments
- Finalization of paperwork including the conflict of interest and contact information
- Review of the bylaws to establish goals for the chapter
- Completion of a SWOT²(strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis
- Development of a shared message group for easy communication
- Review of state organization tools for supporting the chapter

The re-establishment of the organization required concentrated time that was fulfilled by the DNP student. Agenda, meeting minutes, centralized files, document organization, and participation in monthly TONE meetings ensured continued momentum. Conference calls with the preceptor, Dr. Timothy Howell, president of Texas Organization of Nurse Executives (TONE), every 2 weeks ensured questions were answered, concerns were addressed, and ongoing evaluation of work was completed. The preceptor and student were located in 2 Texas cities, Lubbock and Houston, approximately 530 miles apart. Regardless of the physical distance, the establishment of an open, honest, and trusting relationship developed during the early morning calls. Setting up the calls in the morning enabled both nurse leaders to ensure they were able to have short, but meaningful, conversations offering guidance and support.

To ensure the student was up to date on current issues facing the TONE board, Dr. Howell invited her to attend an all-day face-to face TONE planning meeting in July 2018. This served to provide guidance in the direction of the local chapter, an opportunity to network with other chapter leaders across the state, and a face-to-face meeting between the preceptor and student.

The DNP is a practice degree designed to develop enhanced leadership skills and foundational competencies advanced nurse practitioners, including nurses in leadership positions, need to be a successful in today's complex health care settings. To strengthen the

skills of students preparing for executive and administrative roles, DNP programs provide a rich variety of practice experience focused on organizational and systems leadership.³ In 2004, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) delineated the Essentials of Doctoral Education that requires "practice experiences should include in-depth work with nursing experts, ... provide opportunities for meaningful student engagement ..., [and]... be designed to provide systematic opportunities for feedback and reflection."³(p20)

To ensure that specific milestones were met and measurable, the objectives and deliverables for the fellowship were aligned with the DNP Essentials.³ The 100 clinical hours focused on developing a sustainable meeting and membership platform that would minimize the time commitment of board members in the future. Slide templates, flyer templates, registration guides, meeting minutes, and organization of files were the priority. The creation of a board position to focus on publicity was leveraged to ensure social media development was ongoing. The establishment of a centralized e-mail address for the chapter and several social media accounts to support communication would be provided in several manners. For board communication, a group chat was established and identified as the primary method for group communication.

With several chief nursing officers as members of the chapter board, the organization has the ability to move the member meeting to different locations. The decision to hold quarterly meetings rather than monthly meetings was made early on to avoid overloading the new board. The focus being a very high quality presenter and topic with fewer offerings at no charge to current members. The rotation of meeting site allows the host hospital to determine the best meeting time (breakfast or lunch), and the agreement to sponsor the meal results in no charge for members. There is an option to pay for a single meeting and remain a nonmember if desired.

Chapter membership in July 2018 totaled 26 members. By May 2019, the membership had grown to 119 members, including acute care and non-acute care nurse leaders, nurse recruiters, school nurses, and long-term care nurses. Two chapter meetings were held during the fellowship. Both meetings offered continuing nursing education contact hours, and both were well attended with more than 50 members and nonmembers present. A live streaming option was available as an alternative for members who were unable to attend the meeting in person because of time or distance.

During the next 12 months, the HONE board will focus on continued membership development and engagement opportunities. A call for committee membership and nominations for board positions will

occur in June 2019, and a full-day conference is scheduled for September 2019. To ensure success of the established goals, another DNP student was identified and will complete a fellowship with TONE in 2019.

This amazing experience enabled the student to develop leadership skills, obtain clinical hours, and revive the HONE chapter. The support of school faculty and TONE leadership enhanced the experience through guidance provided over the semester. The use of the DNP student to reach specific goals and to focus hours each week to the development is a sustainable practice. DNP fellowship opportunities also support AONE professional competencies that call for nurse executives to contribute to and promote leader and staff participation in professional organizations.¹

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Debbie Cline, DNP, RN, OCN, NEA-BC, CNL, is a graduate from the DNP program at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth, and Associate Director, Nursing Programs, at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. She can be reached at dbcline@mdanderson.org. Nancy Manning Crider, DrPH, RN, NEA-BC, is Assistant Professor, Department of Graduate Studies, Nurse Executive Track, at Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth.

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