1. Institution: The University of Alabama
2. Date of NISP Submission: March 2007
3. Institutional Contact Person: Dr. Sara Barger, Dean
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4. Program Identification:
   Title: Doctor of Nursing Practice
   Award: 
   CIP Code: 51.1602
5. Proposed Program Implementation Date: Fall 2008
6. Statement of Program Objectives:
   a. Integrates nursing science with science-based knowledge from other disciplines to design, implement and evaluate new practices at the patient and population levels of care (1,8)*
   b. Demonstrates leadership practices focused on eliminating health disparities and improving quality health outcomes at the organizational or systems level. (2,6,7,8)
   c. Uses evidence-based scholarship and analytical methods to improve healthcare outcomes across the health continuum. (3,7,8)
   d. Coordinates inter-professional collaboration in the selection and use of Health Information Systems and patient care technology. (4,6,8)
   e. Advocates for social justice, equity, and ethical policies. (5,7,9)
   * Relationship to AACN Essentials
7. Relationship of program to other programs within the institution.
   a. How will the program support or be supported by other programs within the institution?

The University of Alabama has a long history of offering doctoral education. This experience will be useful in assisting with program development and implementation of Graduate School doctoral program policies and procedures. The DNP degree is a first professional degree similar in nature to other professional degrees such as those offered in
law, pharmacy and physical therapy. Because the focus of the degree is on clinical practice, the outcome of the program is a project focused on a relevant clinical practice issue.

b. Will this program replace any existing program(s) or specialization(s), options or concentrations within existing programs? Yes: X  No: __
If yes, please explain.

In October 2004, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) endorsed the Position Statement on the Practice Doctorate in Nursing that called for moving the level of preparation necessary for advanced nursing practice roles from the master's degree to the doctoral degree by the year 2015. The AACN position statement calls for educating advanced practice nurses and other nurses seeking executive level positions in clinical practice settings in Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs.

The position statement mandates a transformational change in the education required for professional nurses who will practice at the most advanced level in nursing. The recommendation that nurses practicing in executive level positions should receive doctoral preparation emerged from multiple factors including the expansion of scientific knowledge required for safe nursing practice and growing concerns regarding the quality of patient care delivery and outcomes. Practice demands associated with an increasingly complex health care system also created a mandate for reassessing the education for clinical practice for all health professionals, including nurses.

Thus, there will be a transition from the current MSN program that prepares nurses for case management for rural populations, to provision of doctoral level education for nurses who will be prepared at the doctoral level as nurse executives with advanced practice knowledge in clinical resource management.

8. If this program is duplicative of any other programs in the state, please give your rationale for program duplication.

AACN has strongly recommended that MSN programs that prepare nurses for advanced practice be transitioned to DNP programs. This transition has already begun in Alabama with the recent initiation of the DNP program at the University of South Alabama. No other DNP programs are currently approved in Alabama. However, it is anticipated that other nursing masters programs in Alabama will also move to follow AACN's recommendation and transition their existing master's programs to the DNP.
9. Do you plan to explore possible program collaboration with other institutions? Please explain.

The University of Alabama (UA), The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and The University of Alabama at Huntsville (UAH) have had a number of discussions regarding the opportunities to collaborate among the three schools in providing the three individual DNP programs. Most recently, a retreat was held for the three schools and agreement was reached that the three schools would work together to provide:

a. Advanced selective or elective courses that can be taken as electives by students on any of the three campuses;

b. Consultation across the three campuses in areas of expertise, such as nursing centers, writing for publication and complementary therapies; and

c. Intensive courses of short duration provided by one program in which students from all three programs might enroll. These courses might include activities such as a visiting professor relevant to DNP practice.

UAB also agreed to share the assessment of the need data for a DNP program that has been completed with UA and UAH. In addition, UA and UAH have agreed to specific areas of cooperation that will promote the maximization of resources as well as quality in both programs. Selected core courses will be developed so that the courses are not duplicated and are available to DNP students on both campuses. Each college will also develop selected courses in an online format that will promote sharing of expertise and provide additional options for students.

10. Do you anticipate the use of distance education technology in the delivery of the program? Please explain.

DNP courses will be designed to use web-based or blended delivery methods. Courses that are web-based may include content delivered in an online format with faculty led discussion of relevant concepts and issues. Blended courses will include a mixture of technology-based instruction and traditional delivery methods. Courses that include clinical nursing practice components, whether web-based or blended, will include faculty facilitation as well as facilitation of the students' clinical experiences from a clinical nursing expert.

11. What methodology will you use to determine the level of student demand for this program?

UA's Capstone College of Nursing and the Schools of Nursing at UAB and UAH have received many inquiries regarding our plans to implement DNP degrees. To determine the interest among practicing nurses in attending a DNP program, a formal random survey of 1800 baccalaureate prepared nurses in Alabama was conducted in September 2006 by the School of Nursing at UAB. The survey assessed the need for the DNP program at the three UA System
Schools of Nursing. The sample was generated from a list prepared by the Alabama Board of Nursing. A total of 1002 responses were received for a response rate of 56 percent. Sixty-three percent (614) of the respondents were baccalaureate prepared and 34% (332) were masters prepared.

A total of 307 (31%) of the nurses who responded stated that they intended to obtain a DNP degree. The majority of these nurses, (58%), said they planned to begin the degree program within the next three years. The majority of those responding were employed in hospitals followed by home health/hospice, physician's offices, and schools of nursing.

12. What methodology will you use to determine the need for this program?

A survey of 101 potential employers was also conducted in fall 2006. The survey was sent to potential employers in seven southeastern states. The largest number of responses was received from potential employers in Alabama which is expected to draw the most students for the program. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they planned to hire Advanced Practice Nurses with a DNP degree. Sixty percent of the employers planned to hire DNP prepared nurses within the next one to three years. In descending order of frequency the respondents were: Deans of Schools of Nursing (36%); Chief Nursing Officers of Hospitals (31%); and Directors of Nursing (16%).