



APRN ROUNDTABLE **INSIGHTS FOR IMPACT**

April 29, 2026 • Virtual



Impact of Direct Patient Care Clinical Hours on NP Certification Pass Rates

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Background

Why DPCC hours matter now

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National expectations for NP clinical hours

• NTF Standards (2022): minimum 750 direct patient care clinical (DPCC) hours

• AACN Essentials (2021): minimum 500 practice hours (direct + indirect); additional time expected for specialty/role

• Yet, many accreditors/certifiers still only require 500 hours for school accreditation/applicant exam eligibility



Challenges

- Rapid growth in NP programs
- Increase in malpractice claims in NPs
- First-time pass rates have declined across several certifiers in recent years
- Growth in NP residencies/onboarding suggests perceived gaps in practice readiness



Clinical education realities

01

Programs face persistent difficulty securing clinical sites and qualified preceptors

02

Limited placement capacity can produce variability in student experiences and readiness

03

Simulation supports learning and assessment but is not counted as DPCC hours



Basis for DPCC hours

- **Kolb:** learning transforms experience into knowledge
- **Bandura:** modeling + feedback build self-efficacy
- **Ericsson:** deliberate practice requires goal-directed repetition with feedback
- **Benner:** progression from novice → expert with meaningful experience
- **Miller's Pyramid:** moves from “knows” to “does” through supervised performance

**DPCC hours = exposure to role models
and authentic patient care complexity**



Evidence gap



National debate continues about raising clinical hour requirements



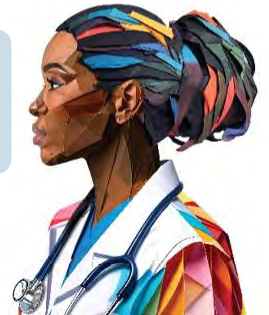
No individual data linking DPCC hours to certification outcomes or patient outcomes



No data linking DPCC hours to certification outcomes at the program level



DNP programs often exceed 750 hours on average and have ~10% higher pass rates –is the pass rate relate to hours?



Purpose



Do more DPCC hours improve certification outcomes?



Purpose: Estimate association between DPCC and first-time pass rates and domain scores after controlling for simulation, faculty-to-student ratio, telehealth hours



Methods

Program-level design and analytic strategy

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Study design and sample



Surveyed U.S. FNP & AGPCNP



Degrees: MS, PGC, DNP



Certification reports 2019-2023
ANCC, AANPCB





American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board
Educational Program Report

Printed: 02/09/2023

Program Code: **Type:** Educational Program
Institution:
Program Name:
Address:

City: **State:** **Zip:**
Country:

Staff

Name	Title	Role	Primary
	Director, FNP Program	NP Program/Graduate Director	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Senior Director, DNP Program	NP Program/Graduate Director	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Associate Dean, DNP Program	Dean	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Senior Academic Services Specialist	Contact	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Co-Director AGNP Primary Care Program	NP Program/Graduate Director	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Program Director, Assistant Professor	NP Program/Graduate Director	<input type="checkbox"/>

Exam History (A-GNP)

Degree	Exam Year	Cds	Atts	Atts 1st	Prog Avg	Natl Avg	Pass	Pct Pass	Pass 1st	Pct 1st	Assess			Diagnose			Plan			Evaluate		
											Items	Natl Avg	Prog Avg	Items	Natl Avg	Prog Avg	Items	Natl Avg	Prog Avg	Items	Natl Avg	Prog Avg
DNP	2022	11	11	11	641	609	11	100%	11	100%	45	34	38	34	26	27	32	25	26	24	19	18

Graduation Year Statistics (A-GNP)

Degree	Exam Year	Grad Year	Cds	Atts	Atts 1st	Pass	Pct Pass	Pass 1st	Pct 1st	Assess			Diagnose			Plan			Evaluate		
										Items	Natl Avg	Prog Avg	Items	Natl Avg	Prog Avg	Items	Natl Avg	Prog Avg	Items	Natl Avg	Prog Avg
DNP	2022	2022	10	10	10	10	100%	10	100%	45	35	38	34	26	26	32	25	25	24	19	18
DNP	2022	2021	1	1	1	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R	45	32	N/R	34	24	N/R	32	23	N/R	24	18	N/R



APRN PROGRAM Aggregate Data Report

Confidential, proprietary information enclosed



: graduates who sat for the Family Nurse Practitioner examination between 1/1/2022 and 12/31/2022

School Code

Table 1: Overall Pass Rate Data by Year of Graduation

Year of Graduation ^{1a}	Number of Candidates ^{1b}	Number of 1 st Time Candidates ^{1c}	School Pass Rate, 1 st Time Candidates ^{1d}	School Pass Rate ^{1e}
2020				
2021	1	1	100.00%	100.00%
2022	MSN		%	%
	Post-Grad DNP	2	2	100.00%
Totals	3	3	100.00%	100.00%

Table 1: Overall Pass Rate Data by Year of Graduation

^{1a} - **Year of Candidate Graduation:** (3 Yr. capture) - Each row in this column designates the 3 most recent graduation years captured in the aggregate data report. For example: the 2022 school aggregate data report will capture candidates who sat for the certification exam during the 2020 reporting year whose graduation years are from 2020, 2021 and 2022. The most recent graduation year will have a breakdown of candidates per graduate degree level -MSN, DNP, Post-Grad.

^{1b} - **Number of Candidates:** Each row under this column designates number of graduates both 1st time and repeat testers (per graduation year) who sat for the exam.

^{1c} - **Number of 1st Time Candidates:** Designates the number of 1st time test takers for that graduation year

^{1d} - **School Pass Rate 1st Time Candidates:** Designates the 1st time test takers % pass rate.

^{1e} - **School Pass Rate:** Designates the overall school pass rate (%) of all 1st time and repeat testers combined.

Table 2: Domain Level Performance, by Year of Graduation

2020			
Domain	Number of Items (150)	Overall ANCC Average Raw Score	School Average Raw Score
Assessment	31		
Diagnosis	39		
Clinical Management	65		
Professional Role	15		
2021			
Domain	Number of Items (150)	Overall ANCC Average Raw Score	School Average Raw Score
Assessment	31	21.89	26.00
Diagnosis	39	26.09	33.00
Clinical Management	65	46.54	58.00
Professional Role	15	10.34	14.00
2022			
Domain	Number of Items (150)	Overall ANCC Average Raw Score	School Average Raw Score
Assessment	31	23.76	24.00
Diagnosis	39	26.72	34.00
Clinical Management	65	50.82	55.00
Professional Role	15	11.25	13.50

Table 2: Domain Level Performance, by Year of Graduation

This table captures how each graduation group (first time and repeat test takers combined) performed in each domain of the specific APRN certification program, comparing the school's and ANCC's overall average raw scores and can be a reference point for evaluating your program curriculum and identifying its strengths and areas of opportunities for improvement.

Table 3: 3 Yr. Combined ANCC Pass Rate Data Benchmark Section

2020, 2021 & 2022 Combined ^{3a}	Overall ANCC Pass Rate, by 1 st Time Candidates ^{3b}	Overall ANCC Pass Rate ^{3c}
	86.29%	82.85%
	Total School Pass Rate, 1 st Time Candidates	Total School Pass Rate
	100.00%	100.00%

Table 3: 3 Yr. Combined ANCC Pass Rate Data Benchmark Section (How Your Schools Compare)

^{3a} - Previous 3 years combined

^{3b} - 3 Yr. ANCC Pass Rate by 1st Time candidates³; Compare this number to total (as listed in Table 1)

^{3c} - ANCC Pass Rate (combined 1st time test takers and repeat test takers); Compare this number to total (as listed in Table 1)

Minimum passing score on all ANCC certification examinations is a scaled score of 350 out of a possible maximum score of 500.



Survey

- Variables for each year:
 - degree type
 - DPCC hours
 - simulation hours
 - faculty-to-student ratio
 - telemedicine policies/hours



Analytic approach

- Descriptives by certifier, population focus, and degree type
- Correlation: Pearson r between DPCC hours and pass rates (stratified by population & certifier)
- Regression (FNP): Generalized estimating equations (logit) to account for clustering by school



Results

Descriptive findings, correlations, and regression

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Programs and reports

- 71 unique schools reported ANCC outcomes;
- 80 unique schools reported AANPCB outcomes;
- 769 Total program reports:
 - ANCC n=292
 - AANPCB n=477



Key Descriptives

Certifier	Population	First-time pass rate Mean %	DPCC hours Mean	Simulation hours Mean	Faculty:Student Mean
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ANCC (N=292)

AGPCNP	91.9	663	44.9	7
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FNP	93.3	671	43.5	7
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AANPCB (N=477)

AGPCNP	93.8	690	47.2	7
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FNP	85.8	694	43	7.3
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DPCC Hours by Degree Track (Mean)

Certifier	Focus	DNP	MS	PGC
ANCC	AGPCNP	821	616	642
ANCC	FNP	803	627	660
AANPCB	AGPCNP	818	614	650
AANPCB	FNP	802	647	621



Domains

Assess
Diagnose
Plan
Evaluate

Assessment
Diagnosis
Clinical Management
Professional Role
Planning
Implementation
Evaluation
Foundations of Independent Practice
Plan of Care
Professional Practice
Patient Assessment Process



Regression Analysis: DPCC Hours/FNP Pass Rates

Certifier	Outcome	Adjusted Odds Ratio (per additional DPCC hour)	95% CI	p-value
ANCC	100% pass rate	1.008	1.003–1.013	0.003
ANCC	≥80% pass rate	1.013	1.001–1.026	0.038
AANPCB	100% pass rate	1.008	1.006–1.011	<0.001
AANPCB	≥80% pass rate	1.010	1.005–1.014	0.004

Findings

Higher DPCC hours significantly associated with improved pass rates
Each additional clinical hour increased odds of a perfect pass rate by ~1%
Both 100% pass-rate and ≥80% pass-rate models significant

Key takeaway: Greater direct patient care clinical hours were consistently associated with stronger FNP certification outcomes across both certifying bodies.

Models adjusted for year, faculty-to-student ratio, and total simulation hours; these covariates were not statistically significant.



Regression Analysis: DPCC Hours /FNP Pass Rates

Adjusted odds ratios for programs requiring >750 DPCC hours vs. ≤750 hours

Certifier	100% pass rate AOR (95% CI)	p	≥80% pass rate AOR (95% CI)	p
ANCC	3.50 [0.88, 13.89]	.075	Not estimated	—
AANPCB	8.31 [3.87, 17.83]	<.001	4.74 [1.50, 14.95]	.008

ANCC

- Programs >750 DPCC hours had higher odds of a perfect pass rate
- Association was positive but did not reach statistical significance (p=.075)

AANPCB

- >750 DPCC hours strongly predicted both perfect and ≥80% pass rates
- Odds were ~8.3× for 100% pass rate and ~4.7× for ≥80% pass rate

Key takeaway: Requiring >750 direct patient care clinical hours was associated with stronger FNP certification outcomes, with the clearest effect in AANPCB models.

Adjusted for year, faculty-to-student ratio, and simulation hours. Faculty-to-student ratio and simulation hours were not significant in these models.

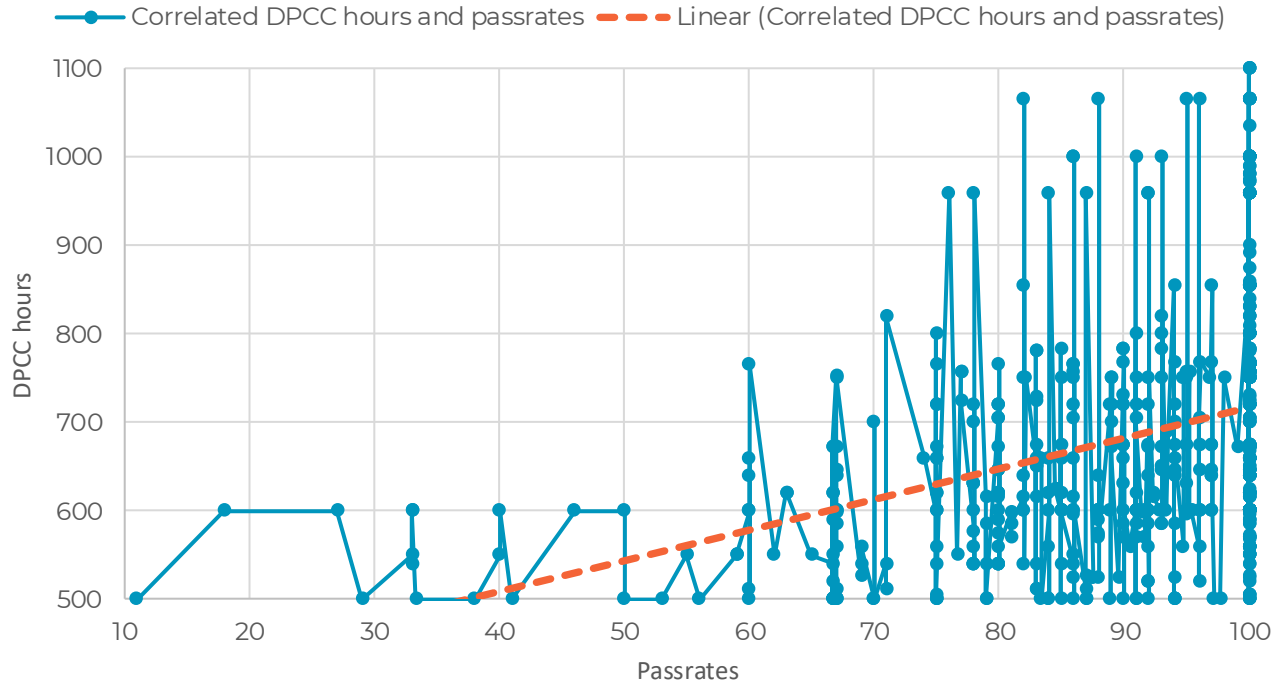


Correlation Between DPCC Hours and Certification Pass Rates

Population	Certifier	Pearson r (DPCC hours/pass rate)	p-value	N
AGPCNP	ANCC	0.3962	<0.001	53
	AANPCB	0.5216	<0.001	83
FNP	ANCC	0.2442	<0.001	138
	AANPCB	0.4045	<0.001	255



DPCC hours and certification pass rates combined FNP/AGPCNP- both certifiers



Faculty ratios and simulation

- Faculty-to-student ratio was not significantly associated with certification outcomes in adjusted models
- Total simulation hours were not significantly associated with outcomes; one model suggested only a minimal effect



Discussion

What the findings mean for NP education

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Interpretation



• DPCC correlated with improved school FNP and AGPCNP certification performance



• DPCC hours were a statistically significant predictor of school FNP certification performance



• Simulation is a valuable adjunct, but not a substitute for DPCC hours



Limitations

- Self-reported program characteristics may be subject to reporting variability
- Sample pass rates exceeded national averages → potential participation bias
- AGPCNP sample size limited adjusted modeling; regression focused on FNP



Future research

- Larger multi-focus samples; longitudinal designs that retain within-school variation
- Standardized clinical log data (case mix, hour types) to improve DPCC measurement
- Evaluate thresholds beyond 750 hours and interactions with telemedicine and simulation design
- Study clinical site quality and preceptor preparation as moderators of outcomes



Implications

Programs may need enhanced clinical partnerships and innovative preceptor models to sustain ≥ 750 hours

Master's programs may face the largest adjustment; many DNP tracks already exceed 750 hours

Inconsistent adoption of the 750-hour standard perpetuates variability in graduate readiness

Some states are specifying DPCC hours in licensure rules

Stronger alignment is needed across LACE stakeholders (licensure, accreditation, certification, education)



Take-home messages



Data limitations impact research on quality outcomes



School characteristics and examinee data should be collected in a reportable database



Transparent, standardized, mandatory outcome reporting can guide future research and help direct investments in clinical training capacity



Take-home messages



• Higher required DPCC hours are consistently associated with better NP certification performance



• A >750-hour threshold showed strong associations in AANPCB FNP data, with supportive trends in ANCC



• Simulation and faculty-to-student ratio did not independently predict outcomes in adjusted models



• DPCC hours should be treated as a core quality metric in NP programs



Questions

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