A. Learning Outcomes:

1. Provide advanced nursing care to improve patient and population health care outcomes in various direct and indirect settings.

2. Take leadership roles in the analysis, delivery, and management of nursing care and health care systems.

3. Provide evidence-based practice through the application of analytical methods, information systems technology, and clinical research.

4. Collaborate with interprofessional teams to meet the healthcare needs of culturally and ethnically diverse individuals and populations.

5. Act as change agent, leader, and advocate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of health care policy as it affects populations and the nursing profession.
The new UNLV School of Nursing Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program initiated the process of national accreditation with a self-study assessment report submitted in August, 2017 and accreditation site visitors on campus October 2-4, 2017. The final self-study report, including appendices, is attached. Please note that the self-study report includes assessment of the post-graduate Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate program that was assessed for accreditation concurrently, and verbiage about that certificate program is embedded in the assessment report. The final determination about the awarding of accreditation for the program is not expected from the CCNE Board of Commissioners until late spring, 2018.

A summary of the primary findings of the UNLV SON self-study, the site visit report, and actions implemented by the School of Nursing and DNP Program faculty as a result of the site visit report follows.

1. Self-Study Report: Primary Findings

A comprehensive review of the DNP program culminated with the preparation of the self-study report. The DNP program has two entry options, post-baccalaureate to DNP and post-master’s to DNP. Since the self-study report was submitted in August 2017, there were no graduates of the DNP program and no exit data to evaluate. Only two semesters of student evaluations of courses had been completed when the self-study report was submitted. Further, two of the three tracks (Advanced Practice-FNP and Academic Leadership) had admitted students and one track (Nurse Executive) was scheduled to admit the first students in fall semester 2017. Many of the courses for the program’s three tracks were new, and some courses had not yet been taught once when the self-study report was created. Rationale for curriculum design was based on the historical success of the University of Nevada DNP (UNDNP) program that had been accredited and was being phased out at the end of its initial five-year accreditation, and best practices as identified from evaluation of other successful, accredited DNP programs nationwide.

The self-assessment process supported the curricular, resources, and faculty preparation bases for the program. A DNP Program Community Advisory Committee had been established and meeting discussions (and meeting minutes) fully supported the design and implementation of the program. It was clear that the Academic Leadership track was at the forefront of curricular design for DNP programs and would face scrutiny by the accrediting body as CCNE was clear in their position that they did not accredit nursing education programs. It was the contention of the SON DNP faculty that leadership was the basis for the doctoral coursework that built on a foundation of academic pedagogy in that track, similar to the Advanced Practice leadership doctoral coursework building on the clinical family nurse practitioner (FNP) foundation of knowledge and skills.

One significant finding in preparation of the self-study report was that more clinical practicum hours were needed in the Nurse Executive track, post-baccalaureate
entry option. Three courses that had been designed as cognate electives in the original curricular design were converted to three sequential clinical practicums. This change was approved through all DNP faculty, SON, and Graduate Council committees prior to any student being admitted to that track.

2. Site Visitor’s Report: Primary Findings

The accreditation site visitors were on campus October 2-4, 2017. The report they presented on Oct. 4, 2017 indicated that three of the four Standards for accreditation had been met. One small concern was reported because the population focus, “Family”, did not appear in all documents, at all possible references, when discussing the Advanced Practice-FNP track in DNP Student Handbook, the SON website, and Graduate College Catalog. The site visitors reported that the Academic Leadership track presented a “Compliance Concern” and resulted in Standard III (Curriculum) not being met for the DNP program. The possibility of this outcome had been introduced the Friday before the site visitor’s arrival and should this outcome be realized, possible actions in response were discussed by the Dean, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and DNP Coordinator.

In all other aspects, the DNP Program was well received and determined to be in compliance with CCNE Accreditation Standards.

3. Actions Taken in Response to the Site Visitor’s Report

In response to the report provided by the accreditation site visitors on October 4, 2017, a decision was made to immediately close the Academic Leadership track, both post-baccalaureate and post-master’s entry options. Current students were contacted by the DNP Coordinator on October 6, 2017, and provided information on the need to close the track and a new plan of study to complete the DNP degree should they choose to transfer to either of the other two tracks, depending on prior education. Six students were affected and all chose to transfer to another track. The new plans of study were reviewed with them and in all cases the students were able to transfer to a new track without an increase in required credits for graduation or increased time required to meet graduation requirements. Potential students who had already applied for fall 2018 admission were contacted and told of the Academic Leadership track closure, and that they could withdraw their application or transfer to one of the other two tracks. To date, the Academic Leadership track is closed, all references to the track have been removed from the DNP Student Handbook, SON website, and UNLV website. The final stage of closure is currently being accomplished with approval from the DNP Faculty, SON committees to change the Graduate College catalog, omitting all reference to this track. The documents required for this change have been submitted for final approval to the Graduate Council Curriculum committee.

To address the concern about the population focus, “Family”, in the Advanced Practice-FNP track, all changes to the DNP Student Handbook and SON and UNLV websites have been made, and approvals for the change in title or verbiage, where appropriate, have been approved by the DNP Faculty, SON, and Graduate Council committees.