The average Purdue Global military student is awarded 54% of the credits needed for an associate's and 45% of the credits needed for a bachelor's. Most Commonly Searched: Most Commonly Searched: More nurses are making the move to earn a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing indicates. The growth of DNP programs has continued, with 40,834 students enrolling in 2021, up from 39,530 in 2020. The number of graduates in the same period increased to 10,086 from 9,158. The online DNP program helps nurses practice at the highest level of nursing by helping them: Angela Owens, department chair for the DNP program at Purdue Global, discussed what a DNP is, what to expect from the DNP degree, and how a DNP can benefit a nurse’s career. A DNP degree lays the groundwork for nurse leaders to improve patient outcomes with the latest new techniques. Nurses with a DNP are sought after for their leadership in clinical applications and are considered key players in the future of health care. However, Owens says not all DNP degree holders are nurse practitioners. “Nurse educators also hold DNPs, as well as nurses in leadership positions, nurse informaticists, and nurses in health care policy. So there's a wide range of areas where a nurse with a DNP can apply their skills,” she says. “The DNP prepares nurses to lead change from a systems level. The ultimate goal is to improve patient outcomes. That patient may be an individual or it may be a community,” Owens says. “The degree helps nurse leaders take a closer look at what's going on in their environment and see what they can do to encourage change, and who they can partner with to make it happen.” The DNP is intended to broaden career opportunities for nurses. With the degree, nurses possess the knowledge to influence health care outcomes through all levels, from organizational leadership to health policy implementation down to direct patient care. “I personally feel like the sky's the limit,” Owens says. >> Read: What Can You Do With a Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree? The importance of a DNP is growing. In 2018, the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties said the DNP should be the new entry-level preparation for nurse practitioners by 2025. The DNP is attractive because it is a terminal degree for nurses, the apex of their practice-based training in nursing. “For nurses, this is the doctorate for our practice,” Owens says. “What the DNP-prepared nurse does is take what has happened in research and pull that into application. So it's translational research; we're taking what has been studied and found to work and putting that into practice.” Owens says DNP nurses look for the best solutions to issues within health care. She says that’s why she chose to get a DNP herself.