Policy Discussion:
Healthcare workforce development — a focus on policy
Tuesday, 8.00 – 10.00 am
Kiva B-C
Tuesday, May 21, 2002

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“Caring for our Future”

It may seem like deja vu all over again: critical shortages of available workers in many health care occupations are affecting many Western states. In some fields, nursing in particular, the shortage of health care workers is at crisis levels. States are also facing shortages of medical aides, dental hygentists, billers and coders, laboratory personnel, pharmacists, physicians in some speciality areas and in many rural communities, and radiology technologists. And workforce projections in some fields indicate that the full brunt of the shortage has yet to occur. This session will address the factors that have led to the current crisis and will provide models of what some states and institutions are doing to solve health care labor shortages.

Moderator: Bruce D. Hamlett, executive director of the Commission on Higher Education in New Mexico and WICHE commissioner.

Bruce Hamlett was appointed executive director of the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education in 1993. He spent 18 years of his career with the California Postsecondary Education Commission and was a faculty member at the University of Santa Clara for eight years. He received his Ph.D. in international relations and government from the Claremont Graduate School. Appointed to the WICHE Commission in 1993, his term ends on December 31, 2004.

R. Philip Eaton became the interim vice president for health sciences at the University of New Mexico in 1998. He served as chief of the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism from 1975 to 1998 and was associate dean for research in the School of Medicine from 1996 to 1998. From 1990 to 1997, he served as the director of the Clinical Research Center. Eaton joined the University of New Mexico in 1968 and is currently a professor of medicine and professor of mathematics and statistics. He is a nationally recognized researcher in endocrinology, with particular interest in diabetes; his work with Sandia National Labs led to the invention of the first implantable, programmable insulin pump. He is a member of the Association of American Physicians and has authored more than 200 articles, book chapters, and books. Eaton received his B.A. in chemistry from the College of Wooster and his M.D. from the University of Chicago Medical School and completed an internship at Barnes Hospital, Washington University. Following his internship, Eaton held the rank of
lieutenant commander in the Public Health Service, serving at the National Heart Institute. After returning to Barnes Hospital to complete his medical residency, he completed a fellowship at Washington University.

Patricia Moritz is an associate professor and interim dean at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, School of Nursing. In addition, she is director of the National Center for Children, Families and Communities, an evidence-based practice research center for community/public health. She served as the associate dean for research from 1996-2001. She has been active in the assessment of intervention strategies and models of care and their outcomes for over 10 years. Prior to going to C.U., she was a scientist administrator at the National Institute of Nursing Research at NIH. She is currently conducting a statewide evaluation of the Oklahoma Children First Program, a legislatively mandated prenatal care program for first-time mothers with follow-up until the infant is 24 months of age. In addition, she has begun to examine factors related to self care and satisfaction with care among those with chronic conditions to determine effective processes of care and potential outcome measures for self-care strategies.

Annette E. Talbott has been the governor’s workforce policy coordinator in Oregon since 1999. She oversees the development and coordination of the state’s workforce policy and staffs the Oregon Workforce Investment Board. She is also leading the state board’s Health Care Sector Employment Initiative. Prior to taking her current position, she was the legislative coordinator for the Oregon Employment Dept. She also worked as an employment and labor lawyer in private practice and as committee counsel for numerous Oregon legislative committees, including the Senate Labor Committee. She is a graduate of Northwestern School of Law of Lewis & Clark College.
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“Oregon’s Health Care Sector Employment Initiative”

What is the initiative: The Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) is undertaking an employment initiative to alleviate skills and staffing shortages in the health care sector. This is an intensive approach to serving the workforce needs of a specific industry or group of related occupations. It involves building relationships, expertise, and understanding of the challenges of the industry. This sector has been selected as it is faced with high growth in jobs, high turnover and an aging workforce. The goal is to identify the demands of the industry that are not being met and to develop strategies to assure an adequate supply of skilled workers and job seekers who can be successful in these jobs and careers.

The Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB), a state-level board (with a private sector majority) that advises the governor on workforce issues, is undertaking the initiative in response to the increasing shortages in the health care industry. Some of the seven local workforce investment boards have begun initiatives to assist the health care industry; these efforts range in size and scope across the state.

The initiative is being undertaken by OWIB to assist and support the work of the workforce investment boards, workforce partners, and educators in helping to resolve issues that are commonly raised as barriers across the entire state (e.g., research and analysis, regulatory issues, curriculum development and articulation). This includes providing assistance to occupation specific initiatives, which are already underway, such as the Oregon Nursing Leadership Council’s Strategic Plan.

Which occupations are being targeted: Preliminary research indicates that the occupations listed below are in demand and will be difficult to fill unless innovative strategies are adopted by workforce partners, educators and employers to address: recruitment, retention, working conditions, wage and benefits issues, capacity expansion, and professional development opportunities. The sector initiative will select occupations along the wage continuum – from entry-level opportunities with mobility to jobs with self-sufficient wages. The initial list of targeted occupations includes: medical records clerk/office assistant, medical transcriptionists, medical interpreters, certified nursing assistants, certified medical assistants, radiologic technologists, licensed practical nurses, and registered nurses.

Who will be invited to be involved: Several stakeholder teams will be assembled to build high performance partnerships to coordinate this initiative including:

K-12
Community colleges
Oregon univ. system
Private colleges
Private career schools
Workforce boards
Workforce partners
State agencies

Labor market economists
Community based orgs.
Industry employers
Labor organizations
Professional assoc.
Health associations
Regulatory boards

How will it be organized: There will be a state steering committee made up of key stakeholders to help direct the initiative and review the work of three strategy teams. Three teams will be formed: (1) statewide employers, health care organizations, and labor organizations; (2) workforce professionals; and (3) educators. The first team will describe the needs of the industry, list factors contributing to the difficulties in meeting their needs and propose ways employers and others can minimize or address these factors. The other two teams will evaluate the current labor market; assess the employment and training
capacity (types, locations, cost, length, eligibility); identify target populations; look at promising practices – building career ladders and developing core curriculum and competencies; and list barriers to increasing the pool of skilled applicants.

When will the activities occur: Phase I, Fall 2001-Spring 2002. (a) Performing Sector Research and Analysis, including identifying overly restrictive regulatory requirements unnecessarily impeding the expansion of the applicant pool, exploring best practices, and convening stakeholder teams. (b) Drafting a Health Care Sector Strategic Action Plan developed by the Steering Committee and teams and holding a summit to get public comments on the plan. Phase II (implementation phase) will involve short-term and long-term goals from six months to one year and longer as necessary. This will include developing curriculum, designing programs, and building resource plans.

What are the anticipated outcomes: The overall goal is to increase the number of health care workers in the targeted occupations while providing these workers with increased training and career opportunities. Improvements are likely to occur in these areas:

Education/Workforce:
- Use of industry developed skill sets and standards
- Enhanced career advancement advice
- Compressed employment integrated training

Employers:
- Lower turnover
- Reduced overtime or use of temporaries
- Lower hiring costs
- Access to higher skilled workers
- Higher productivity

Workers/Students
- Health Care Employment Guide with career ladders to aid in selecting career opportunities
- Increased self-sufficiency
- More professional development opportunities

To achieve these results, the stakeholders must:
- Support state and local employer consortia committed to providing career paths and professional development opportunities for their workers and those in the sector.
- Leverage funds by building public-private sector partnerships.
- Re-engineer curriculum to meet industry needs and set core competencies.
- Modify unnecessarily restrictive regulations to increase capacity/expedite training.

How do I find out more about this initiative: If you are interested in this initiative, please contact Annette Talbott, the governor’s workforce policy coordinator in the Governor’s Office of Education and Workforce Policy at 503-378-3921, x 24.

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