

CHARLOTTE REGIONAL COMMUNITY FORUM ON GROWING THE HEALTH WORKFORCE

South Piedmont Community College Old Charlotte Highway Campus, NC
June 21, 2011

Meeting Summary

Challenge: Despite the most recent economic downturn, the healthcare industry still experienced job growth and was one of only a handful of industries to do so. According to the North Carolina Health Professions Data System, from 1999-2009 there was a 3 percent growth in North Carolina jobs and 46 percent were healthcare jobs. Because health service jobs are less vulnerable to outsourcing and economic recession, job growth in this sector is likely to continue, driven by demographic changes, population growth and insurance expansion.

Purpose: Bring new groups of stakeholders together to work collaboratively to identify new solutions to address workforce and economic challenges as it relates to the Southern NC healthcare workforce.

Attendees: Carol Allen, Rowan Cabarrus Community College; Elaine Bearden, Central Piedmont Community College; Linda Bolick, York Technical College; Mary Alice Bradley, South Piedmont Community College; Steven Burke, Novant Health; Keith Carnes, UNC Charlotte; Judy Carpenter, Union County JobLink Career Center; Vail Carter, Centralina Workforce Development Board; Shanna Coles, UNC Charlotte; Laura Conner, Charlotte AHEC; Donna Crook, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College; Gail Cummins, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College; Alisa Debnam, Council for Allied Health in North Carolina; Holly Gryder, UNC Charlotte; Beverly Haigler-Daly, ASCT Services, Inc.; Charita Harmon, CKOenterprise; Shelema Harris, Visalus Science; Ruth Hedgpeth, Central Piedmont Community College; Karen Hill, Central Piedmont Community College; David Hollars, Centralina Workforce Development Board; Janeene Humphrey, UNC Charlotte; Linda Martinson, Neldina Maynard, Employment Security Commission; Lawrence Mays, UNC Charlotte; Melinda McVadon, The McLynn Group LLC; Melicent Miller, Carolinas CARE Partnership; Vernease Miller, Pfeiffer University; Donna North, The McLynn Group LLC; Janet Otton, South Piedmont Community College; Jan Overman, Forsyth Technical Community College; Heidi Patzelt, CLINFOSYS, LLC; Ellen Sheppard, Carolinas College of Health Sciences; Patricia Simpson, Union County Health Department; Edward Smith, Gaston Regional Chamber; Dianne Snyder, Cabarrus College of Health Sciences; Connie Stack, Alamance Community College; Lori Starnes, South Piedmont Community College; Sharon Starr, Gaston College; Gabby Talahumbu, UNC Charlotte; Janice Terrell, Carolinas College of Health Sciences; Joel Vickers, Pfeiffer University; and Evelyn Zupko, Solstas Lab Partners. **Staff:** Justin Bright, Patrick Cronin, Sarah Langer, Marissa Weiss

Why health workforce? An overview of the state's healthcare challenges and opportunities was shared, as well as 2011 health workforce data from the North Carolina Health Professions Data System, administered by the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Assets: In 2007, Centralinas Workforce Development Board received a one-year planning grant to convene the Allied Health Regional Skills Partnership. Then, they received a two-year implementation grant that will expire December 31, 2011. As a result of this work, the Partnership worked to stage Allied Health Career Showcases across the region to gain interest in this field. The events boasted a total attendance of over 1,000 and moved 75 adults into training or employment. In addition, the Partnership launched Career Pathway Pilots for physical therapist assistants and those seeking an anesthesia technician certification. Thanks to the diligence of the Partnership, Central Piedmont Community College will begin classes for its occupational therapist assistant program in the spring semester of 2012. The Partnership has learned the importance of collaboration, developing projects based on employer need, and

piloting projects through continuing education. These lessons will lead the Partnership to expand and adapt existing models and use existing partnerships to assure that the region has the allied health resources necessary to meet the healthcare needs of its citizens.

Many of the participants shared that health information technology (HIT) jobs were a growing opportunity in the region. Dr. Lawrence Mays, Associate Professor at UNC C shared efforts to provide a Professional Science Masters in Health Informatics program (waiting UNC Board of Governors approval) as well as details on UNC-C's existing Professional Science Master's in Bioinformatics program. He defined informatics as it applies to healthcare and described these rigorous programs, both of which include a strong focus on internship opportunities. Dr. Mays projects that North Carolina will need 6,000 new Health Informatics jobs to meet the growing demand. Overall, he stressed that employers are looking for employees with an ability to think across disciplines, do quantitative work and who have leadership skills

In addition, the region provides workforce support through the Charlotte Area Health Education Center (AHEC). Laura Conner, Education Specialist in Allied & Public Health at Charlotte AHEC, serves as a career counselor retention specialist and discussed a new model program that meets potential students where they are at and coordinates with employers to support career advancement opportunities. This work has allowed students to overcome their fear of continuing education and rejoin the workforce.

Participants also learned of efforts by Rowan-Cabarrus Community College (RWCC) to enhance the success of its nontraditional students. Carol Allen, Director of Career Readiness Certification, highlighted the college's condensed career readiness program (3 hours a day for 8 weeks) that teaches the "soft skills" necessary in the workplace. Career Readiness Certification (www.workkeys.org) is being used as an assessment tool for potential students into the allied health programs and verifies workplace reading, math and locating information skills. This portable credential is also a valuable tool to assist employers in matching the right person with the job. The Career Readiness Certification. RWCC also has a Patient Services Technician program which trains students to become receptionists in the medical professions and that when paired with a NA2 certification makes them attractive to both hospitals and Doctor's offices.

Opportunities: Participants shared additional opportunities to grow the health workforce in the region. This involves including college and university Science Department Chairs in this conversation, as much of this content serves as building blocks for allied health careers. This also makes the case for stronger middle and high school programs. There is an anticipated need for allied health professionals, including an emerging need for Recreational Therapists and RT Assistants. On-site training and personal engagement will go a long way in getting new people into/moving through the pipeline, and mentoring and scholarships will help them stay in the programs. Providing online courses and clinical placements in rural areas as a means to retain graduates in these areas.

Barriers: Participants then identified barriers to growing the health workforce in the region. We learned that there is limited scope of awareness toward many allied health professions and the expectations around careers are not clearly known by students. This is supplemented by a lack of incentives for employers to create career pathway and career ladder programs. In addition, state funding for community colleges makes it difficult to offer collaborative programming; community colleges cannot compete with clinical salaries for faculty positions; many accreditation guidelines limit the number of new trainees; and there are gaps in student preparation, including literacy and soft skills. The overarching barriers identified by participants include:

1. Preparation Skills/Curriculum
2. Funding
3. Faculty recruitment and retention
4. Professional development
5. Marketing
6. Accreditation and clinical placements

The table below outlines the strategies for each of these barriers.

Strategies: After identifying barriers, participants worked collaboratively to identify strategies to overcome these barriers. **L**=Local, **S**=State, **N**=National

Preparation Skills/ Curriculum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Allied Health Regional Skills Partnership to encourage employers to profile their positions for entry into and advancement with in their position. L, S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop “Turn-Key” programs based on these profiles and have them certified. L, S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Allied Health Regional Skills Partnership to encourage employers to make use of CRC testing levels to evaluate potential employers and determine whether or not tuition reimbursement would be offered to existing employees to pursue advancement. L, S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage schools to partner with organizations to provide remediation to bring people up to “required” CRC levels for education. L, S
Funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene employers, workforce development boards and deans of Allied Health programs to explore and apply for foundation, government, and corporate grants. L, S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene hospital administration, workforce development boards and Presidents of community colleges to have a united voice to advocate for funding needs. L, S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit in-kind support from businesses for equipment and startup resources. The Charlotte region boasts a growing medical device cluster. L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redirect state funds to pay for faculty or program equipment. L, S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify champions with legislative influence and bring them together to form a common agenda. L, S, N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create interactive work groups where Physicians engage students in the field in problem solving (ex. Life-Long Learners program in Michigan). L, S
Faculty Recruitment and Retention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage graduates to move toward a terminal degree (i.e., faculty eligible degree/credentials). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), an accreditation body, is one place to begin this discussion. S, N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek ways to increase incentives for healthcare workers to move into faculty positions (e.g., flexible hours, time-off, etc.). L, S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate and communicate with politicians to provide additional funding for healthcare educators salaries. L, S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage the SACS to consider revising minimum requirements for community college faculty. S, N
Professional Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify individual barriers specific to the different health professions and develop professional development opportunities in response to these distinct needs. L, S, N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and identify successful models that can be replicated. L, S, N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the business case for employers to support/fund career ladder and lattice programs. L, S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate incentives for participants in a regional partnership that create employment pipelines. L, S, N

Accreditation and Clinical Placements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and bring together accrediting bodies for each and every allied health discipline to discuss alignment of some requirements. N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make application fee for credentialing more proportional to the discipline's income. N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide CEUs to continue current certification or licensure that is more affordable. S, N
Marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate students on the broad opportunities of their chosen profession career advancement opportunities. L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt personalized strategies with customized attention to market entry into the pipeline. L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate the public on the actual requirements of each profession through information sessions and by sending them/their job sites informative resources. L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create online assessment tools and provide online information sessions on the different healthcare professions (potentially funded by CFNC in partnership with allied health). S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market allied health workforce opportunities through billboards, career cruisers (i.e., a team of health professionals that travel to different sites and give demonstrations), and career fairs in middle and high schools. L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market allied health opportunities through career fairs in middle and high schools. L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed allied health curricula into guided studies at the middle and high school grades. L, S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use social media to market allied health workforce (e.g., ProNet, Associations, Facebook, videos, QR Tags and Twitter). L

Next steps: The state level strategies from all four community forums (Western NC, Southern NC, Northern NC, Charlotte Region) will be fed into a Working Group that will be convened this fall. Working Group members, consisting of representation from each Community Forum, will explore and analyze these strategies for consideration in a statewide policy agenda to grow the healthcare workforce in North Carolina. If you are interested in serving on the Working Group, please contact Sarah Langer at sarah_langer@ncsu.edu or (919)-513-2800.

It is our hope that there is renewed commitment among participants and other stakeholders to further explore advancing the local strategies to grow the health workforce. Please stay in touch and let us know if there is movement in any of these strategies, or efforts to grow the healthcare workforce in the region that stemmed from this Community Forum. We can share this information with others and highlight your successes and lessons learned.