



Educating Nurse Leaders for Service in Underserved Communities

Development of a plan for an entry-level MSN program to address California's nursing shortage and increase diversity in its nursing workforce

SUMMARY

The [Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science](#), in Los Angeles—recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a historically black graduate institution—launched the [Mervyn M. Dymally School of Nursing](#) in August 2010. The school aims to educate clinical nurse leaders who can address the needs of diverse, underserved communities.

Under this project, from 2008 through 2011, the school hired staff, developed programs leading to a Master of Science in Nursing degree, enrolled its first students, and forged partnerships with other area institutions.

Key Results

In a report to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and an interview for this report, project staff reported these key results:

- Hiring a dean and an ethnically and racially diverse faculty
- Developing a curriculum targeting underserved communities
- Enrolling some 230 students—most multilingual—in two tracks leading to a Master of Science in Nursing degree

Funding

RWJF supported this project from September 2008 through December 2011 with a grant of \$599,434. Gloria J. McNeal, PhD, founding dean of the school, was also an RWJF Executive Nurse Fellow (2007–2010).¹

¹ For more information on this program see the [Program Results Report](#).

CONTEXT

In 2007, U.S. hospitals reported some 116,000 vacancies for registered nurse positions, and the nation faces a shortage of 500,000 nurses by 2025, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Yet a lack of qualified faculty, classroom space, and sites for clinical training forces nursing schools to turn away 43,000 applicants to baccalaureate and graduate programs each year.

The nursing shortage is particularly acute in California. The state ranked 49th in the nation in RNs per capita in April 2005, with 539 per 100,000, compared with a national average of 798 per 100,000, according to the California Department of Finance.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported in 2008 that 69.3 percent of RNs in the Pacific region, which includes California, were white, 16 percent Asian, 6.7 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent black. A shortage of minority clinicians and faculty almost certainly contributes to disparities in health care, according to the project director.

RWJF's Interest in This Area

In 2010, RWJF and the Institute of Medicine released *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*,² which called for ensuring that 80 percent of the U.S. nursing workforce has baccalaureate degrees by 2020—up from about half in 2012. To implement the report's recommendations, RWJF launched *The Future of Nursing™: Campaign for Action*, a national program, in November 2010.

The initiative supports 48 state coalitions composed of health care professionals, business executives, academic and nonprofit leaders, policy-makers, and consumer advocates working to create a more highly educated nursing workforce. A second phase of the program will fund nine of the coalitions to ensure academic progression and employment opportunities for baccalaureate-level nurses.

Along with AARP and the AARP Foundation, RWJF also supports the [Center to Champion Nursing in America®](#). Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, MBA, president and CEO of RWJF, contributed a guest editorial on the growing need for nurses educated at the baccalaureate level and beyond to the March 2012 issue of *Nursing Outlook*.³

THE PROJECT

The [Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science](#) (CDU) launched the [Mervyn M. Dymally School of Nursing](#) (MMDSON) in August 2010. The school aims to educate clinical nurse leaders who can address the needs of diverse, underserved communities.

² Available [online](#).

³ Outline available [online](#).

Under this project, from 2008 through 2011, the school hired staff, developed programs leading to a Master of Science in Nursing degree, enrolled its first students, and forged partnerships with other area institutions.

RESULTS

In a report to RWJF and an interview, project staff reported that the MMDSON:

- **Hired a dean (January 2010) and an ethnically and racially diverse faculty.** The dean, Gloria J. McNeal, PhD, MSN, FAAN, was formerly associate dean of the school of nursing at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. The faculty of 24 includes 13 Blacks and seven Asians. Fourteen faculty members hold doctorates, and two are enrolled in doctoral programs.
- **Developed a curriculum targeting underserved communities.** "There's a diversity course in the core curriculum," said McNeal, who also served as project director, and students "have to develop a special project involving the underserved."
- **Enrolled some 230 students—most multilingual—in two tracks leading to a Master of Science in Nursing degree:**

- *A five-semester "entry-level" track* admits students who already hold a bachelor's degree in another field. After earning their master's degrees in nursing, these students are prepared to take the certification exam to become clinical nurse leaders. Clinical nurse leaders oversee the integration of care for groups of patients.

By the end of 2011, 62 students had enrolled in this track, 54 women and 8 men. Thirty-two of them were Black, 17 were Asian (including eight from underrepresented groups), four were Hispanic, four were native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and five were White. The first cohort graduated in June 2012.

- *A four-semester family nurse practitioner track*, which trains nurses to provide primary care for patients of all ages, and to track the impact of illnesses on the lives of both patients and families. By the end of 2011, 167 students had enrolled in this track. They included 126 women and 41 men, of whom 145 were Asian, 16 were native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, three were Black, and three were Latino.

"We established this track partly because of my involvement with *The Future of Nursing* report," McNeal said. "RWJF invited me to contribute to that report, which made several recommendations, including the need to prepare more nurses to become primary care providers."

- *A three-semester accelerated track* prepares students, who are graduates of foreign medical schools and licensed as registered nurses in the United States, to

assume the role of family nurse practitioners. Some 116 students had enrolled in this track by the end of 2011. The first cohort of 69 students graduated in December 2011.

- **Established agreements with six medical centers to provide clinical placements for entry-level students, and more than 60 preceptorships to enable family nurse practitioner students to work with physicians or nurses.** The school also formed a partnership with the UCLA School of Nursing to develop joint course offerings and exchange faculty and students.
- **Took the first steps toward accreditation.** In November 2011, the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) conducted a site visit. Until NLNAC renders a final decision, the school remains at Candidacy status. The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), which also decides on accreditation, conducted a site visit in February 2012, and submitted its preliminary report indicating that all standards had been met. A final decision regarding the accreditation status will be made by CCNE in October 2012.

Communications Results

- Time Warner Cable developed advertisements designed to recruit students to the Dymally School of Nursing, and ran them on cable channels (under a subcontract). The California Endowment also hired a crew to produce a recruiting [video](#), posted on the university's website and YouTube.
- Interviews with McNeal appeared in *AACN Bold Voices*, a monthly magazine of the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, and numerous news articles, and aired in a radio broadcast.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Recruiting applicants for a new nursing school is challenging.** Recruiting the first class proved difficult because the school was not yet accredited. The school is working to overcome that barrier (Project Director/McNeal)
2. **Use a focused approach to recruit potential students.** The cable ads were not effective in spurring applications to the entry-level program from people with bachelor's degrees. Partnerships with two- and four-year institutions to attract transfer students might have been more effective. (Project Director/McNeal)
3. **To create an online application system, work closely with the information technology department.** The school's online process helped convert "inquiries" from potential applicants into actual applications, and helped the nursing school's small staff process them efficiently. However, the system could not provide immediate automated responses, and some applicants expressed concern about the lack of a seamless interface between the school and PayPal.

Tapping the expertise of the IT department sooner might have allowed the nursing school to avoid these problems. (Project Director/McNeal)

4. **Plan ahead for the use of classroom space.** When enrollment reaches 300, the nursing school will exceed its space capacity. The school is considering using other available campus space. (Project Director/McNeal).
5. **Consider online education to expand access to nursing education.** To meet the needs of working health professionals, the school implemented an “executive model” for the family nurse practitioner curriculum. Students meet one weekend per month in a traditional classroom, and use an array of technologies to receive instruction during the remaining three weeks of the month. (Project Director/McNeal)

AFTERWARD

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Labor provided a \$1 million training grant to enable the school to enroll nurses with Bachelor of Science degrees in the family nurse practitioner curriculum. Partners in this program include Drew, the Los Angeles County Department of Health, and the Worker Education and Resource Center, a nonprofit organization in Los Angeles.

The nursing school is awaiting a decision from the National Institutes of Health on a joint application with the UCLA School of Nursing for a Bridges to the Doctorate Award. The funding would enable the school to create a direct pipeline for its graduates to enroll in UCLA's PhD programs. Confirmation has been received that the score for the grant proposal was favorable.

The CDU College of Science and Health is also developing a bachelor's program in life sciences, that will serve as a pipeline to prepare students to pursue graduate nursing degrees. To encourage more students to enroll in its programs, the school is also expanding outreach to social service providers, community colleges, and other universities.

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Grant ID #63704

Program area: Human Capital

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Communications or Promotions

Grantee Website

www.cdrewu.edu/school-of-nursing. Los Angeles: Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science.