

Grants

Multistate online nursing education aimed at increasing the number of baccalaureate level graduate nurses

Despite a severe and growing national nursing shortage, nursing schools turn away tens of thousands of qualified students each year due to an insufficient number of nurse faculty, clinical experience opportunities, preceptors and space. The Health Resources and Services Administration estimates that U.S. nursing schools must increase the number of graduates by 90 percent to adequately address the present and future shortage. Alternative educational options are imperative to combat the nursing shortage. Organizations such as Pricewaterhouse Coopers' Health Research Institute have recommended strategies to address factors that exacerbate the nursing shortage, including the development of more public-private partnerships and the use of technology as a training tool. Western Governors University (WGU), an accredited university granting online, competency-based degrees with a focus on working adults, has partnered with five national health care organizations to design, develop, test, and roll out the Multi-state Approach to the Preparation of Bachelors Level Registered Nurses (MAP-RN) program. The program seeks to increase the national pool of qualified nurses with baccalaureate degrees and to develop and disseminate a new online model for nursing education that can be implemented on a national scale. This innovative nationwide approach to preparing nurses consists of a multistate, accredited, online, accelerated, competency-based bachelor's degree program to prepare registered nurses. The distance-delivered program offers students the opportunity for both online learning and a clinical experience that involves both in person and simulation methodologies in one of five participating health care organizations. Students benefit from a multitude of online educational resources such as learning communities and learning modules. Mentors provide guidance and support to students throughout the program, while preceptors oversee and guide the clinical experiences. Student enrollment in the program begins in the second year of the grant and is projected to reach 3,250 students by conclusion of the three-year grant period. This program addresses a major contributing factor to the nursing shortage--lack of capacity in nursing schools--by educating students through self-taught online courses that do not require additional nursing faculty. The program is aligned with the Foundation's goal of ensuring that our nation has a sufficient, well-trained healthcare workforce. The MAP-RN program will be leveraged with funds from the U.S. Department of Labor, the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency, and five participating health care organizations including Cedars Sinai, Hospital Corporation of America, Kaiser Permanente, Tenet Healthcare Corporation and Universal Health System.

Amount Awarded \$725,000.00

Awarded on: 12/7/2007

Time frame: 1/1/2008 - 12/31/2010

Grant Number: 62520

GRANTEE

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