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Background

Glendale Adventist Medical Center (GAMC) implemented the Health Scholar Program in March 2012. The program immerses aspiring pre-health professionals, including college students, career transitioners and veterans, into both clinical and administrative settings within health systems. The program provides structured experiential education and hands-on professional development.

As stated in a previous article titled *Community Benefit Workforce and Economic Triple Bottom Line Investments*, “the experiences help to shape best-fit candidates for hire, and foster long-term loyalties to the organization as program participants progress through their careers.” By leveraging students from within the program, participating hospitals and health systems are positioned as the employer of choice within the community and at local colleges and universities. Employers also experience lower recruitment costs for certain positions.



Partnership with Human Resources

Over the past four years, GAMC has leveraged the Health Scholar program to achieve two goals:

1. Fill positions with best-fit, pre-screened talent. Hiring supervisors have an opportunity to “try-before-they-buy” as Health Scholars demonstrate and build their skills, work ethic, and culture fit over the course of at minimum 280-hours in the program alongside the hospital staff.
2. Support clinical and administrative staff to improve staff engagement. Health Scholars are well-trained extra sets of hands and eyes in clinical and administrative areas that provide significant support to staff. Especially in high-volume patient-care areas, Scholars can assist with comfort care activities such as ambulating, feeding, and discharging patients.

When positions need to be filled, Recruiters find the Health Scholar cohort an ideal resource because the students are already familiar with the organization’s culture, mission and values, have proven

they integrate well with current team members, and demonstrated excellence in the organization's approach to patient care.

Developing Best-fit Candidates

The Health Scholar Program fosters a direct and mutually beneficial relationship between GAMC and talent from over 15 colleges and universities within a 15-mile radius of the hospital. The program promotes cultural responsiveness by recruiting students from the local community, specifically those fluent in Armenian to reflect the patient demographic.

With GAMC serving a large population of Armenian patients, it is critical that the program commits to engaging Armenian speaking Scholars to further support the staff in providing culturally responsive care. Of the 350 Scholars at GAMC, 81% are self-declared bilingual and 25% specifically speak Armenian. The Scholars are therefore able to better engage patients and family members to provide care in a culturally competent and patient-centered manner. The long-term vision is that the Scholars will jumpstart their careers with the hospital in entry-level positions or continue in their education and stay connected with the organization as they become licensed health care professionals.

Selection, Onboarding & Training Process

Each year, thousands of pre-health professionals apply to the Health Scholar Program across our 17 sites in Southern California and Washington State to demonstrate their desire to learn and contribute their skillset in a patient-centered, team-based environment. A subset of the applicants are invited to an interview and an even smaller cohort is invited to Health Scholar training. This in-depth screening ensures a strong, compassionate candidates joins our patient care teams. Once this cohort of diverse students are identified, their competencies are developed through a highly structured, hands-on training. The initial core curriculum includes 30-hours of didactic and practical skills training related to patient experience, patient safety, HIPAA confidentiality, cultural competency and much more. Continuing education is provided through additional meetings, workshops, and department-specific training each time Scholars engage with a new area of the organization. The students also benefit through mentorship from frontline staff, who take pride in developing the next generation of health care providers.

Additionally, Scholars interested in leadership development have the opportunity to be a part of the leadership team, which cultivates management, public speaking, and professional skills. These Scholars are mentored and guided by our on-site program managers, and are equipped to enter the workforce as more competitive candidates.

Testimonial

“The Health Scholar Program has done a great job in the selection and training process of the new additions of professionals to their team. What is particularly remarkable about the program is its emphasis on matching the candidates with the right skill set that best-fit the departments. This is a group of bright, young professionals who are eager to learn and have great potential to grow in the healthcare industry with their passion at work. They are well prepared to assist in various types of work in the healthcare setting with an orientation program that is aligned with both regulatory requirements and the hospital's internal process.”

– Zoe Chen, GAMC's Director of Risk Management & Accreditation

Outcomes

Over the past four years, GAMC has employed over forty Health Scholars across areas from business support to nursing. Notably, there were seven registered nurses, four student nurses and two certified nursing assistants hired in 2015, which is a six-fold increase from 2012.

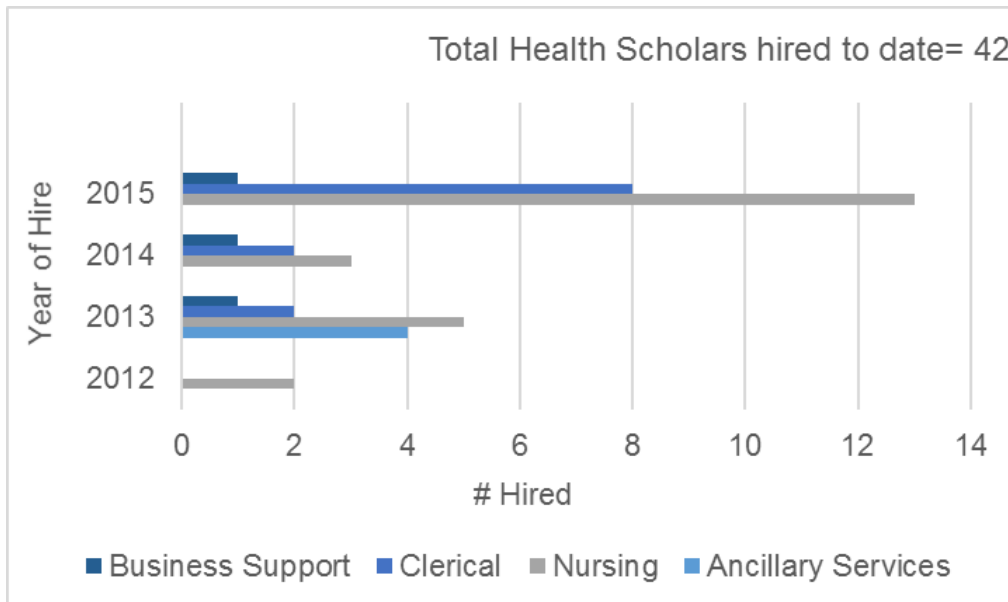


Figure 1. Number of Health Scholars hired at GAMC from March 2012- to date.

Conclusion

GAMC has uniquely leveraged the pool of highly-skilled, patient experience driven talent from the Health Scholar program for entry-level positions. Next steps will be to increase recruitment of Health Scholars by (1) developing a proactive, rather than reactive recruitment strategy that addresses their strategic human capital needs and provides a future workforce that is competent to care for patients in their community and (2) evaluating the retention and advancement of the existing hires.

