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Not-for-profit hospitals and health systems can achieve a ‘win-win-win’ triple bottom line with community benefit investments that focus on the diverse youth in their communities. Our COPE Health Scholars talent development pipeline programs reach deep into the communities surrounding our partner health systems and provide economic opportunities to the diverse youth in those areas. The programs put actions behind the many words lamenting the gap between the identified community workforce needs and talent recruitment, particularly culturally diverse workers.

Since the passage of the ACA, every non-profit hospital is now required to report that it has conducted a community health needs assessment (CHNA) and adopted an implementation strategy to address the identified needs of the community it serves.ⁱ Implementation of health reform means fewer uninsured patients, and thus fewer community benefit dollars needed for charity care. This opens the door for hospitals to invest more significantly in activities that impact community health improvement, prevention, education and economic opportunity. A more comprehensive approach to community health recognizes the need to partner with others in the community, and to invest in efforts that address the social determinants of health.

Non-profit hospitals and health systems already do much for their communities. Providing access to direct health care services at the time of need is a critical community benefit. But it is clear that factors other than medical care play important roles in shaping individual and community health. Income, culture, education and employment, in particular, are known to be among the most important social factors that influence health.ⁱⁱ

Many of our partners want to provide an impact that can be touched and felt within the community, one which raises the economic outlook for community residents. They are seeking opportunities that enhance the sense of partnership and improve brand identification of the hospital or health system – a win-win-win proposition. The COPE Health Scholars pipeline programs fulfill that role, creating direct and indirect economic opportunity, supporting patient-centered care in all care settings and extending the role and reputation of the hospital into the community. Our partners are able to count not just their program investment, but also staff time, dedicated training resources, space and students impacted toward their community benefit contribution.

While many health workforce initiatives increasingly partner with the community with a goal of systemic change, the difficulty they commonly face is an inability to achieve large-scale ‘boots on the ground’ operations that prove

their concept, replicability and sustainability over time. The COPE Health Scholars programs allow health systems to open the organization to hundreds of the community's diverse student population, who are interested in health and health professions, thereby building a pipeline of best-fit diverse talent for recruitment.

Each year, COPE Health Scholars courses have provided thousands of individuals with experiences that focus and mold a passion for patient-centered, team-based care, and which uniquely position them to access exciting health care careers. Currently, more than 4,000 students participate annually at 20 different hospitals or health systems, while also earning a certificate through the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. There are more than 26,000 alumni over our 15 years of operation.

COPE Health Scholars consists of a turn-key set of programs that help health systems home-grow their workforces from within their communities. *Health Scholar* is designed for college-age students and veterans, *Junior Health Scholar* for high-school age students and *Care Coordination Scholar* for those who wish to learn skills in patient navigation. Additionally, *Licensed Nurse Scholar* assists recent RN graduates to gain critical experience in difficult job markets. 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. Many will seek to begin their careers with the health system or choose to return to work at their host facilities as experienced health care professionals. Further, COPE Connect is an alumni community of more than 26,000 health professionals and pre-health professionals who support a culture of continual learning and professional development of community health care leaders.

Back to the triple bottom line of COPE Health Scholars investments - the first 'win' is for those community youth who often lack traditional connections that lead to advancement in educational and work opportunities. Every young person touched by our partner health systems is given the chance to participate in patient care, to learn from health care professionals and to be mentored into the right educational and vocational opportunities. Students learn side-by-side with clinical professionals in the inpatient and ambulatory care settings to provide exceptional patient care and learn if clinical care is the right path for them.

Second, these young people act as patient ambassadors both on the floors of the hospitals, but also in their own communities, disseminating the messages of health, education, employment opportunity, social cohesion and culture. Their exposure to the strong messaging on health and prevention creates a ripple effect across the community as they interact with their own families and friends. Through the health education of hundreds of local students, the health system expands its capacity to address the upstream determinants of health for patients, members and the community. The Care Coordination Scholars serve in community ambulatory care settings, enabling hospitals to focus on community benefit investments that can improve health and access to care, and reduce hospital readmissions and the unnecessary use of emergency departments.

The third win is for the health system, which realizes the immediate benefit of increased support on the hospital units to engage with patients, as well as the longer term benefits of 'home-growing' best-fit candidates for future job openings. The programs align with the hospital's overall need to excel in a changing health care environment. The COPE Health Scholars programs position the health system as an economic revitalization anchor in the community by recruiting local students into workforce development programs, with even one more win – a closer partnership with health system unions, that see new entrants and potential members of the hospital workforce.

COPE Health Solutions can partner with you to implement a COPE Health Scholars workforce development pipeline to enhance access to education and economic opportunity for the young talent in your community, and to achieve a triple bottom line for your community benefit investments. Please go to our website to learn more or give us a call directly at 213-259-0245.

ⁱ IRS/Treasury oversight of community benefits, first articulated in 1969, specified that a hospital seeking exemption from federal taxation must demonstrate that it promotes the health of “a class of persons that is broad enough to benefit the community. States also have established standards, under most state laws not-for-profit hospitals must justify their continuing tax exemption as charitable institutions by demonstrating that they are providing a community benefit. The most significant societal imperative related to hospitals is the persistent and system-wide problem of access to care for the uninsured — free charity care to indigent patients and community needs for disease prevention and improvement of health status.

ⁱⁱ RWJF, 2011a; RWJF, 2011b; Center on Society and Health, 2014.

