

Leadership Diversity Initiatives at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare Southeast Wisconsin

Background

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare is a large health care provider in Southeast Wisconsin with more than 10,000 associates and affiliations with more than 1,300 physicians. The health care system's patient population is diverse racially, ethnically and linguistically. To attain its goal of having an inclusive and diverse workforce that reflects its patient population, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare has established several key strategies.

Intervention

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare's executive diversity strategy team was founded in 2008. This team is co-chaired by the CEO and the vice president of diversity and inclusion strategies, and meets quarterly to provide oversight in achieving the health care system's diversity strategic plan.

To support a commitment to have a diverse leadership and professional staff, the executive diversity strategy team implemented a diversity recruitment and retention scorecard. This quarterly scorecard is designed to monitor several metrics: opportunities to hire staff, current leadership and professional workforce demographics, number of promotions, and external hires and terminations. The scorecard has site-specific workforce-percentage "increase" goals and helps the organization focus on strategies to recruit, hire and retain a diverse workforce that mirrors the community. Since it began using the diversity recruitment and retention scorecard, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare has developed several systemwide initiatives aimed to diversify its workforce.

One such initiative is the Minorities Advancing in Nursing Scholars Program. This program was created to identify bilingual nurses and nurses of color. In partnership with area colleges and universities, the program recruits nursing students of color during their senior year of college. Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare partners with the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board to provide funding for these student scholarships. The scholarship covers books, tuition, the national licensure exam, uniforms and other items to support a student in successfully attaining a bachelor's degree. Students work as part-time nurse interns while completing their final year of college.

While employed with Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare, the nurse interns gain valuable hands-on experience providing care to patients. An established Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare nurse is assigned to mentor each intern, helping the interns succeed and work through any issues that affect job performance and successful completion of their nursing education. The scholarship provides significant support to these students, many of whom are working more than one job to pay for tuition, books and other needs.

Results

The diversity recruitment and retention scorecard is a helpful tool as Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare works to diversify its workforce. Each region of the system has its own specific goals, and these goals are reported on a systemwide scorecard. One systemwide goal is to increase the number of racially and ethnically diverse leaders by 3 percent over a three-year period. Last year, the health care system increased the number of racially and ethnically diverse leaders by 9 percent. Achieving the scorecard's workforce-percentage "increase" goals is tied to executive compensation, and the goals are also part of the health care system's strategic plan. The executive diversity strategy

team reviews performance on scorecard measures quarterly, and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare's leadership team discusses these metrics in forums, at board meetings and in other venues across the health care system. Thus, goals and performance remain visible and at the forefront for leadership.

Since the launch of the Minorities Advancing in Nursing Scholars Program in 2012, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare has hired 16 nurse interns for full-time and part-time RN positions, and retained 13 of these nurses within the system. The program has been successful in diversifying the nursing workforce and promoting collaboration between the health care system, workforce investment board and academic partners at local colleges and universities.

Lessons Learned

- Diversity scorecards are useful tools for monitoring the makeup of the workforce as well as progress on internal goals for recruitment, hiring and retention.
- Partnering with academic institutions provides valuable opportunities for students from underrepresented groups to gain experience in the health care field.

Contact Information

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