

**TO: Workforce Investment Board
Executive Committee**

Date: 12/02/02

FROM: WIB Staff

For Action
 For Information
 Meeting Notes

SUBJECT: Submission of Diversity in Health Professions Grant to the California Wellness Foundation

PROPOSED MOTION:

The WIB Executive Committee authorize the Department of Workforce Investment to prepare and submit the application.

DISCUSSION:

The Department of Workforce Investment intends to request \$90,000 over a three year period to implement a program designed to ensure the attraction and retention of people of color and other underrepresented groups to the LVN and RN programs at Merced College. This will be accomplished through a multi-faceted approach to provide students with the keys to success.

The goals of this proposed program are to attract diverse students to the program and to ensure that minority students who may otherwise be at-risk for dropping out of the program receive increased support. This program will produce not only a greater number of nurses of color, but greater numbers of nurses overall to address the severe nursing shortage in Merced County .

ATTACHMENTS: Executive Summary

Executive Summary
Diversity in Health Professions Grant Proposal
to the California Wellness Foundation

The Merced County Department of Workforce Investment (WI) is the administrative and fiscal entity for the Merced County Workforce Investment Board. The agency offers employment and training services for people who are out of work, laid off, have a low income or receive financial help, such as food stamps, welfare, or unemployment insurance payments. WI works closely with Merced College to ensure that well-designed training opportunities are available for WI clients and all County residents, including opportunities in the health professions. Merced College is a Public Community College serving California's diverse and economically challenged Central Valley. At present, a number of WI clients are enrolled in the Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) and Registered Nursing (RN) programs at Merced College.

Currently, the students enrolled in the Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) and Registered Nursing (RN) programs at Merced College have the following demographic characteristics: 45% white, 17% Hispanic, 19% Asian, 5% African American, 14% other, and 9% male. While these statistics compare favorably to the demographics of nurses statewide (82% white, 4% Hispanic, 9% Asian, 4% African American, and 7% male), there remains a disparity between the ethnic breakdown of local nursing students and the local overall population. In addition, over the past five academic years, of the students who enroll but fail to complete the programs, an average of 73% have been from underrepresented groups. Every year, an average of 23% of the students enrolled in the LVN and RN programs dropout, sometimes due to academic difficulties, other times due to financial, familial, and social hardships. Current dropout statistics illustrate that students of color and students for whom English is a second language are disproportionately affected by these factors. Considering that WI clients enrolled in Merced College programs are equally, if not more, susceptible to the hardships associated with attrition, it is vital that WI and Merced College work together to find innovative solutions to the dropout problem.

The Merced County Department of Workforce Investment intends to request \$90,000 from the California Wellness Foundation to implement a program designed to ensure the attraction and retention of people of color and other underrepresented groups to the LVN and RN programs at Merced College. This will be accomplished through a multi-faceted approach to provide students with the keys to success. Specifically, the plan proposes to 1) increase recruitment efforts through the implementation of a Nursing Ambassador program, through which diverse members of the nursing community will make presentations to local youth in schools and to WI clients at the local One-Stop Career Centers to inspire their interest in the nursing profession; 2) Increase retention efforts by employing a part-time Success Monitor to provide intensive counseling and one-on-one assistance to nursing students; and 3) Improve program completion rates by providing modest stipends to students to reduce the likelihood of attrition due to financial hardship.

The goals of this proposed program are two-fold: to attract diverse students to the program, and to ensure that minority students who may otherwise be at-risk for dropping out of the program receive increased support. This program will produce not only a greater number of nurses of color, but greater numbers of nurses overall. Such a change is vital for addressing the severe nursing shortage in Merced County and throughout the state.