

Executive Summary of Minutes
EMPLOYER STRATEGIES WORK GROUP
April 17, 2006

- I) The *SWIFT* Initiative addresses the shortage of nurse educators in Wisconsin by proposing novel ways for health care employers, schools of nursing, workforce development initiatives, and other stakeholders in the health care system to work together to assist candidates to complete graduate education in nursing in order to become educators.
 - A) One of the primary goals is to increase the number of nurse educators in the state by 120, and it is intended that 20% of these candidates be from underrepresented minority groups.
 - B) Three work groups will guide and oversee the work in this initiative – a Steering Committee, the Educational Strategies Work Group, and the Employer Strategies Work Group
 - C) Except for a small group of 20 nurse educator candidates who already have masters degrees as advanced nurse practitioners, the *SWIFT* grant does not pay for tuition support for candidates to become nurse educators. Employers will provide the largest amount of support, with some funds being contributed by local Workforce Development Boards.
 - D) The primary methods to fast-track candidates through their masters education include expert program advisement, careful sequencing of coursework, and focusing support resources so that candidates can afford to go to school full-time.

- II) Candidate selection is a complex process that includes both university-based admission criteria and individual employer selection criteria.
 - A) The university admission criteria are established and available to candidates and employers.
 - B) The employers must develop their own specific candidate selection criteria.
 - C) Once candidates are evaluated as being acceptable candidates for graduate education, the employers and *SWIFT* staff will collaborate on the final selection
 - D) We are working toward having the first group of *SWIFT* candidates enrolled in the masters program by January, 2007

- III) Formal agreements are being developed to clarify expectations between key partner entities within the *SWIFT* Initiative.
 - A) The first of these is a letter of agreement between the UW Board of Regents and each employer sponsoring *SWIFT* candidates specifying the level and payment method of tuition support, additional paid time off, and the employer's agreement to facilitate the candidate working at least part-time as a nurse educator upon completing the masters degree.

- B) In addition, employers are encouraged to develop letters of agreement for their employees who become *SWIFT* candidates declaring their intentions to continue to work for the employer for a specific period of time after completing their studies, and their obligation to pay back some or all of the financial support received if they should leave their employer or drop out of their masters program.

IV) Summary of *SWIFT* deliverables to employers

- A) Flow chart depicting candidate identification process
- B) Updated/enhanced educational program information tables
- C) Draft employer-candidates contract template
- D) Employer template for budgeting *SWIFT* costs
- E) Enhanced website information on program details
- F) Specific letters of agreement between the employers and the UW Board of Regents
- G) A timeline (working backwards) for when things need to be done in order to get started by January 2007
- H) Send minutes to both attendees and those unable to come before next meeting

V) Next meeting

- A) Will be held on a Monday in July at Meriter Hospital

Minutes
EMPLOYER STRATEGIES WORK GROUP
April 17, 2006, 10:00 am-3:00pm
Meriter Hospital, Madison, WI

- I) Call to order and introductions
 - A) Meeting was called to order by Jo Ann Appleyard at 10:15. Introductions were done.
 - B) Those present include: Denice Dorpat and Jennifer Tryba from Aspirus Wausau Hospital; Bob Herdrich and Andrea Lindsay from Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare; Barb Pinekenstein and Joan Jacobsen from Meriter Hospital; Patricia Volkert and Sue Katz from Aurora Health Care; Sally Lundeen, Sue Dean-Baar, Jo Ann Appleyard, and Jessica Roberts from UW-Milwaukee.

- II) SWIFT Nurse Educator overview and progress to date
 - A) Generic brochure has just been finalized and printed. All present at the meeting received copies to bring back with them.
 - B) We are targeting three groups and are recruiting 120 candidates to become nurse educators
 - 1) Nurses with associate and baccalaureate degrees
 - 2) People with bachelors degrees in other fields who want to be nurses and want to be nurse educators
 - 3) Twenty candidates will have masters degrees in nursing but will be provided tuition to complete a Health Professional Education Certificate
 - C) Other *SWIFT* Initiative goals
 - 1) Enhance the current partnership among UW Schools of Nursing and Technical College programs
 - 2) Recruit 20% of the candidates from underrepresented minority groups.
 - 3) Implement and evaluate long term partnerships among employers, nursing education programs, and local Workforce Development Boards
 - 4) Establish a system for stabilizing the nursing workforce in Wisconsin through consistent collection and analysis of nursing workforce data
 - 5) Disseminate information about the *SWIFT* Initiative to others to serve as a national model
 - D) Additional information and discussion related to *SWIFT*
 - 1) All nursing schools are currently above capacity in terms of qualified candidate applications with waiting lists. A major reason for this is a shortage of faculty, which will become even worse in the next 20 years.

- 2) We are asking employers to step up and help keep the nursing pipeline moving.
 - (1) How do we pick the best candidates to become nurse educators?
 - (2) How do we come up with innovative ways to help them through their masters programs so they can teach, as well as remain in practice?
 - 3) Workforce Development Boards (WDBs)
 - (1) Support from this group was essential to the success in getting *SWIFT* funded.
 - (2) WDBs will help with in-kind funding for the students. Additional help for books, transportation, child care, etc. can be awarded. The amount and process of support will vary from board to board.
 - (3) The *SWIFT* grant will provide up to \$250,000 to participating WDBs to implement this additional support to candidates.
 - 4) Statewide partnerships with health care employers
 - (1) Essential to ensure an on-going way to provide nurses and nurse educators
 - (2) There have been initiatives to address the nursing shortage, but not many have addressed the nursing educator shortage.
 - (3) Employer Workgroup would like a list of those that have agreed to participate in *SWIFT*. Additional participants include:
 - (a) A long-term care facility near Racine
 - (b) A nurse staffing agency in Milwaukee
 - (4) A big issue may not be getting people interested but determining how many people each employer can support through this.
 - (5) Covenant Cohort is possibly going to be transferred over to the *SWIFT* Initiative
 - (6) We are working with rural employers through the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative to develop ways they may be able to sponsor candidates.
 - 5) The Wisconsin Center for Nursing (WCN) will have a sub-contract through the *SWIFT* grant to implement a long-term process for maintaining nursing workforce data.
 - 6) As employers actually sign letters of agreement to participate in *SWIFT*, their names will be included on the *SWIFT* website.
- E) Where we are with our goal of admitting 120 into the program
- 1) There is an online 15 credit (5 course) certificate preparing post-baccalaureate students in education for health professionals (HPEC). The grant will pay for 20 nurses with masters degrees in nursing to complete this certificate. The first course starts on April 24. We currently have 12 people who are signed on, most of whom live and work in the Milwaukee area.
 - (1) There are additional slots for nurses from other regions in the state, which we will fill over the next several weeks. These students will take begin with the second course starting in June, and will take the first course next summer.
 - (2) Jess will mail out a stack of HPEC brochures to each of those who are here.

- (3) There is no employer assistance required here. However, there is a 1-2 year commitment of the student to be an educator. Students do not have to teach full-time. This can be a joint-appointment situation.
- F) The structure of this initiative
- 1) Two strategic work groups
 - (1) Educational Strategies Work Group – Include 4 reps from each UW school of nursing (Madison, Milwaukee, Oshkosh, and Eau Claire) and 4 reps from the Technical college system. The group’s initial meeting was on February 13 and the next meeting is scheduled for June 14.
 - (a) Charge of Educational Strategies Work Group
 - (i) Serve as expert advisory group for achieving the educational goals of the *SWIFT* Initiative
 - (ii) Review graduate curricula to identify opportunities for accelerating students through program requirements
 - (iii) Develop strategies for partnership with employers to facilitate the joint employment of *SWIFT* candidates upon completion of their masters degrees
 - (2) Employer Strategies Workgroup – This group will be more fluid in membership. Those here today will be core members. We will also add representatives from long term care and rural hospitals in order to develop innovative ways to provide nurse educators throughout the state.
 - (a) The purpose is to get broad representation in order to assess and propose solutions for all the different issues that employers will face in sponsoring *SWIFT* candidates.
 - 2) Steering Committee – Broad group of stakeholders who will look at the project as a whole and provide advice about strategic directions and activities. This group will hold its initial meeting on June 19.
- G) Questions from the Work Group
- 1) How will the masters programs be fast-tracked?
 - (1) The participating UW schools will not be developing new curricula.
 - (2) They are developing formats, sequencing, and resources in order for students to complete their masters degrees faster. With these elements it is projected that *SWIFT* candidates with nursing baccalaureate degrees will be able to complete the programs in two years while still working for their employers.
 - (3) *SWIFT* candidates who are nurses without baccalaureate degrees will probably complete their masters degrees in 2 1/2 to 3 years. This process depends on program advisors focusing on assessing the coursework already completed by the students and finding ways to accelerate them through their baccalaureate degrees.
 - (4) For non-nurse candidates with baccalaureates in other fields, the Direct Entry Masters (DEM) program is available at UW-Milwaukee. This program requires full-time study year-round without working for the first year and a half. Candidates will complete the program in 27 months.
 - 2) What about practice doctorates?

- (1) These will eventually replace our masters-based advanced practice degrees.
- (2) If candidates are concerned about this, they need to be told that these new programs are still under development and the masters degree will be sufficient for nurse educators for several more years, if not indefinitely.

III) Candidate selection process

- A) UW graduate nursing program admission requirements distributed
 - 1) Since a baccalaureate degree is required for admission into graduate programs, candidates with ADN or diploma nursing preparation will apply as they complete the baccalaureate. Grade point average (GPA) requirements for all graduate programs are a minimum of 2.75, whereas there is a 2.5 minimum for admission to the online UW BSN completion program.
 - 2) We will have educational program information on the *SWIFT* website under “prospective students” that will be updated quarterly, or as needed.
 - 3) All of the four UW programs have an RN to Masters program
 - (1) Oshkosh is in the process of being approved.
 - (2) All except the capstone clinical practicum class can be completed online.
 - (3) The clinical practicum course is not online. However, some programs waive this course requirement for students in the RN to masters track.
 - 4) Who makes the decisions for candidate selection?
 - (1) There should be at least a two-tier process for making these decisions
 - (2) Interested candidates must first be screened to determine their eligibility for graduate nursing programs
 - (3) Once eligibility has been verified, criteria developed by the individual institution may be applied
 - 5) It is strongly recommended that the employers work with the UW school in their region in the candidate selection process.
- B) Should preference be given to candidates that will go to school full-time over part-time?
 - 1) YES! This will allow them to get through the program as quickly as possible.
 - 2) We expect that all *SWIFT* candidates will be at least part-time workers. This is where the employer compensated time commitment comes in. If the student has the time to take the coursework, then they will be more likely to complete the program on a timely basis. The requirements will vary based on what program the student enrolls in and whether or not they already have a baccalaureate degree.
- C) There is also a preference to support candidates from minority and/or underrepresented groups.
 - 1) Here we are referring to racial/ethnic minority status rather than gender minority (males)
 - 2) Minority candidates will still have to meet all requirements
 - (1) Sometimes there can be a probationary admission status, but it’s not guaranteed these candidates can actually succeed in completing the program. A probationary candidate has to be part-time.
- D) Discussion of candidate selection criteria and complicating issues

- 1) The criteria must address the likelihood that candidates will be successful in a 3 year commitment
 - 2) Candidates must meet graduate admission requirements
 - 3) Criteria may vary by employer but are likely to address the following factors:
 - (1) Employer needs for specific advanced practice specialties
 - (2) Candidate characteristics such as flexibility, leadership potential, commitment to teaching, and interest in research
 - 4) Employers must budget for the anticipated expenses associated with supporting *SWIFT* candidates through a multi-year education program, which may present a barrier, since most health care facility budgeting occurs on an annual budget, and it is difficult to foresee revenue shortfalls which could reduce the ability to support candidates in the second or third years.
 - 5) The *SWIFT* Nurse Educator grant targets groups which may be difficult to recruit into nursing educator positions, specifically underrepresented minorities and non-nurses with degrees in other fields.
- E) It is quite possible that candidates who are not selected for *SWIFT* support will realize they still want to participate in graduate education and decide to enroll on their own. They can most likely receive tuition reimbursement through the employer, and the WDB's may also offer assistance to the students.
- F) What will be the effect on employers if the *SWIFT* leadership team were to request specific numbers of supported candidates from the different targeted groups? For example, if we request an employer to support more ADN candidates, will this be a problem?
- 1) YES! It is harder to know who will be successful. It is a much larger financial commitment to get these students through.
- G) How can we create a supportive "bond" across the state for *SWIFT* nurses?
- 1) We have found that cohorts have been very successful in other programs. (Online PhD program for example)
- H) Would preference ever be given to those students that want to continue on to the PhD program?
- 1) YES
- I) General discussion of the process of candidate selection
- 1) Employers will identify appropriate interested candidates
 - 2) Interested candidates will be directed to the local UW nursing school to learn the details of the available programs and to be evaluated for admission
 - 3) The school of nursing will notify the employer of the candidates' eligibility for admission (with the written permission of the candidate)
 - 4) Those candidates who are eligible for admission will be evaluated according to the criteria specified by the employer. Once the final candidates are identified by the employer, the *SWIFT* staff and employer will work together to examine factors including return on investment, candidate minority status and portfolio, and the timeline for completing the masters degree. It is anticipated there will be a consensus between the employer and the *SWIFT* staff regarding the final selection of candidates.
- IV) Formal agreements clarifying expectations among parties

- A) A letter of agreement between the UW Board of Regents and each employer will be developed addressing the following elements:
 - 1) Number of candidates employer will sponsor
 - 2) Level of financial support for tuition costs and how this will be paid (it is requested the employers agree to pay this in advance rather than after a semester is completed to minimize disruptions caused by student inability to pay tuition)
 - 3) Amount of compensated time off – candidates will be in school approximately 44 weeks per calendar year and it is requested that the employer provide a minimum of eight hours of paid time off for each week of classes
 - 4) General language addressing work arrangements for the candidates once they have completed their masters degrees to allow them to teach in a school of nursing as well as carry out their duties assigned by the employer
- B) Elements of letters of agreement between employers and candidates will be determined by each employer’s human resources and legal departments.
 - 1) These letters will include:
 - (1) The candidate’s commitment to continue working for employer for a specified period of time post-degree completion;
 - (2) Their commitment to begin teaching in a local school of nursing post-degree completion;
 - (3) A commitment to return a portion of funds received if degree is not completed or if the candidate leaves the employer.
 - (4) Other considerations
 - (a) Candidate must keep up with the requirements of the school
 - (b) Candidate must keep up with their job duties and responsibilities
 - (c) It might be useful to include that the candidate is required to give permission for their nursing program to share information about their progress through the educational program, including grades, with the employer.
 - 2) Is this something that there should be a template for? Or, do the employers already have a template in place based on the current tuition reimbursement practices? At a minimum, there should be a standard set of sentences that point out the commitment that each candidate has to the employer.
- V) Specific discussion regarding the SWIFT candidate identification process
 - A) As soon as employees meet minimum qualifications set by the employers to be considered for the *SWIFT* program, those candidates should be directed to the UW program that they will likely attend.
 - 1) Before referring the candidates to UW, employers may want to request that the candidates obtain transcripts from their previous post-high school educational programs. Again, candidates with ADN degrees need a minimum of a 2.5 grade point average (GPA) to be eligible for the UW BSN completion program, and those with BSN degrees need at least a 2.75 GPA for the masters program. It is recommended that employers advise the ADN-educated candidates they should have close to a 3.0 GPA from their technical college program to ensure they can be admitted to the graduate school.

- 2) It is recommended the employer liaisons establish a process to notify the UW program advisors when specific employees are identified as being potential *SWIFT* candidates. These names can then be flagged at each school so that those candidates are marked as being a part of the *SWIFT* Initiative.
 - (1) Information will need to flow from the employers to the education system and vice versa. This should occur both prior to admission and throughout the educational process.
 - (2) Once the schools identify which candidates are eligible for the appropriate educational program, the employer should apply their individualized criteria for selecting the final candidates.
 - (3) The *SWIFT* program staff need to be involved at the point of final identification to assist with the efficient flow of the process and to assess how the *SWIFT* goals are being met.
- 3) Other points for consideration
 - (1) Oshkosh and Eau Claire currently have programs in place with the technical schools which allow those that are on waiting lists to get the ADN and then when the spot opens up at UW, they can get the BSN much more quickly.
 - (2) This grant is limited to the UW system at the moment. However, as the education program-employer partner models get created, we would like to see this being implemented across the state with all the different masters programs.
 - (3) These days there are more opportunities for clinical teaching during evenings and weekends, so weekend and second shift employees should be encouraged to consider *SWIFT*.

VI) Timelines and other operational details

- A) Target admission date for first group of *SWIFT* candidates is January 2007
 - 1) Candidate selections process needs to begin now (Spring, 2006) to allow for the time it takes for the employers and nursing programs to evaluate the candidates.
 - 2) Employers should begin work immediately to distribute the *SWIFT* brochures to employees and determine which candidates should be referred to a nearby UW program for admissions evaluation.
 - 3) Employers should begin considering their approach to holding *SWIFT* candidates accountable for reimbursing support expenses if they do not complete their education and/or leave their employment.
- B) Jo Ann Appleyard will be approaching employers with letters of agreement before the end of May
- C) The first five employers who agree to sponsor four or more candidates are eligible to receive a \$15,000 allocation from the grant to support their administrative work in developing and implementing their candidate selection processes.
- D) Questions arose about the teaching opportunities for *SWIFT* candidates once they complete their masters degrees
 - 1) It is anticipated there will be both clinical and classroom teaching opportunities.

- (1) The Educational Strategies Work Group will be helping us to understand what teaching opportunities are available and where throughout the state.
- (2) The *SWIFT* staff will collect and disseminate this information to be available when candidates are in their last two semesters.
- 2) There were questions regarding how employers can manage the variations in teaching opportunities. Some require one day a week, while others require three days a week.
 - (1) The contracts with the schools of nursing must address a number of issues, and the language will have to be flexible.

VII) Questions and issues for discussion and resolution at subsequent meetings

- A) How will needs for additional candidate financial support be identified and evaluated?
 - 1) This will be a joint effort between the employers and WDBs.
 - 2) Additional funds from the WDBs may be used to cover things such as child care, books, gas, computers, etc. that can not be received through financial aid.
- B) We will devote much of the agenda of subsequent meetings to sharing on how things are progressing for each of the employers.
- C) Once a candidate has completed their masters degree and is teaching, how do we deal with those who “fail” as teachers?
 - 1) We will develop recommendations for identifying and managing such situations
 - 2) Employers should have substantial input into what courses these candidates will teach - *SWIFT* candidates should be teaching what they know
- D) Will there be any thought/language regarding if candidates want to pursue a dual track in their masters education?
 - 1) Employers should consider limits to what they are willing to support. This should be very specific – could include a specific period of months for education, what specialties are wanted, etc.

VIII) Summary of *SWIFT* deliverables to employers

- A) Flow chart depicting candidate identification process
- B) Updated/enhanced educational program information tables
- C) Draft employer-candidates contract template
- D) Employer template for budgeting *SWIFT* costs
- E) Enhanced website information on program details
- F) Specific letters of agreement between the employers and the UW Board of Regents
- G) A timeline (working backwards) for when things need to be done in order to get started by January 2007
- H) Send minutes to both attendees and those unable to come before next meeting
 - 1) We will share these minutes with the Educational Strategies Committee at their next meeting on June 14

IX) Future Meeting Schedule

- A) How often should this group meet?

- 1) Next meeting should be in July
 - 2) Mondays are usually good for everyone
 - 3) Meriter is probably the most central location currently and is willing to host the next meeting
- B) Joint meetings between the Educational and Employer Work Groups
- 1) Regional meetings may make more sense because each campus has different requirements and timelines

X) Meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm