



WEST TENNESSEE HEALTH CARE JACKSON, TN December 2004

Executive Summary:

West Tennessee Health Care has partnered with the Tennessee Hospital Association to provide a summer internship program for minority students studying health care administration. The Agenda 21 program provides minority students with a designated preceptor and the opportunity to participate in organizational projects, attend department director and board meetings, and rotate through a variety of departments in West Tennessee Health Care's six acute care hospitals. Participating in the Tennessee Hospital Association program is aligned with the system's mission of providing educational opportunities for health care students. In addition to gaining first-hand knowledge and experience of the health care administration profession, interns are provided with on-campus housing, free meals in the cafeteria, and a \$10,000 stipend. West Tennessee Health Care has participated in the program for over 10 years, and every intern has continued their education or career in the health care field.

Organization Size: Six Acute Care Hospitals

Program/Initiative Description:

Agenda 21: In a partnership with the Tennessee Hospital Association (THA), West Tennessee Health Care provides a summer internship program for graduate and undergraduate minority students studying health care administration. The program is available for students before their junior or senior year or during their graduate degree studies. The emphasis is on helping students understand their interests and options and use that knowledge to direct the emphasis of their coursework. THA organizes the program logistics, including the application and interview process, and provides West Tennessee Health Care with a qualified candidate who fit the organization's requirements. The system pays THA \$10,000 for the intern, which is then paid by THA to the student as a stipend for their three-month summer internship. In addition, West Tennessee Health Care provides the intern with on-campus housing and free cafeteria meals.

During the program, the interns rotate through the system's six acute care facilities, gaining exposure to all aspects of acute care, skilled nursing, financial management, and managed care. Each student may choose an emphasis based on their professional interests. The interns are assigned to a specific preceptor, and also attend meetings such as department director and board meetings. In addition, each intern participates in a system project and creates reports and papers for THA, including a daily log and a final report about the experience.

THA ensures that the intern and the organization achieve their goals by regularly reviewing the paperwork of the participants. The hospital association strives to place 20 students each year, and maintains the following objectives with each placement:

- Attract highly qualified undergraduate minority students to the field of health care administration
- Strengthen problem-solving and decision-making abilities, and promote the development of additional managerial skills within a functioning health care setting
- Enhance understanding of concepts and principles acquired in the didactic phase, and the realization that the realities of the workplace environment often require the modification of strictly applied theory and principles

- Broaden student perspectives regarding the complexity of problems characteristically faced by health care administrators and the demanding managerial responsibilities they must shoulder
- Develop the student's appreciation of the complex role of a health care organization as it responds to internal and external forces
- Engender a personal philosophy of health services administration based upon a strong sense of purpose and high ethical standards, which will serve to guide dedicated administrators

Establishment of Program/Initiative: West Tennessee Health Care has participated in the Agenda 21 program for over 10 years

Racial or Ethnic Disparities Problem the Program/Initiative Was Designed to Address: Underrepresentation of African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, and women in the upper levels of health care management

Major Objectives:

- Fulfill the system's mission to provide educational opportunities for students
- Achieve greater ethnic and racial diversity to enhance the competitiveness of health care networks in Tennessee
- Provide students with exposure to the health care administration profession before their junior and senior year of college, to enable the students to maximize their own personal talents and improve the lives of community residents
- Attract greater numbers of minority groups into the health administration field by providing them with a pre-professional internship in a health care organization; exposure to top level health care executives in a wide range of health programs; and didactic material on the problems facing the health care industry

Significant Results:

- Each student the system has been involved with has continued in their career path in health care; one student returned to the system to work for several years before moving on to a different position in the health care field.
- The program helps further the West Tennessee Health System's mission as well as THA's mission to contribute to the education of future health care leaders.

External Partners in the Program/Initiative: Tennessee Hospital Association (THA)

Limitations or Problems Encountered: None

Estimated Cost of the Program, To Date: \$10,000 per year

Advice to Other Organizations That May Want to Start a Similar Program:

- The partnership is a time commitment as well as a fiscal obligation; it is important to remember that if an organization cannot financially commit to the program one year, they do not have to participate.
- The key to the success of the program is THA's selection of candidates who meet the system's standards, and have the correct background knowledge and personality to fit the system's culture. In addition, THA doesn't hesitate to remove an individual who isn't working out and replace that individual with a new applicant.

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