

June 28, 2018

Cory Sbarbaro  
Acting President & CEO  
Group Health Foundation  
810 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Suite 220  
Seattle, WA 98104

Re: Lessons Learned from Community Engagement

Dear Mr. Sbarbaro,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our learnings as we engage our community through the Nursing Academy.

The Mission of Heritage University (HU) is to empower a multi-cultural and inclusive student body to overcome the social, cultural, economic and geographic barriers that limit access to higher education. Rooted in the homeland of the Yakama Nation, we embrace transformational student-centered education that cultivates leadership and a commitment to the promotion of a more just society. HU engages with the local community and region in alignment with its four core themes: access and equity, academic excellence, community engagement and institutional vitality.

During the 2016/18 academic years the HU BSN Program developed a program that would serve to increase access and equity while also engaging partners in creating opportunities for Native American students to consider nursing as a pathway to higher education. The Mt. Adams School District was identified as a partner because it serves students who are at a greater disadvantage and located in a highly rural area that widens the gap of access to higher education or career exploration experiences. The mission of Mt. Adams is: Continuous Student Learning. The district strives to make life-long learning an aspiration for all students and to prepare students for success.

The HU-White Swan Nursing Academy is designed to use a HU-BSN Program faculty member to partner with a school district representative to create learning opportunities for high school students to explore nursing as a career choice. It uses current HU-BSN students to serve as mentors during a weeklong Nursing Academy at the Heritage Campus. HU provides all materials, supplies, meals, transportation, and experiential sessions for students who are interested in exploring a career in nursing.

Our partnership has several outcomes and learnings that resulted from this pilot program. Primarily we learned the need for time, the importance of resources, and the value and strength

of impact far outweighed any of our program shortfalls. Here are the details of our process and learnings.

**1. How have you engaged, convened, and maintained relationships with your community/communities?**

HU already had an established rapport with the Superintendent of Mt. Adams School District, Mr. Curt Guaglianone, Ed.D. In addition, Mt. Adams hosts monthly Community Coalition Meetings that are cross-sector and multi-agency in which HU participates on a regular basis. HU approached the Superintendent with the program proposal and he facilitated discussion with the White Swan High School staff who proceeded to host roundtable sessions. The high school staff were joined by HU faculty and HU's Native American Liaison and engaged in roundtable sessions to discuss: strategy, vision, logistics, program planning, and student recruitment among staff of the high school, superintendent, faculty and a Native American Liaison for HU.

**2. How have you co-designed or co-created solutions with your community/communities?**

On this particular project the joint roundtable sessions served as a primary process to co-design this program to reflect and include space, culture considerations, engagement approach to recruit students, and self-identified needs. Priorities of resources resulted from these discussion as well as the need for access to additional resources. For example, this approach resulted in a strategic plan including components such as BSN-student-to-high-school-student tutoring and mentorship, dual credit White Swan-Heritage University courses to fulfill high school requirements and college prerequisites, collaboration with Heritage admissions and financial aid offices for pre-enrollment counseling, and Summer programs to maintain interest and continuity prior to graduation from high school. Within Heritage University, other health science programs including Biology, Medical Laboratory Science, and Social Work have been included to provide representation to students interested in other health science pathway options.

**3. How have you addressed systematic inequities that affect health (such as power differentials or racism) as part of your community engagement work?**

Inclusion and active engagement in the design of the program was the primary mode of creating a partnership that was mutual, had shared goals, and included resources for successful outcomes.

The inclusion of the high school staff and HU's Native American Liaison was one way to be inclusive and reflective of developing a program that would provide pathway development to health careers to students who are not represented in substantive numbers within the field of nursing. The White Swan Pre-Nursing Academy is specifically geared to reach Native Americans who are under-represented in healthcare and underserved communities in the Yakima Valley by fostering early engagement in health sciences directly in future leaders. By exposing high school students to nursing and other health sciences while still in primary education, they can better envision possibilities for their future careers and how to give back to their communities, particularly by seeing fellow White Swan residents who are successful Heritage

University students. The Pre-Nursing Academy also assists high school students overcome access and information barriers through assistance with admissions and financial aid counseling and meeting prerequisite requirements for university through BSN student tutoring and mentorship.

We share a strategic and intentional effort to increase the number of Native students going into health-related fields in order for them to return to the Reservation and provide health services to their community. This partnership was developed over time, with conversations between campus leadership, suggestions and ideas from students, innovation and collaboration to overcome hurdles resulting from public/private partnership barriers.

**4. What about your organization’s way of working has made you successful? How has your organizational culture or structure changed to allow for authentic community relationships? Include examples of how your staff and your board (if relevant) contributed to the culture and values that enabled your success.**

Leadership was a primary component of our success. We were successful partners because we have engagement and buy-in from multiple levels of our organizations. The board of directors from Mt. Adams were enthusiastic and said “Proceed with gusto!” Mt. Adams affirmed their vision and purpose to improve the quality of life, through education, for the students and families of the communities of White Swan and Harrah. The Superintendent encourages innovation from his administrators, and collaboration at every level with community partners, and provides guidance for a growth mindset toward the future. Mt. Adams embraces partnerships that support learning and opportunities for its students. There is an honor of the Yakama and the cultures non-Yakama to build the self-efficacy and create a pathway of success for students.

With regard to HU, a mission-driven organization, Heritage faculty and staff are dedicated to overcoming “the social, cultural, economic and geographic barriers that limit access to higher education.” HU’s Board includes a Tribal Relations Committee and includes the Native American Liaison to support leadership on projects such as this one. HU faculty and staff openly offer their assistance for contributing to Nurse Camp, thoughts and insights about process, and resources for possible future expansions of the program. Several Heritage faculty such as Dr. Christina Nyirati, Dr. Maxine Janis, and Dr. Jessica Black have ongoing relationships through existing research initiatives with the Yakama Nation. Discussions are underway about how to weave their programs into Pre-Nursing Academy in order to amplify their service back to the community by providing exposure and training for students in research skills development and increased awareness of community health issues.

Key to this partnership was the adaptability to adjust and rework components that did not go as planned such as the lower than anticipated program enrollment for the academy. We did not abandon the project nor lessen the quality. We also are sensitive to staff changes and have adjusted timelines as needed.

**5. What have been your most significant challenges, obstacles, and missteps? We know that we can learn as much from setbacks as we can from successes, so please don’t**

**hold back! (If you are concerned about sharing challenges publicly, just let us know and we will omit your response to this question from the version we share publicly.)**

We learned the need for time was higher than anticipated. We did not adequately know how wide the gap was for students to be academically prepared to participate in a nursing academy which highlighted the importance of resources. Lastly, our outcomes for the pilot were partly limited due to low enrollment.

Staff changes impacted the time frame as one of the original faculty Pre-Nursing Academy directors left Heritage University and created a gap in program continuity, particularly as nursing faculty underwent an exhaustive national accreditation review in 2017-2018. Unfortunately, Nurse Camp 2018 was cancelled last minute because of administrative turnover at Mt. Adams School District, but the existing plans and schedule are ready to be implemented in Summer 2019.

In addition, initial implementation was overly ambitious compared to the resources available. Having reflected on this already, the goal for 2018-2019 is establishing a strong foundation of secure components to build on. This includes Nurse Camp, student tutors, and admission/financial aid counseling.

Ongoing challenges continue to be funding, particularly essential but costly components such as transportation and food, as well as Heritage University student involvement who are currently serving entirely in a volunteer capacity.

<b>Program Goals</b>	<b>Year One</b>	<b>Year Two</b>	<b>Notes</b>
2 Visits with HU Faculty and White Swan HS staff/counselors	Met	Exceeded	New HU faculty resulted in additional meeting times and more are scheduled.
To demonstrate accurate understanding of high school requirements for admissions to any BSN program in WA State.	Met	Met	HS counselors and HU faculty met last year and established this understanding. This year partners are working towards extending this understanding to HS students.
To discuss a plan to interface the academy curriculum with WS HS Curriculum	Met	Met	Plan is in place year one, partners are working towards implementation
Information session for 15-20 students who have expressed interest in nursing or other health	Exceeded	Partially Met	10 sessions were held in year one, this year WS HS would like a kick-off assembly

professions and their parent/guardians			followed by sessions – dates pending
15 WSHS freshman students join Future Nursing Club (FNC) and attend monthly meetings	Partially Met	Partially Met	Year one actively recruited but meetings were sparse, Year two is lacking meetings due to new faculty, WS HS schedule misalignments. However, students are being encouraged by HS staff to enroll in the academy.
At least 10 WSHS freshman enroll in Pre-Nursing Academy	Partially Met	Expected to be Met	Year one’s participation was 7, of those 6 have expressed interest to return and serve as peer mentors in addition to new program participants.
At least 10 students enroll in year two (soph.) of Pre-Nursing Academy classes Fall 2017	Partially Met	Expected to be partially met	6 of 7 year-one participants have expressed intent to return in 2018.

**6. What changes have you seen that give you hope about a future that is more equitable?**

Given our size and rural-ness among partners we are able to witness that success happens one student and one celebration at a time. Systemic discrimination is so pervasive that we celebrate the individual wins.

Four of the current 40 Heritage students enrolled in the BSN program are White Swan residents and/or enrolled Yakama Nation. In addition, these students are strong and successful students, and each has openly expressed their desire to remain in the area (or return after completing advanced degrees!) in order to serve their communities. One student is interning at the National Institute of Health, with the confidence to conduct research in this National science lab, because professors from HU and PNWU believed in him and encouraged him to participate in our partnerships and to pursue his dream of becoming a physician.

Our Pre-Nursing Academy directly addresses these and other issues. In consideration of all this, we are hopeful and expectant that our program will greatly increase representation in the BSN program and other Heritage health sciences programs.

One student is interning at the National Institute of Health, with the confidence to conduct research in this National science lab.

This program gives students an experiential opportunity that imprints them with the potential to explore the career further.

Education creates equity, and every day, every student, in every classroom in the Mt. Adams School District and at HU. Link to HU Nursing Academy video:

<https://youtu.be/IB3GuO4hVGA>