REFLECTIONS ON WASHINGTON’S SIX YEARS OF INVESTMENT AND INNOVATION IN THE HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE

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Like a HEET partnership, this paper is the product of the generosity and contributions of many partners.

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On the cover of this report is Vanthong Sombath, a HEET student and Medical Assistant at Group Health Cooperative.
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TURN UP THE HEET!

Since 2008, Washington State has invested more than $11 million dollars in Hospital Employee Education and Training (HEET) projects to advance health care workers’ careers. Here, we step back from the day-to-day operation and programs and take a broader view of HEET. With the perspective provided by multiple projects and partners on the ground, HEET adds up to much more than a simple count of students trained. At its core, the innovation of HEET is the partnership of labor, management, and education. Most of the impressive educational and student support strategies that have come from HEET are generated, forged, leveraged, and supported in that partnership. HEET has profoundly transformed workers lives. HEET has transformed systems as well, with innovations cascading out to change education and workforce development throughout the state. This paper takes stock of the overall meaning and impact of six years of HEET based on review of existing annual evaluations and retrospective interviews with dozens of leaders, stakeholders, and implementers of HEET projects.

HEET’s most essential and unique feature is the partnership at its center. Labor, management, and education come together to develop projects that help the diverse health care workforce gain the skills they need to move into more advanced roles. The partnership is essential in that HEET explicitly requires active participation of labor, management, and education. HEET partners meet regularly to design, implement, monitor, and, when needed, to revise the project. The partnership is unique in that it drives innovation through shared ownership. Rather than simply funneling money to existing programs and ways of doing things, HEET supports a partnership charged with developing new solutions. As a result, the program has generated transformative strategies beyond the boundaries of current systems.

HEET partnerships provide the foundation for programmatic innovation and success. New strategies to train workers – changing course time or location, customizing content or developing new modes of delivery, altering entrance requirements and student supports, to name just a few – grow from that base. In HEET partnerships, colleges have designed tools and strategies tailored to the needs of workers in the health care industry. And they have been able to count on the partnership of labor and management to make changes within worksites that support success as well.

At its best, HEET creates new ways of working that take root inside systems, improving opportunities for workers in the program, but also altering the ways that colleges, labor, and management approach the very issues of education, training and advancement.
HEET creates a partnership with a dynamic practice, shared resources for innovation, and the interests of all parties at its core, allowing HEET’s impact to spread far beyond the boundaries of its projects. Programs gain new insight into industry demand and changes. Management and union leaders build stronger ties and a history of problem solving that increases the capacity to proactively respond to new challenges. Colleges see working adults in new ways, focusing on the unique capacities and constraints these students face, and build programming with them in mind.

Over the course of six years, with roughly $2 million invested each year, more than 21 projects have received support. Some 16 colleges have engaged in the work, building new partnerships with dozens of employers and unions across the state. While some partnerships lasted for only a year, some projects and partnerships have evolved across the entire period. Six colleges have participated in HEET at least four of the six years possible. The product of these partnerships – changes to assessment and entry-standards, integration of basic and occupational skills, worksite delivery of education, scheduling of work and training so workers can engage in both, case management and personal support, cohorts of co-workers moving through classes, greater use of simulations at all levels – are impressive.

HEET has built the skills of hundreds of health care workers. More than 800 students have enrolled in some 1200 classes since the first HEET grant. Workers have moved from the entry-level to nursing positions across the course of the grant. The full-time equivalents (FTEs) in the community college system averaged 65 per year. HEET students are overwhelmingly female, substantially more racially diverse than the state population, and many are well-into their work and family lives (the median age of HEET students is around 38). Half of these workers never completed education past high school, for them, the impact of HEET has been particularly profound.

HEET training has changed workers’ lives, workplace culture, and the views of educators in the process. One employer reported a culture change in management, union, and workforce conception of training as a result of HEET: “The workers are now more focused on learning.” He noted a shifting view on the part of the colleges as well: “We consistently challenged the picture of who can be a successful nurse.” HEET evaluations, which demonstrated strong student performance in spite of real and presumed challenges helped make the change possible.

HEET students did as well as or better than non-HEET students in 28 of 33 unique courses where comparative data was available.
HEET funding allowed workers across the state to successfully move into and up through health care career and preparatory programs.

To be sure, there are improvements that can be made. HEET projects are often complex and don’t always work as planned. Relationships fray or are undermined by pressures of time and competing priorities, innovations misfire, and labor market conditions change. But the essence of the program and its multifaceted results remain strong in spite of these challenges. **HEET has done important work in Washington State, for health care workers clearly, but just as importantly, for their employers, their unions, and community and technical colleges.**

HEET offers answers to some of the nation’s most critical workforce and health care policy questions regarding industry leadership and changes in education and the best educational approaches for working adults. HEET projects respond to key national health care policy issues as well. Whether it is the need to increase the diversity of the health care workforce or to help current workers adapt to the rapidly changing training and certification standards in the health care field, HEET has helped create solutions.

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF HEET**

HEET is founded on three essential elements of program design:

1. **Industry – meaning both labor and employer – engagement, leadership, and investment in a partnership with community and technical colleges**

2. **Building the skills of current health care workers**

3. **Investing in capacity for innovation in education to apply directly to these workers**

We discuss each element in greater detail next.

**PERSPECTIVES**

"*The HEET program gave people the chance to advance their careers while helping us fill needed positions. It was a win-win for everyone.*"

- Health Care Employer
INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP, AND INVESTMENT IN A PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

Since its inception in 2008 when The Washington State Hospital Association and SEIU Healthcare 1199NW proposed and lobbied for the program, HEET’s very foundation has been industry engagement and leadership. Concerned about projected occupational shortages and seeking to increase the diversity of the patient care workforce, industry leaders supported HEET to develop the unrealized potential of so many current hospital workers in entry-level jobs. In doing so, they created a new way of working with the state’s technical and community colleges for training.

The importance of industry engagement – from both hospitals and unions – cannot be overstated. To design training that meets workers where they are – literally and figuratively – requires access, information, and support on the job that even the best educators cannot secure. Education must have partners and allies inside a hospital for this training to work. Student/workers need the support of administrators, supervisors and co-workers, especially when their training occurs on work time. And for those healthcare workers with changing shifts, scheduling must be flexible and healthcare institution’s operations must be engaged to support access to post-secondary education. Shared investment in student success means that all partners monitor and support the student, providing early intervention when problems emerge, and working as a team to provide service and support in classes and on the job. Partnership can thus establish a more complete infrastructure for the working student’s success. Projects across the country seek to secure industry commitment and leadership.

Too often, however, “industry engagement” is demonstrated by sign-off on a letter of support. HEET’s requirement is more meaningful. Labor and management are key contributors to and supporters of the development and ongoing work of projects. The serious investment of time, the commitment to the partnership, the mutual team-based approach to planning and supporting projects all demonstrate the essential, and more complete, meaning of HEET’s “industry engagement.”

PERSPECTIVES

"It all goes back to the partnerships. HEET put labor, management, and the college meeting together once a month or more. Standing alone none of us could be nearly as effective as if we stood together."

- Community College Administrator
BUILDING THE SKILLS OF CURRENT HEALTH CARE WORKERS

The second essential element of HEET is the focus on building the skills of the incumbent health care workforce, a priority of industry leaders from the very inception of the program. HEET provides a resource to help health care workers realize greater potential within the industry, to answer the desire for advancement, and to help build a pipeline from the typically more diverse entry-level and service occupations in health care into the higher levels of patient care which desperately need that diversity. HEET seizes on and builds the potential of the pool of workers already committed to the industry, familiar with its institutions, and with clarity about the content of the jobs for which they are training.

The partnership of industry and education is focused then on working adults, and that helps customize the education precisely to the issues, capacities, and needs of incumbent health care workers. Educators can tailor their work to reach these workers, building on their shared experience and understanding of hospitals/clinics, and with a clearer understanding of both the capacities and challenges of these worker/students. In many cases, educators can further rely on and leverage the strengths of a cohort of coworkers that provides mutual support and motivation as students move through the program.

The vast majority of the workforce of tomorrow is already at work today, and improving the income of low-wage adults requires getting relevant training “to work” for working people. Numerous initiatives, public and private, have focused on this very issue, seeking to make training accessible and relevant to working adults. HEET experience suggests that efforts could be strengthened with an industry focus in course design, greater engagement of labor and management in program development, and the systematic support of incumbent workers that formal partnerships with labor help secure.

PERSPECTIVES

"All in all, I couldn't have asked for a better opportunity, not just in the timing for my coursework completion, but more importantly to renew my confidence. I consider myself very lucky to have found this class."

- HEET Student
CAPACITY AND RESOURCES FOR INNOVATION

HEET investments do not simply support the partnerships or fund incumbent worker training in existing programs. Rather, and critically, they also provide those partnerships with resources for educational innovation. The partnership at the core of the HEET project provides the context for the innovation, and the needs of incumbent workers become the drivers for innovation. But from there, HEET opens up the opportunity to seek the best ways to make education work for students. HEET provides an invigorating opportunity for educators – who sometimes feel hamstrung by current practice – to try new models and reach new students.

The range of education innovation demonstrated by HEET projects is remarkable. Location, timing, and methods of delivery of classes have all been consistent areas of work. Strategies for wrap-around supports and guidance have been developed and refined. Assessment systems, which too often keep capable students out of programs, have been altered. Basic skill delivery has been rethought. Practical ways to assess and validate prior learning and skills have been developed.

With HEET, and the focus on current health care workers, each program is designed to move a targeted group of workers successfully through a specific course, credential, or skill set. Assessment, which is often used as a means to limit or constrain the pool of students, must then be reconceived as a way to support students’ entry into programs. The experience of working adults, too often undervalued by the formal educational system, has become an asset to be considered alongside GPA or prior academic record. By starting with very specific students, educators must see, build on, and connect to the strengths of those students. Educators consistently reported the welcome change that this approach to education provided. And the strong grades and completion rates of HEET students (often better than results posted by non-HEET students) suggests that this approach doesn’t “lower standards” as some feared, but actually extends opportunity to capable students.

PERSPECTIVES

"This program opens doors in the most profound way to people who wouldn’t have had opportunity before. HEET is good policy."

- SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Leader
LESSONS OF HEET

The three essential elements of HEET – real industry engagement and partnerships, incumbent workers, and educational innovation – are the foundation of the program. These essentials are instructive in the national dialogue on workforce training. The partnerships have generated a broad range of lessons in the field. Review of evaluations and interviews with stakeholders provide a number of principles that HEET also has yielded. These include:

- Support educational innovation, not just outputs
- Support the development of strong partnerships between industry (including labor and management) and education
- Require real industry input in program design; with employer and worker needs carrying equal weight
- Leverage private funding with public resources
- Maintain support over time; multiple funding cycles allow partnerships to refine, redesign, and mature
- Support ongoing evaluation to improve programs and disseminate lessons learned

CONCLUSION

From HEET’s inception, the health care industry – labor and management – has been united behind this funding to help advance workers and diversify the patient care workforce. But instead of just setting up a funding stream to train workers, HEET has created new partnerships of labor, management, and education; and these partnerships have found new solutions. Putting the partnership at the center of the project fundamentally reorients all the parties. “We turned the question around,” said one community college program director. Instead of figuring out how to market existing programs, they asked what industry needed. And instead of sticking rigidly to entrance requirements that stood as a barrier to health care workers, colleges found ways to reach working students and provide education that met their unique needs.

By starting with a new partnership and new questions, HEET has created a new way of doing business in the state. For workers, the results have been profound. Each of the partners – labor, management, and colleges – report transformative change as well. These sorts of reforms – from credit for skills learned on-the-job to training linked directly to industry needs – are at the very center of national priorities for workforce development. The practice innovations and policies on which they are founded deserve support and attention within the state and beyond its borders.
INTRODUCTION

In 2008, leaders of Washington state’s health care industry could see real challenges ahead. The Washington State Hospital Association and SEIU Healthcare 1199NW proposed and lobbied for legislation providing funding to help build a strong, diverse, and skilled health care workforce for the future. The program they designed – Hospital Employees Education and Training Program (HEET) – provides grants that fund labor, management, and college partnerships to develop, expand, and evaluate programs so health care workers can advance their careers.

Over the last six years, the HEET program, administered by the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), has invested over $11 million in partnerships and innovation for training the health care workforce. Some 22 projects have been developed at 16 different colleges. The required partnerships of college, labor, and management leaders at the core of these grants have, in some cases, evolved across the entire 6-year period. On average, each year 240 health care workers have taken HEET courses. These are students who know the health care industry and are dealing with the daily demands of their jobs and families while taking classes. They are supported by considerable innovation in programming and the joint commitment to success of their college, union, and employer. HEET programs have changed assessment and entry requirements, integrated basic and occupational skill delivery, provided for education at worksites, and led to new strategies for scheduling of work and training.

In HEET, workers can access both case management and academic advising, participate with cohorts of peers, and build skills for future advancement while maintaining their current jobs. The students succeed, often in ways that defy expectations.
By starting with a new partnership and new questions, HEET has created a new way of doing business in the state. For workers, the results have been profound. Each of the partners – labor, management, and colleges – report transformative change as well.

The story of HEET cascades from personal success to institutional change, demonstrating that alignment of industry interests – represented by both labor and management – with college interests and resources can generate real results for working students in the health care industry. Industry based program innovation then becomes a new way of doing business at colleges. The project has succeeded because it builds directly on the shared interests of employers, unions, and colleges.

This paper provides an overview of the ongoing work, success, and learning generated by HEET. We draw from a diverse set of sources. First, we have carefully reviewed 18 one-year evaluations of various HEET programs. Second, we rely on the insight provided in dozens of retrospective interviews both in person and over the phone with a broad spectrum of HEET leaders. These interviews focused on a six-year perspective of HEET and what it has meant for workers, the industry and colleges. Third, this evaluative overview also draws from our own knowledge of the subset of HEET partnerships that H-CAP has evaluated through the years. Finally, we analyze data provided by SBCTC on both the HEET program and partnerships and data including demographics of program participants.

We start with a review of the evidence those sources allow. We close with consideration of essential workforce questions facing training and education institutions and policy makers nationally and reflect on the ways HEET experience sheds light on these issues.
HEET ESSENTIALS: PARTNERSHIPS, CURRENT HEALTH CARE WORKERS, AND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

Since its inception, three essential elements have been required of every HEET project: partnership of employers, unions, and colleges; focus on current health care workers; and educational innovation to support success. These required elements of programs design, conceived and lobbied for by Washington State Hospital Association and SEIU Healthcare 1199NW, provide the fundamental structure and framework for the program.

1 First, at the heart of each HEET project is a partnership of labor, management, and colleges. This partnership is a new way of working for all and requires joint and shared leadership, ownership, and investment in the project from each partner. This shared structure for project inception, implementation, and refinements is a unique and essential hallmark of HEET. The partnership makes a new way of doing business possible. Partners apply their considerable collective resources towards meeting their shared goals.

2 HEET’s second essential element is a focus directly on current workers in partner health care institutions. Projecting shortages of skilled health care workers in the future, the industry prioritized investing in current health care workers to build skills and meet coming shortages. Incumbent workers understand health care and the structure and demands of its more skilled positions. With training, these workers can bring considerable diversity to these jobs. HEET was designed to put labor and management in partnership with colleges in order to help these workers succeed in school. The industry identified the enormous potential of this workforce. But they also saw all that stood in the way – serious demands of jobs and home life, lack of confidence about schooling, and basic skill and language needs. These workers – their potential and their challenges – are the center of concern of HEET projects. The partnership identifies the challenges and training opportunities and builds a program to develop incumbent health care workers and build the skills employers need.

3 HEET’s third essential element is educational innovation to secure success for workers/students. The partnership identifies workers and skills needed. But making education work for these students requires new approaches from education partners. Colleges have responded to this opportunity with flexibility and focus; and the creative solutions generated by HEET are impressive. The interface between college and work becomes a site for innovation, allowing the development of supports that build success for HEET participants both as workers and as students.
HEET PARTNERSHIPS

Over the past six years, a total of $11.4 million has been awarded by SBCTC in 35 grants to HEET partnerships. These annual grants have funded some new and some ongoing projects. Because many have secured multiple years of funding, those 35 grants have supported 21 different partnerships – 16 HEET projects and another 5 “HEET Innovations” grants. The 16 HEET partnerships developed training for incumbent health care workers. In 2012, HEET Innovations funding was extended to five partnerships to support college system innovations and capacity building that extended and institutionalized the reach of HEET models and experience. Three innovations grants have gone on to an implementation stage through HEET program funding in 2013-14.

In a typical academic year, four or five projects/partnerships (some new, some continuing) have been funded. Most projects receive between $200,000 and $500,000 in support, though partnership investment has varied.

HEET PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS (2008-14)

» Stepping Stones to Allied Health Careers
» Pathways to RN: Evergreen Health
» Moving Forward: Creating Career Pathways for Northwest Hospital Workers
» Moving Forward: Health Occupations Pathway Program
» Partnership for Pathway Development
» Pathways Into Nursing
» Health Education & Advancement thru Language Learning (HEALL)
» Healthcare Education for Adult Learners-Medical Assisting Project (HEAL-MAP)
» Health Care Partnership of Nursing
» Rural Online Nursing Education (RONE)
» Health Care Career Ladders and Advanced Human Simulation
» Environmental Sustainability Careers in Healthcare
» Integrated Contextual Cohort-based Healthcare Education
» Access to Advancement for Incumbent Workers: Reaching Out/ Moving Up
» Foundation Skills Training and Improved System Alignment-Supporting Healthcare Worker Advancement
» New Simulations in the Medical Surgery Ward

HEET INNOVATIONS (2012-13)

» Health Care Education for Adult Learners
» New Medical Simulations
» Advanced Medical Billing and Coding Pathway for Incumbent Workers
» Industry and College Collaborative to Improve Nursing Simulation Capacity
» Enhanced Medical Billing and Coding Pathway
These HEET Partnerships engaged leaders from more than 26 health care employers across Washington. Many employers were involved in more than one partnership and some were involved in all the years of the project. The employers participating in HEET projects included:

- EvergreenHealth (Kirkland)
- Ferry County Memorial Hospital (Republic)
- Franciscan Health System/ St. Joseph Medical Center (Tacoma)
- Good Samaritan Hospital MultiCare (Puyallup)
- Group Health Cooperative (State-wide)
- Highline Medical Center* (Des Moines)
- Island Hospital (Anacortes)
- Jefferson Health Care (Port Townsend)
- Klickitat Valley Health (Klickitat County)
- Lourdes Medical Center (Pasco)
- Madigan Army Hospital (Tacoma)
- Morton General Hospital (Lewis County)
- MultiCare Health System (Auburn)
- Northwest Hospital* (Seattle)
- PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center (Bellingham)
- Providence Regional Medical Center (Everett)
- Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center (Spokane)
- Skagit Valley Hospital (Mount Vernon)
- Stevens Hospital/Swedish Edmonds* (Edmonds)
- Swedish Medical Center (Seattle)
- United General Hospital (Sedro-Woolley)
- Valley Medical Center* (Renton)
- Whidbey General Hospital (Whidbey Island)

*Employer names appear as they were at the time the project took place.

Unions provide equally important leadership to the HEET projects. SEIU Healthcare 1199NW provided labor leadership in 15 of these partnerships. The UFCW (Locals 21 and 141, which merged) were labor partners in 6 projects. Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union Local 2767 were labor partners for one HEET project. Washington State Nurses Association was involved with several projects as well. (Two projects engaged both SEIU and UFCW leaders.) In the SEIU projects, the SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multiemployer Education and Training Fund was an essential and active partner, representing the interests of both labor and management, providing ongoing support, case management, and facilitation and coordination.

**PERSPECTIVES**

“HEET put labor, management, and the college meeting together once a month or more. And being serious about that partnership meant that the college had to reconsider our business.”
- Community College Leader
The state’s community and technical college system has also been deeply engaged in each HEET partnership. Over the six years of HEET, 20 colleges have participated – Bellevue, Bellingham, Clover Park, Columbia Basin, Edmonds, Everett, Highline, Lake Washington, Lower Columbia, Olympic, Pierce Fort Steilacoom, Pierce Puyallup, Renton, Seattle Central, North Seattle, South Seattle, Skagit Valley, Spokane, Tacoma, Whatcom, and Yakima Valley. Many projects included multiple college partners and many colleges have been involved in multiple grants over several funding cycles.

In interviews with leaders from labor, management, and education, the HEET partnerships were often identified as a key foundation for success. One community college leader said it this way: “HEET put labor, management, and the college meeting together once a month or more. And being serious about that partnership meant that the college had to reconsider our business.” Another community college leader noted that HEET provided partners with resources to start with industry/worker/student needs and build a response that worked for this particular group, rather than re-package or re-market the current ways of doing business.

A different college leader echoed this idea, explaining the difference between the established route to industry input – advisory boards – and the partnership model this way: “Industry advisory boards are run by the college. Advisors may comment. [HEET built] an active team. Everyone had responsibility to make it work. Everyone in the partnership wanted to make it work. Everybody was committed to having a high quality program. And we were all strengthened by having three different perspectives on what that meant.”

**PERSPECTIVES**

**STUDENT SUCCESS OVER THE YEARS**

In the early years of the program one HEET participant had this to say: “Eventually I want to move on and get my BSN. The support is really there – from the Union, Training Fund, and hospital. ... They want workers to grow and be successful. I’m really thankful for that. My nurse manager is very supportive to me.” (This was one of many quotes from students gathered by the Training Fund in the early years of the program.)

In an interview for this paper in March 2014, a labor leader told a story (by fortunate coincidence) about the same person who had provided the above quote years before. “Just last week, I ran into a young lady. She was a CNA and one of the folks at Northwest Hospital that got involved with the HEET program. She’s become an RN. She ran and gave me a hug and was very emotional. She told me again how grateful she was and how much of a difference it had made. How it had changed her life, her family’s life, and she can now provide for her family. That’s just one example of how HEET has done great things for these workers.”
Another leader with experience of multiple HEET partnerships suggested that stronger partnerships tended to develop stronger programs for worker/students. The commitment of each partner to work toward a common aim was consistently mentioned as a powerful foundation for success by leaders from unions, management, and colleges.

**HEET WORKER/STUDENT FOCUS**

Effective education and training for the incumbent health care workforce defined and focused the work of HEET partnerships. When talking about the program, many leaders quickly identified the success of students as the most important achievement. As one labor leader said: “We have a tool that can help workers move up. Too many workers face barriers in moving up a ladder. This program opens doors in the most profound way to people who wouldn’t have had opportunity before.” A HEET employer summed it up this way: “The HEET program gave people the chance to advance their careers while helping us fill needed positions. It was a win-win for everyone.” HEET has provided training and supports to help hundreds of health care workers build new skills.

**WORKER/STUDENT PARTICIPATION**

In the five completed years of HEET programming:

- 859 worker/students have taken classes, an average of 172 students each year.

- Because many students have taken more than one class, HEET generated over 1200 course enrollments in its first five years.

- Another way to measure the scale of HEET is to consider annualized FTEs (every 45 credits of enrollment within one year is equal to one annualized FTE). This is a common SBCTC measure of program size. Original HEET legislation included an enrollment target of 50 annualized FTEs per year of funding. Throughout the program, HEET enrollments have exceeded this annual target.

- The total HEET annualized FTE was 323, or an average of 65, annualized FTE per year.
HEET STUDENT PROFILE

These 859 HEET students display the characteristics of the health care workforce from which they are drawn. Reflecting the health care workforce more broadly, more than four of five HEET students were women (83 percent female). With a median age in the mid to late 30’s, these HEET worker/students were also well into their working and family lives. (The median age of program participants was 38 for each year of the program with the exception of 2012-13 when the age fell to 34.) These age and gender statistics may not surprise, but they do indicate that this program reached the very workers HEET intended to reach. Further, these health care workers generally also present a number of serious challenges to schooling. First, they are already working in demanding jobs. For workers, finding time and capacity for school is always a challenge. Second, many are old enough to have been long out of school and wary of returning to the status of “student.” Also many of these workers are juggling the serious demands of family and home life, adding another set of distractions that can put school out of reach. The HEET student profile hints at both the incredible potential of these workers and some of the significant barriers to further education they face.

A significant objective of HEET has been to answer the need for increased diversity in skilled health care positions by training and promoting from the already diverse entry-level health care workforce. The HEET student population shows considerable diversity. According to the census, 71 percent of the state population is white, but the HEET student population is considerably less white (57 percent). Table 1 shows that HEET students are more diverse. This is particularly evident for Asian/Pacific Islanders – comprising 17 percent of the HEET population but just 10 percent of the state population – and African Americans – accounting for 13 percent of the HEET population but 5 percent of the state population. The pattern is reversed for Hispanics, however. The HEET student population slightly underrepresents this group – 9 percent of HEET students compared to 11 percent of the state population identify as Hispanic.1

Table 1

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<th>HEET Students</th>
<th>State Population (2010 Census)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander (including Hawaiian)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native American (American Indian or Alaskan Native)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other, Multiracial</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Greater diversity of HEET students is evident comparing HEET students to the broader student body of the colleges they attended as well. For the five colleges participating in 2009-10 partnership programs where we have the clearest data, Asian/Pacific Islanders and African Americans were more common in the HEET student population than the broader student body on three campuses. On the other campuses, HEET students were at least as diverse as the broader student population.

Consistent demographic data comparable to campus or workforce populations is not available for every program. But data from Renton and North Seattle Community College offers further evidence of the diversity of HEET student/workers for these key urban partnerships. The data is summarized in Table 2, below. African Americans accounted for around 30 percent of HEET students and the Asian or Asian American share of HEET ranged from 16 to 26 percent. HEET students are more diverse than the student population on those campuses. These data suggest that HEET is connecting with and supporting the broad and diverse entry-level health care workforce in the state. And, through training and supports, HEET is helping to move these diverse workers up in health care. In the future, standardization of reporting on demographics and analyses of these data could strengthen the evidence. But for key programs with demographic data available, HEET’s important contribution to diversity is already evident.

### Table 2

| HEET Cohort Demographic Data (for Available Program Years) at Renton Technical College (RTC), and North Seattle Community College (NSCC). |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 19% | 30% | 26% | 40% | 22% | 38% | 28% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander (including Hawaiian) | na | 26% | 22% | 20% | 19% | 16% | 19% |
| African American | 26% | 33% | 31% | 33% | 30% | 28% | 29% |
| Native American (American Indian or Alaskan Native) | na | 0% | 0% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 6% |
| Hispanic | 15% | 7% | 4% | 6% | 7% | 4% | 8% |
| Other, Multiracial | 40% | 4% | 17% | 0% | 22% | 14% | 1% |
| Not Reported | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 9% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
Finally, the prior educational experience of HEET students is shown in Table 3 (below). The table provides the distribution of the prior education of HEET students (for the 754 HEET students who provided prior education). One half of HEET students had not completed any post-secondary degrees or certificates prior to participation in HEET. Indeed, three of every ten HEET students had no formal education beyond high school. Another twenty percent reported having had some post-secondary education but never completing a degree or certificate. Another 17 percent of HEET students completed a post-secondary certificate (short of a two year degree). Clearly this program is reaching a large population of workers who have neither experienced nor completed significant post-secondary schooling, many of whom have not been in a school setting since their high school years.

The HEET student population presents evident challenges even in this straightforward demographic breakdown. The students are largely women. They are an older population, generally in their mid- to late-30s. Most are not just starting out in the labor market, but firmly established in it. We know that many working women consistently face significant family/work stressors. Given their age and gender, it is quite likely that these HEET students take on education even as they carry the stress that working families generally face. It is also probable that many carry an extra load at home – perhaps due to uneven division of household labor or because some may be raising children on their own. Their current work and age means that HEET workers are not new to the challenges of work, but they are fairly removed from the rigors of school. And finally, HEET students do not come to their health care jobs with abundant post-secondary educations. The strengths of these workers are clear – they are committed to the industry and largely reflect the diverse patient population being served in Washington’s healthcare institutions – but the challenges they face in accessing and completing post-secondary education are significant.

Table 3
HEET STUDENT PRIOR EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Head Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than High School Graduation</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Post High School, No Degree or Certificate</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate (Less Than Two Years)</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree or Above</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other and Tech Prep</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>754</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HEET OCCUPATIONAL PATHWAYS

HEET students take a broad spectrum of classes that help them move into more skilled healthcare positions. Table 4 provides information on course of study for nearly 800 HEET students (all HEET students since its beginning). There are courses represented from across the entire nursing career path and pathways into other technical careers. At the most basic level, courses are offered to prepare HEET students to get into healthcare pathways. These Allied Health Prerequisites account for nearly half of HEET students (45 percent). These courses open doors into all health programs, both nursing programs and other skilled health positions as well. HEET’s consistent work on the nursing pathway is evident from that foundation and up through higher levels of training. Through HEET, 98 students (12 percent of the HEET total) received training for Certified Nursing Assistant positions. Another 18 students engaged in a LPN/RN bridge program. And 174 students (22 percent of the HEET total) took nursing pre-requisites, with 21 of these 174 completing their RN degree under the HEET program. In addition, although exact data is not available, many others who completed nursing pre-requisites under HEET went on to complete nursing school under non-HEET programming.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Groupings</th>
<th>Unduplicated Head Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allied Health Pre-requisites (Healthcare Pathways)</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Service Technician</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified Nursing Assistant</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Lab Assistant</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Department Technician</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Unit Coordinator</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab Assistant/Phlebotomist</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPN/RN bridge</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Office Reception</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Pre-requisites</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HEET projects also provided training for a number of technical jobs – for example, central service technician (18 HEET students), clinical lab assistant (15 students), and lab assistant/phlebotomist (13 students) – as well as positions like health unit coordinator and medical reception (12 and 10 students respectively). HEET programs worked at all levels of the health care career pathway supporting workers with basic skill and foundational prerequisites as well as advanced training and pathways to credentials and certification.

**HEET STUDENT’S IMPRESSIVE RESULTS**

Because of the demographic profile of HEET, sometimes colleges and even HEET students themselves haven’t felt that these workers were “ready for college.” One leader in the program reported that a real strength of HEET was the ability to **consistently challenge pre-existing notions of who “could succeed” in college and who “could be a nurse.”** The program demonstrated that HEET workers could successfully complete courses and programs of study, in spite of these concerns about their ability to meet college standards. Evaluation results showing that HEET students were doing as well or, often, better than other students in the same programs and classes helped build more acceptance and buy-in to this approach of more closely considering individual students and their qualities as workers.

A review of all available evaluations of HEET projects shows impressive performance of HEET students. The existing library of evaluations provides information about specific HEET partnerships for specific years. Method and data varies widely across these evaluations and only some provide comparative data. Of 18 program/year evaluations, 8 provided quantitative data on HEET student performance and comparative results for non-HEET students in 33 unique classes.

**PERSPECTIVES**

"**HEET has changed the culture of the entire ... department. Workers embrace learning and are confident about education and their jobs. HEET was a catalyst for that change.**"

- HEET Employer Leader
The results of these comparisons show that HEET students consistently did as well as or better than the more traditional student population. In fact, HEET students’ grades were the same or better than the grades of more “traditional” students in 28 of the 33 unique classes. For example, in 2009-10, HEET students at Bellevue College not only consistently outperformed non-HEET students, they also aced their courses. The average grade for the 11 HEET students in Introduction to Health that year was 3.8, for example. In Introduction to Anatomy and Physiology, the average grade of 17 HEET students was 3.6, and every one of the 11 HEET students in Communication received an A. The class average was 4.0 (compared to a non-HEET communications average of 3.3). HEET students at Lake Washington Technical College posted grades roughly a half a grade point higher than non-HEET students in Pharmacology and Mental Health Nursing despite the fact that on admission, their entry level GPAs, while meeting the colleges’ minimum standard, were below the average GPA for the rest of the nursing program.

These course-based evaluations of HEET student performance helped build the case for HEET, helped colleges and employers see potential in the workforce and the program, and helped build momentum in ongoing partnerships while inspiring new partnership development. The importance of these evaluations to the program was mentioned by a diverse array of leaders from colleges as well as from SEIU Healthcare 1199NW (the most consistently engaged union), and the SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi Employer Training Fund.

As one community college leader said about the work through HEET, “We are not changing the standards of our programs. We are changing the approach.” Their strong grades show that HEET students seized the opportunities provided by these new approaches. As one student stated, “I had tried twice before to complete Statistics, the last class I needed to finish my degree. The first time I dropped the class and the second time I ended up on a very long wait list. Then I saw the notification posted on my workplace cafeteria bulletin board about the Statistics class offered by the Training Fund (and HEET). The level of support they provided me, at no cost, solidified my confidence level that I was actually going to pass this class!”
Furthermore, strong HEET student performance suggests that some factors that lead to success for the working adult are not always considered in college assessments and admissions. The students’ extra motivation, experience, and worksite support may all be factors that help explain their strong outcomes. These non-academic factors of student success may be a key area for research and evaluation in the future.

**HEET PROGRAM INNOVATION**

The third essential element of HEET is innovation – finding new ways to work that ensure HEET students succeed in school and move into more secure or skilled positions. The partnership at the core of the HEET project provides the context for the innovation and the needs of incumbent workers become its drivers.

With HEET, and its focus on current health care workers, most programs are designed to move a targeted group of workers successfully through a specific course, credential, or skill set. As one community college leader explained, starting with the students and finding a way to make the programs work for them fundamentally changed the way the college thought about training. Assessment, too often used as a barrier to program entry, was re-evaluated in several HEET funded programs.

**PERSPECTIVES**

“I had tried twice before to complete Statistics, the last class I needed to finish my degree. The first time I dropped the class and the second time I ended up on a very long wait list. Then I saw the notification posted on my workplace cafeteria bulletin board about the Statistics class offered by the Training Fund (and HEET). The level of support they provided me, at no cost, solidified my confidence level that I was actually going to pass this class!

- HEET Student
The daily experience of working adults, often undervalued by the formal educational system, had to be reconceived as a resource and asset to be considered alongside prior academic record. By starting with very specific students, educators saw, built on, and connected to the strengths of those students. Particularly in early HEET years, some feared that this approach would “lower standards” in programs, but partnerships found that this approach extended opportunity to capable students who would be otherwise left out. As one HEET employer leader observed of programs to train nurses, educators were really willing “to go the extra mile, focusing on increasing success without decreasing standards.”

HEET innovation has extended to nearly every area and concern of training and student support. Programs developed new and comprehensive case management systems that were more expansive and connected more directly to the workplace environment than existing college guidance systems. These included student-to-student support systems – developing and training cohorts of worker/students and using the connections of coworkers to help reinforce success. Basic skills were contextualized to the health care setting and integrated with post-secondary content. Scheduling – both the scheduling of courses in relation to worksite shifts, and also moving the training schedule off the academic year – is an essential but often overlooked issue for the working adult. It became a consistent area of HEET project work. Case managers and often union representatives worked closely with worker/students and the direct supervisors to make sure the education and work schedules were compatible.

Thus, HEET partnership innovations supported workers both on the job and in the classroom. To limit time for transition from work to class, HEET programs consistently offered training at the workplace at hours convenient for workers.

\textit{HEET innovation has extended to nearly every area and concern of training and student support. Programs developed new and comprehensive case management systems that were more expansive and connected more directly to the workplace environment than existing college guidance systems.}
HEET partnerships also developed work-site strategies to secure support from supervisors (whose demands could easily derail training) and to build training into worksite cultures so that coworkers would be more likely to cheer on their colleagues in training than to resent their absence from work. Staff from the Training Fund played an increasingly important facilitating role in much of this work. As one employer pointed out, the Training Fund was "the perfect vehicle" because they "know how work with us. Their whole entire mission is growth and development."

It would be difficult to provide an exact accounting of every innovation of every partnership in HEET. These examples are indicative of the range and richness of practice.

» **PRE-REQUISITE PATHWAYS (MULTIPLE PROJECTS)** Several projects have worked to address systemic barriers faced by worker/students as they attempt to complete their often lengthy pre-requisite courses prior to beginning a healthcare training program. Creative adaptations in these programs included non-traditional and flexible scheduling, systematic case management support, contextualized instruction, accelerated developmental-level math and English classes, computer-based modularized math instruction, and improved course alignment within and across colleges. The Seattle College District, Bellevue College, and the northwest regional consortium of schools led by Bellingham Technical College, all contributed to these and other pre-requisite innovations.

» **HEALTH CARE CAREER LADDERS AND ADVANCED HUMAN SIMULATION** This program supported the use of a hospital simulation lab in pre-requisite coursework for worker/students studying to become nurses. The project supported college faculty to use the simulation lab to introduce nursing concepts into pre-requisite science and psychology courses. The project also developed joint training on simulation technology for college nursing faculty and hospital nurse educators, thereby bridging institutional divides and fostering a collaborative between hospital and college-based nurse educators. This development was extended into other projects and also to an innovation grant.

» **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY CAREERS IN HEALTHCARE** This program built on work of a project to green housekeeping jobs in health care. That program began with a federally funded grant and expanded under HEET to additional departments at Northwest Hospital. The project relied on an active labor/management team that engaged all levels of hospital and union leadership. Workers from nutrition and facilities/maintenance worked together on project-based efforts that simultaneously improved processes and trained workers. For example, workers in facilities maintenance helped develop measurements and metrics for use by other departments in assessing their contribution to an environmentally sustainable healthcare system. The project-based learning was facilitated through a five-credit Sustainability in Healthcare class at North Seattle Community College. A number of the students in this course went on to further their post-secondary education and some received promotions in their departments.
» **HEALTH CARE EDUCATION FOR ADULT LEARNERS** As of July 2013, Medical Assistants in Washington State are required to have an Medical Assistant-Registered (MA-R) or Medical Assistant-Certified (MA-C) designation in order to remain working as MAs. This HEET project built a competency-based system to help experienced and working MAs efficiently and successfully attain the needed certification. The project developed and implemented competency-based skills assessments (often conducted at an MA’s workplace), extensive use of credit for prior learning, condensed Saturday clinical skills labs, and an online national exam prep course. This groundbreaking work has fostered job security and built skills for working MAs. It also has demonstrated the potential of and need for these sorts of worker focused, competency based models for other healthcare career pathways in the college system.

» **HEALTH CARE PARTNERSHIP OF NURSING** This HEET partnership developed a cohort model for nursing. Members of the cohort were accepted based on a set of minimum eligibility criteria (rather than on a competitive basis with rest of the college’s nursing applicants). The cohorts’ outcomes in terms of retention, persistence, and NCLEX pass rates compared positively with “traditional” competitively selected students.

» **INTEGRATED CONTEXTUAL COHORT-BASED HEALTHCARE EDUCATION**

The project built a shared instructional plan for a consortium of colleges and developed customized classes for college preparation with industry skills embedded. The program developed new systems for working with industry partners - both labor and management -and improved training access for working adults through scheduling innovations.

» **MOVING FORWARD: CREATING CAREER PATHWAYS FOR NORTHWEST HOSPITAL WORKERS** This HEET project developed a number of innovations to support working adults including worksite classes for a cohort of students, partnership work on scheduling, and customization of curricula to health care settings. The cohort included workers from several hospitals together, allowing for smaller institutions to participate in otherwise inaccessible cohort based training and build regional economies of scale through multi-employer/multi-college collaboration.

» **RURAL ONLINE NURSING EDUCATION (RONE)** This HEET project (a continuation of another grant funded project) focused on training for rural areas, developing an on-line educational program for LPNs to make the move to RN. It addressed the persistent problem of retention of nurses in rural areas. This program was found to also address the needs of employers and healthcare workers in urban areas who needed the flexibility of on-line and hybrid programs in order to access nursing classes. It was later replicated broadly through a Recovery Act grant on healthcare career pathways.
These are just a sampling to give a sense of what has been possible with HEET. Each partnership developed new approaches at colleges and in worksites to solve concrete problems for workers and employers. Many partnerships continued, refining and extending successful approaches. HEET is a unique source for innovation because it provides sustained and focused but flexible resources. Further, HEET investments were leveraged by and connected to financial and other resources invested by stakeholders in each partnership. Utilizing and braiding multiple resources allowed for focused and effective programming and creative problem solving.

Colleges were inspired by the opportunity. As one college leader said: “Colleges have zero research and development dollars. This [HEET] was R&D - to try something different. And that’s had a long-term impact. Once we figured out that something worked better, we adapted that. HEET made our reputation with hospitals stronger and now we work with more.” Another mentioned that while everyone is interested in moving toward competency-based education, few resources actually support the real work to undertake the implied (and enormous) system change. HEET’s sustained support for innovation provided the leverage to actually move the system reform required by competency-based education.

UNIQUE ROUTES TO COMMON GOALS: TWO INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE HEET PARTNERSHIPS

HEET allows partnerships considerable latitude to respond to local conditions and evolve as industry needs and the external labor market change. The longevity and flexibility of the program has been embraced by many HEET partnerships allowing the resource to provide fuel for ongoing improvement and innovation.

In the following case studies we focus a bit more on two successful HEET partnerships. We focus on them because their similarities and differences demonstrate the range of approaches pursued in HEET. Both have been successful and long-standing. Both have strong partnerships at their center and have found ways to evolve and innovate in response to changing needs. Sharing key infrastructure, however, they have pursued unique approaches to the task of building the skills of incumbent health care workers.

The juxtaposition of these partnerships shows that HEET has been founded on strong principals – of industry engagement and focus on incumbent workers – in a flexible and responsive way. Different partnerships have pursued different strategies or priorities, but the impact of their work has consistently supported access to post-secondary education for the working adult and education for skills that employers need. HEET partnerships bring training into the workplace through educational innovation and customization of curriculum. And finally, the HEET program has created opportunities for structural innovation at the colleges and brought new students to the system.
In the first year of HEET, a consortium of North Seattle Community College (NSCC) partnered with Northwest Hospital and Medical Center (NWH), SEIU Healthcare 1199NW, and the SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi-Employer Training & Education Fund (Training Fund) in order to focus on the development of pathways to nursing careers. Over the next four years of programming, 93 worker/students from NWH took pre-requisites for nursing courses with HEET support. Importantly, HEET support did not end with the completion of pre-requisites for nursing courses. Facilitated by the continued availability of HEET and other labor-management support, many of these very same worker/students also went on to enroll in and complete the RN program at NSCC, as part of this multi-year process. Many classes were at NWH, and the NHW simulation lab was used for pre-requisite and preparatory programs.

In early years, this partnership established models that have become some hallmarks of HEET. The Training Fund’s capacity to represent both labor and management interests, to provide support to students, and to help convene and direct projects was developed and refined in this partnership. The Training Fund then disseminated this model and approach to other partnerships. The project also integrated nursing concepts into prerequisite courses like English 101.

The partnership implemented new admission criteria and evaluation strategies for HEET students. Several worker/students were assessed positively by case managers but did not test at required levels for admission into the nursing pre-requisite program. But NSCC, with its industry partners, experimented with admission requirements and evaluated results. In spite of lower scores on initial assessments, HEET students outperformed more traditional students. Indeed, HEET student grades exceeded the traditional student population in 8 out of 9 unique course offered over the course of the grant.

With compelling data on HEET student success in hand, the college and the HEET partnership continued to find new ways to invest in training and innovate with respect to admissions requirements. Once students transitioned into the RN program, a labor-management committee developed alternative acceptance criteria. This committee then worked in partnership with NSCC to identify the minimum academic threshold and to evaluate applicants through a simulation. Labor, management, and the college were able to come together to define non-traditional criteria that met the interests of all partners, and worker/students.

The industry goal of bringing a more diverse workforce to the higher paid professional and technical positions is demonstrated within the demographics of the HEET participants. Racial and ethnic “minorities” – Latinos, Asians, African Americans, etc. – made up the majority of the 93 HEET students. These students were also most often female and in their late 30s. (See Table A, below.)

This HEET partnership stands out for the commitment and leadership of management and labor to the project from its inception. Both spoke highly of their relationship before HEET and the way that HEET helped build and strengthen it. The industry – NWH and SEIU Healthcare 1199NW – together created a strong culture of for learning and advancement. HEET supported this partnership, extended the relationship to the college, and forged new approaches to educate NWH workers.

**Table A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Non-white</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>38 yrs</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDUSTRY/CROSS-CAMPUS COLLABORATION IN NORTHWEST WASHINGTON: THREE COLLEGES, FIVE EMPLOYERS, AND THREE UNIONS

Building on an existing collaboration among hospitals, this partnership in NW Washington received HEET funding starting in 2009. Bellingham Technical College (BTC) partnered with Whatcom Community College (WCC), Skagit Valley College (SVC), five regional hospitals, SEIU Healthcare 1199NW, the SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi-Employer Training & Education Fund (Training Fund), the United Commercial and Food Workers Local 21, the Washington State Nursing Association, the Northwest Alliance for Healthcare Skills, and the Northwest Workforce Council. HEET has helped this partnership develop support for pre-requisite coursework for healthcare occupations, Certified Nursing Assistant training, and LPN/RN bridge coursework.

More than 400 students have participated in HEET classes. Demographic data on these students is presented below. Reflecting the relatively more homogenous demographics of the region, HEET students in NW Washington are less diverse than HEET students at NSCC. In each year, 78 percent or more were white and students were generally in their late 30s. For the one course with comparative data on student success, HEET student posted higher average GPA than the non-HEET students.

Like the partnership at NSCC, NW Washington worked to develop cohorts of worker/students. The partnership took on issues of scheduling and integrating work and learning for the classes. In order to reach students effectively, colleges began to coordinate and harmonize their applications, assessment, and guidance systems. Given the overlapping labor market, and the ways that workers moved across health institutions in the region, such coordination was a direct benefit to workers, industry, and the colleges. The rural context creates serious challenges for training working adults - less density and scale and a more diffuse base of employers and educational institutions. The broad partnership brings coordination across employers, unions, and colleges that is essential to the success of this regional sector partnership.

NW Washington's regional approach has evolved over time in response to shifting demand for health care workers along with attention to the interests of both of the partnership's diverse employer and worker stakeholders. Early in the project, focus on LPN pathways to RN allowed many workers access to more secure positions. The recession and local health care industry changes brought about a decline in regional RN demand, so the colleges then refocused their efforts on creating more common standards and transferability across different colleges. The colleges and industry remain well coordinated and it is clear that as the region's economy and health care systems evolve, the colleges have developed the structure to respond. HEET is a critical source of support for innovation of this partnership.

Table B

DEMOGRAPHICS OF HEET WORKER/STUDENTS IN NW WASHINGTON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Non-white</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>34 yrs</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>38 yrs</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35 yrs</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>33 yrs</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HEET SYSTEMIC IMPACT

HEET has profoundly transformed workers lives. But through its partnerships, HEET has transformed systems as well, with innovations reaching beyond the boundaries of HEET projects to change education and workforce development systems themselves. Colleges have built new relationships, gathered information on industry demand and coming changes. Management and union leaders have built collaborative relationships and acquired a history of problem solving that increases the capacity to proactively respond to new challenges. Colleges and their instructors approach working adults in new ways, building programs with the unique capacities and constraints of these students in mind. System effects were consistently mentioned by respondent interviews when describing the most important and lasting effects of HEET funding. As one HEET employer stated, “HEET has changed the culture of the entire environmental services department. Workers embrace learning and are confident about education and their jobs. HEET was a catalyst for that change.”

In some instances, HEET also changed labor management relationships. According to one labor leader: “HEET has also helped transform labor-management relations – working together collaboratively helps both sides learn. We learn how to relate to each other in a different way. HEET builds up human relations, which doesn’t always happen in an adversarial labor-management relationship.”

HEET partnerships provide all three parties with new relationships and new ways of working that can provide a foundation for transformation of work beyond HEET. Some partnerships have evolved over time, identifying new projects and leveraging new resources to support them. Participating colleges have extended partnership work to secure millions of dollars in grants – including federal grants – in support of industry-focused training.

For example, the state-wide ARRA Health Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) was developed by education and industry partners that began working together in HEET. Similarly, a national Energy Training Partnership Grant awarded to H-CAP from DOL was implemented in Seattle (through sub-grants from H-CAP to NSCC and the Training Fund) and built on established HEET projects. Some colleges found that their success in HEET made their varied programs and training opportunities more interesting to the health care industry more broadly. Thus, HEET attracted new partners to the campus and influenced programs. As one community college leader put it: “Colleges too often think they have the answers. But here we were challenged to really work in a team and work in a real partnership.”
A significant but more administrative impact is also notable in some projects. HEET partnerships often engage multiple colleges and the discussion and coordination between colleges can illuminate irrationalities and roadblocks from the student perspective. They have undertaken serious steps to harmonize cross-college practices in healthcare admissions and training in order to make the student experience consistent and navigable. These partnership actions have influenced systemic change – new modes of thinking and new methods of acting not only in projects, but outside of them as well. Amongst the examples of HEET innovations with cascading impact are the following:

1 CREATION OF A CONSISTENT NURSING APPLICATION AT THE THREE CAMPUSSES OF SEATTLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Each of the three Seattle Community College campuses had unique applications for nursing programs. Seeing how this could be a barrier for students, campuses worked together to develop a common application for all three campuses. This innovation was identified in the context of HEET partnerships and work, but the impact reaches all students on nursing pathways in the Seattle district, not just those in HEET projects.

2 IMPLEMENTING A COMPETENCY BASED APPROACH

This HEET project, mentioned earlier, helps long-standing MAs meet the certification standard required by the state starting in 2013 (MAs must hold either the registered (MA-R) or certified (MA-C) designation). We focus on it here because the project reaches far beyond the original HEET partners that supported the innovation and, critically, because the project has fostered the implementation of a competency-based approach to education – long an aspiration of education systems but very difficult to achieve. The systemic implications of competency-based education are significant and the potential of the approach for adult workers is enormous. The MA-C program takes the workers where they are and provides education, training, and preparation for the certifying exam in ways that meets individual worker need. While “taking workers where they are” may seem to be a straightforward process, in reality, it is a complex and involved educational reform. The HEET partnership is implementing a system of credit for demonstrated skills (rather than the more traditional credit for time in class) in order to help experienced MAs get the credits they need to meet the new industry standard in Washington.
This is accomplished through competency-based assessments, as well as clinical skill and exam preparation classes as a means to qualify to sit for the certification exams. HEET has provided the funding to develop a modularized curriculum, a system of competency based assessments, and innovative, non-traditional classes.

The HEET partnership between Highline Community College, SEIU Healthcare 1199NW and Group Health was essential to implementation of the pilot program. Now the project is expanding across the state through a statewide consortium of Community Colleges, all of which contributed to the development of the competency based-system and are beginning its implementation at their campuses. This new system is a boon for employers, for workers (both MAs needing certification and other workers including Veteran Medics who can now more rapidly attain MA-C status) and their families, and for the patients they serve.

The implementation of this model of education stands as an example and provides real experience with an essential but difficult evolution in education. Competency-based approaches to education, training, and credentials could substantially change the playing field for working adults – allowing them to demonstrate skills and receive credit for knowledge developed outside the classroom. These systems are especially hard to build because they challenge traditional and foundational approaches to the structure and funding of education systems. Only in the context of a sustained grant (and considerable support from innovative college leaders) can the beginnings of a competency-based system be developed and implemented.

PERSPECTIVES

"Working together collaboratively helps both sides learn. HEET builds up human relations, which doesn’t always happen in an adversarial labor-management relationship."

-HEET Labor Leader
3 DEVELOPING NEW CONTENT DELIVERY METHODS

In several other programs new methods of delivery of content were developed in HEET and then generalized to a broader population. One example is the RONE project (Rural Online Nursing Education), which provided on-line training and allowed for completion of nursing clinical rotations at their own hospitals to LPNs in order to support their advancement in an articulated RN program. The on-line delivery mode made training more accessible to this widely dispersed workforce. While the model was developed under a different grant, HEET allowed it to continue and expand its pilot phase. This distance learning nursing program has since been adapted and implemented in other parts of the state.

HEET investment in simulation labs and curriculum development at campuses and area health care systems provides a second example where teaching and delivery changed beyond the HEET partnerships. HEET invested in simulation models and curricula that have now been used at the professional education level, the pre-requisite level, and the post licensure level. This collaboration between education and industry across the stages of education – particularly but not only in nursing – is helping bridge the current and changing demands of the industry with the need to train professionals in ways that adapt to new skill demands. These programs and HEET partnerships have established stronger relationships between campuses and health care systems that have morphed into broader coordination on training and clinical rotations, as well as joint college/industry training on instructor strategies and simulation curricula.

4 EXTENDING SUPPORTS

Student supports extending beyond the classroom have been an important aspect of almost all HEET projects. One example has been the development of a model for tutoring that has tutors working directly with class instructors and then, based on instructor input, providing targeted support to address areas of weakness using a group-tutoring model. Partners in HEET evaluations over the last two years have praised the effectiveness of this targeted tutoring model. Future evaluations should look at how this model has been extended and whether or not it has been generalized into other programs outside of HEET. Systemic HEET impacts like these are another measure of the extent of the reach of this funding.
HEET LESSONS FOR WASHINGTON STATE AND BEYOND

HEET is an important funding source to train health care workers. But it is much more. HEET investments secure personal success and cascade into institutional change. The program suggests that alignment of industry interests and resources – represented and supplied by both labor and management – with college interest and resources can generate programmatic innovations that become new ways of doing business. In turn, these innovations and cascading impacts lead to profound results and support for working students in the health care industry.

Through its partnerships, HEET has created a new way of working on training. It focuses resources on success of the participants not only as students, but as workers as well. Unique aspects of the design of HEET have provided the foundation for these results:

» SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION, NOT JUST OUTPUTS. HEET partnerships were expected and required to innovate. This was not a source that was simply established to fund more of what was already going on – or to provide some scholarships to health care workers so that they could engage in existing programs. HEET expected innovation, and it required the partnership of management, labor, and colleges to build the innovation. Funding focused on outputs too often simply secures increased flow through existing channels, a good thing, but not always sufficient in times of change or when existing systems don’t work well for specific populations. HEET funded the development of new channels for success adapted to the needs of the working adult.

» SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRONG PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION. “Industry engagement” is an aspiration of countless efforts. By requiring partnerships to design and support HEET programming, HEET provided a more structured framework for the engagement of industry. This is not simply industry sign off on plans made by colleges. HEET requires joint engagement in the project on program design and implementation of training innovations. And importantly, industry, both labor and management, bring real resources including money, time, and location to the project as well. HEET funding required partnership, but also supported the development of partnerships. Too many funding sources assume that the infrastructure exists, and so limit their resource to student outcomes only. By supporting the partnership process itself, HEET reaped rewards for students, industry, and the education and training system alike.

The implementation of this model of education stands as an example and provides real experience with an essential but difficult evolution in education.
**REQUIRE REAL INDUSTRY INPUT IN PROGRAM DESIGN WITH EMPLOYER AND WORKER NEEDS CARRYING EQUAL WEIGHT.** From its inception, HEET – created and advocated for by Washington State Hospital Association and SEIU Healthcare 1199NW – has embraced labor and management as equal partners. “Industry” in HEET work means both labor and management and all projects must explicitly engage both sets of leaders. Like colleges, labor and management are invested in student/worker success. But their unique perspectives help refine and strengthen the programming. Labor’s voice and that of the workers it represents is too often missing during training program development. HEET design built labor in, and students, colleges, and employers have all benefited from the resources and worker-perspective labor leadership brings to the project.

** LEVERAGE PRIVATE FUNDING WITH PUBLIC RESOURCES.** HEET industry partners bring real resources, not just an approval stamp, to partnership projects. Active engagement from the labor and health care institutions is a serious commitment. Further, the SEIU Healthcare 1199 NW Multi-Employer Training and Education Fund brings leadership to partnership development and has built models of wrap around support and case management for worker/students. Their role and professional expertise has facilitated the relationships across organizations by keeping the needs of the industry at the center of projects. The Training Fund provides tuition to students through negotiated education benefits thereby allowing for a critical leveraging of resources that further support the use of HEET funds for innovations in program. Furthermore, that tuition benefit also provides students with an opportunity to continue their education post grant. Participating employers and unions supported recruitment efforts, provided rooms for meetings and classes, personnel for scheduling, and the use of simulation labs and equipment. Partners are engaged in building the solutions. Too often the resources of partners are counted against projects – the thinking being that if there are resources already, the public dollar is not needed. In HEET, partner resources are embraced and leveraged by public investment.

** MAINTAIN SUPPORT OVER TIME; MULTIPLE FUNDING CYCLES ALLOW PARTNERSHIPS TO REFINE, REDESIGN, AND MATURE.** In its first year, HEET programming was only for one year. But it became clear quite early that starting a partnership, delivering an innovative program, and conducting an evaluation of the activity were simply too much work to do in just a year. If programs and partnerships were working, they needed resources to refine and mature their work. HEET administrators changed the program cycle in response and while extra years of funding are not guaranteed, the prospects for extra years of support, especially for a functional program, are much better and more defined. Funding continuity helps partners stay invested in building and improving projects.
SUPPORT ONGOING EVALUATION TO IMPROVE PROGRAMS AND DISSEMINATE LESSONS LEARNED. Annual program evaluation was built into the HEET model as well. Many projects credited evaluation results with improving programs through the feedback and insight they provided. This was especially true of longer lasting partnerships, which considered previous evaluations and results when designing and refining programming. Further, the evaluations are credited with building support for HEET and HEET-like models on campuses. The evidence that HEET students were succeeding nudged college faculty into seeing these programs and students in a new light. The documented results of programs also led to instructor orientation and engagement in several colleges in ways that not only built buy-in but also a better understanding across the institutions of the needs and characteristics of the working adult student population.

These HEET lessons are important in considering the program in future years, and in the development of new funding streams for innovation by campuses in the coming years.

HEET AND NATIONAL POLICY ISSUES

At the national level, workforce development and policy change seeks to answer long-standing problems. Common priorities are broadly shared – meaningful employer engagement, integration of work and learning, credentials for working adults, stronger job quality – but practice often falls short of these aims. HEET policy and practice provide applied solutions to the problems posed by federal agencies, business and labor leaders, advocates and administrators from workforce boards and community colleges, and major national private philanthropic organizations.

How can public money connect and spur strong industry leadership and partnership with training and education systems?

Throughout the nation, workforce and education systems have sought to develop stronger connections to industry to gain from its input and leadership. Traditional structures like advisory boards will remain necessary, but states and the federal government are increasingly turning to sector and/or partnership strategies to secure effective response to industry workforce demand. Building new infrastructure for industry engagement is not a simple matter. And all too often, public systems have a hard time changing and do not have sufficient funding to undertake needed changes. In these cases, meaningful industry engagement and true system reform remain an aspiration.
By starting with new partnerships and questions, HEET has created a new way of doing business in the state. For workers, the results have been profound.

HEET has made industry partnership an integral and meaningful part of projects. Partners – labor and management – help develop and implement the program. They are co-creators and co-investors in the program and feel responsible and involved in making the program work. They invest important resources – time, money, facilities – to the projects. As a result, HEET partnerships have helped develop new approaches to training and education for participating health care workers and for health care programs over all. The HEET investment requires and secures partnership and meaningful engagement. The partnership brings diverse perspectives to common interests leading to new ways that employer, union, and college leaders work together. The HEET structure both requires and rewards committed and engaged industry leadership.

HEET experience also shows that one way to make training meaningful and accessible for workers is to be sure that both employers and unions are invested in the project. Joint labor and management leadership influences both the demand and supply side of the workforce equation. On the supply side, employers and unions can help advocate for educational strategies -- like the realignment of admissions policy or the contextualization of courses -- that work for working adults. On the demand side, the industry partnership opens the worksite itself to innovation. Labor and management buy-in can allow for restructuring of work schedule and work load for students, secure the support for their training from supervisors and coworkers, and provide other support to the student as a worker. HEET’s model supports working adults in education both in school and on the job.

How can the community college system better connect to and secure success and credentials for working adults?

Nationally, career pathways programs and bridge programs have become the prevalent tools for community college connection to working adults. Washington State’s own I-BEST program is a national model, integrating basic and occupational skills delivery for disadvantaged adults, and helping those adults connect to better jobs. HEET extends the lessons of I-BEST to a work and industry partnership context.
HEET bridges and pathways programs leverage union representation and employer commitment to strengthen training and education outcomes. First, in general, these workers have strong job quality and training infrastructure from the entry-level through skilled positions that surrounds and supports any bridge or pathway program. Second, the project focuses not only on worker advancement but also employers’ needs. HEET answers hospitals’ concern about the workforce of the future, both building a sufficient supply of skilled patient care workers and increasing the diversity of that workforce. The joint model secures and builds the worksite partnership to meet the needs of workers and employers. Third, through HEET partnerships, colleges find new ways to relate to the industry and the working adult, starting with workers at specific sites and with specific profiles or training needs. The focus on incumbent workers within partnerships allows for a strong and integrated structure of educational and worksite support.

Beyond that, colleges also learn more about the structure of work and the way that work is changing overtime. For these reasons and more, the unique labor/management partnership approach of HEET if implemented more broadly has the potential to strengthen national approaches to training for working adults.

How can we build stronger systems for racial equity and opportunity in the health care workforce?

One strategy to reduce racial/ethnic inequality in health outcomes is to develop greater diversity in the professional health care workforce (see Institute of Medicine (2010) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions (2006)). HEET provides an answer here as well, by building from the already diverse ranks of incumbent workers currently in the industry. HEET taps this talent pool and provides a pipeline to build skilled and diverse professional health care workers for the industry. All of the aforementioned lessons – seeing and building on the strengths and commitment of workers, customizing programs to their needs, creating supportive systems for them as students and workers – are also lessons about ways to effectively diversify the health care workforce.

HEET provides a model that delivers on national workforce priorities through meaningful partnership with the health care industry and support of its mission of bringing quality care to the community. This model is applicable far beyond the borders of Washington State, and, we hope, useful to thinking and refining models and funding streams in other states and nationally.
CONCLUSION: TURN UP THE HEET!

With six years of HEET in Washington State, there is more experience, wisdom, and innovation than can be easily summarized in a simple white paper. The projects, their partnerships, leadership, and approaches are impressive, varied, and inspiring. The lasting impact of investments is creating systemic change in colleges and their approaches to supporting and training working adults.

Here we have focused on HEET as a force for innovation. From HEET’s inception, the health care industry – labor and management – has been united behind the program. But instead of simply establishing a funding stream to train workers, HEET charged partnerships of labor, management, and education to innovate. Putting the partnership at the center of the project fundamentally alters its questions. Instead of marketing or tinkering with existing programs, partners asked what industry needed. Instead of sticking rigidly to entrance requirements that held too many current health care workers out of programs, colleges had to think about making programs that met the students where they were and got them training and skills to advance.

By starting with new partnerships and questions, HEET has created a new way of doing business in the state. For workers, the results have been profound. Each of the partners – labor, management, and colleges – report transformative change as well. And the sorts of reforms – from credit for competency, workforce diversity, and skills to training linked directly to industry needs – are at the very center of national priorities for workforce development. The program merits further study and the principles and policies on which it is founded deserve emulation in Washington and well beyond its borders. As one health care labor leader summed up: “To have a benefit for members that so profoundly affects their livelihood, in a time of inequality - we have a tool that can help workers move up. This program opens doors in the most profound way to people who wouldn’t have had opportunity before. As a benefit to members, it has far exceeded anything that we could have imagined. As a benefit to quality patient care, it equips front line care givers with higher skills. HEET is good policy.”

ENDNOTES

1 Further research into Hispanic underrepresentation in HEET may yield important insights for policy and practice in this program.

2 Data collected for race/ethnic distribution at Renton Technical College during 2008-09 combined Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American and Multiracial into one category labeled Other, Multiracial. Therefore, data on the percentage of HEET students identifying as one of the aforementioned is not available.
BACKGROUND REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS


ABOUT H-CAP

H-CAP is a national organization of SEIU unions and healthcare employers who are partnering on workforce education and training. Its related organization, H-CAP Education Association, comprises 15 labor/management and labor-based training organizations (that include over 700 employers and more than 400,000 workers). Both organizations are strongly committed to providing workplace skills and career pathways to their members/employees and bringing greater diversity into the healthcare professions. H-CAP works with its partners to disseminate best practices across the network, develop solutions to emerging issues, and create a more cohesive approach to policy issues. The organization also provides curriculum development, program development, research, and evaluation services to collaborating partners.

ABOUT COWS

Based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, COWS is a national think-and-do tank that promotes “high road” solutions to social problems. These treat shared growth and opportunity, environmental sustainability, and resilient democratic institutions as necessary and achievable complements in human development. COWS is nonpartisan but values-based. We seek a world of equal opportunity and security for all.