Giving Hope to Underrepresented Students to Earn a Living Wage

In 2007, Windward Community College started the Nursing Pathway as a way out of poverty for economically challenged students. The concept was to go beyond preparing students for low wage jobs as Nurse Aides ($12/hr.), to invest in students who would traditionally not seek professional degrees. Students are mentored along a “pathway” to a professional career as an LPN ($22/hr.) and ultimately as an RN earning a living wage of $35/hr. Through this program, students can improve the long-term outcome for themselves and the next generation, and also diversify the pool of health care workers.

To enter the Pathway, students:
1. Complete the Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) training
2. Pass American Red Cross Exam to be a CNA
3. Enroll in pre-nursing college courses – Maintain a 2.5 GPA
4. Be employed or volunteer as a CNA

To remain in the Pathway, CNA graduates:
- Volunteer two hours per week to help new, incoming Nurse’s Aide students to complete training and pass the American Red Cross CNA exam
- Attend a three-hour per week Prep to Health Careers course
- Volunteer four hours per semester at community health events
- Volunteer two hours per month in the Pathway Nursing Garden
- Work on one of eight leadership committees of the student-governed Pathway
- Students must drive the continued growth and success of their own program

What Students Say About the Nursing Pathway Program
“Hi, my name is Melisa Joines and I am a recent graduate of the Kapi'olani Community College Registered Nurse Program. The Pathway helped me accomplish my educational goals beyond my expectations by preparing me for the demands necessary in the professional field of nursing. Through the Nursing Pathway Program I have gained a lifelong support system. My high point in the program was experiencing the merging of Western medicine practices with Hawaiian medicinal healing. I was introduced to cultural practices otherwise unimaginable. As a Registered Nurse graduate, I would like to contribute to the Pathway ‘ohana by demonstrating clinical skills faced as a professional nursing student.”

— Melisa Joines, Nursing Pathway graduate, 2010
The Challenge to Help Students Begin Their Journey out of Poverty

CNA is an eight-week entry-level health care job training program. The investment of $1,200 tuition and $275 American Red Cross exam fee supports one Nurse Aide student for a job in the high-demand field of nursing. CNA’s are needed to care for Hawai’i’s increasing numbers of people aged 65 or older.

A further investment of $8,500 helps a CNA continue to higher education to be a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), most who work in long-term care; or students may choose to study in five other allied health fields.

An investment of $14,850 then helps a student continue to higher education to obtain an Registered Nurse (RN) degree. RN’s work in hospitals, long-term care settings, and community health. There are far-reaching benefits for you and the community.

Pathway students are:
• Knowledgeable about holistic healing options
• Advancing in a Pathway from low wage jobs to sustainable wages
• Earning opportunities in education through service
• Professionals trained to be active leaders in the healthcare community

The WCC Nursing Pathway Needs Your Commitment
• Certified Nurse Aide job training program tuition & exam fee $1,475
• College tuition for LPN $8,500
• College tuition for RN $14,850
• Nursing Pathway per student cost $24,825

“The CNA-LPN-RN Pathway Program is so successful it is winning state and national awards. But more importantly it is changing the lives of its students. Our students are climbing out of poverty and hopelessness to a better future. And by default, their children are able to reap the benefits of a better life. Please consider stepping forward to ask how you can help. The need for scholarships is urgent and real.”

—Doug Dykstra, Chancellor, Windward Community College

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Photos top to bottom:
1. Students learn about Hawaiian traditions
2. Dr. Jamie Boyd, Assistant Professor & Program Coordinator
3. Planting taro in the nursing garden
4. Student designed tapa for uniforms
5. Student volunteer at Ann Pearl Care Home
Photos by Peter Tully Owen