



KEY FINDINGS

INTERVIEWS WITH DEANS OF ALLIED HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS AT CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

**Funded by a grant to Fenton Communications
from The California Wellness Foundation**

December 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
THE PROMISE OF ALLIED HEALTH.....	2
COLLEGES NOT KEEPING UP WITH STUDENT DEMAND	2
OBSTACLES – AND OPPORTUNITIES – FOR INCREASING TRAINING CAPACITY	2
ALLIED HEALTH AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY	3
DETAILED FINDINGS.....	4
ALLIED HEALTH PROGRAMS MOST POPULAR	4
COLLEGES UNABLE TO ACCEPT ALL QUALIFIED APPLICANTS	5
<i>Factors in Turning Away Qualified Applicants</i>	<i>6</i>
CHANGES IN ALLIED HEALTH PROGRAMS.....	7
<i>Programs Added</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Programs Expanded.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Programs Eliminated.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Reduced Student Slots.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Reasons for Reducing or Eliminating Programs</i>	<i>13</i>
TRAINING CAPACITY	13
<i>Reasons for Remaining the Same.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Reasons for Increasing</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Reasons for Decreasing</i>	<i>14</i>
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.....	14
STATEMENTS ABOUT ALLIED HEALTH PROGRAMS	15

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This report summarizes the key findings from in-depth interviews with 33 Deans or Directors of Allied Health Training Programs at California Community Colleges. The interviews were conducted over the telephone from November 15 through December 2, 2010.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Promise of Allied Health

Allied health training programs are overwhelmingly among the most popular at community colleges. Seven in ten (70%) deans say their allied health programs are the most sought after programs, and two-thirds (66%) say waiting lists are among the longest for any programs at their colleges. One important reason for this is the success graduates have in finding work in these professions – 97 percent of deans say their allied health graduates are usually successful in finding work.

Colleges Not Keeping Up with Student Demand

Although allied health programs are highly sought after, only six percent of deans report they are able to accept all qualified applicants for their programs, and just over one in four (27%) accepted all or most.

While nearly six in ten (58%) community colleges either added (33%) or expanded (36%) an allied health program in 2009 or 2010, four in ten (42%) eliminated a program (24%) or reduced the number of available student slots in a program (21%) during this time. Two in ten (21%) say that they both added or expanded a program and eliminated or reduced a program. The same portion (21%) reports that they maintained their status quo – neither adding, expanding, eliminating or reducing programs.

Obstacles - and Opportunities - for Increasing Training Capacity

With the budget reductions that many schools faced during the past two years, it is not surprising that nearly two-thirds (64%) of those colleges that turned away qualified applicants say lack of funding is an extremely or very important factor in why qualified applicants are refused admittance.

The budget is not the only limiting factor for these schools, though. Almost two-thirds (65%) of deans at colleges that turned away qualified applicants say that too few partnerships with health providers is an extremely or very important factor in why they have to turn away qualified applicants. In fact, in a separate question, 81 percent of all deans believe more partnerships with health providers would help them expand their capacity to train workers.

A majority (53%) of deans at colleges that turned away qualified applicants say that the lack of affordable clinical space is another extremely or very important reason for turning away qualified applicants.

Finally, almost six in ten (57%) deans whose colleges turned away qualified applicants cite the lack of funding to hire the instructors needed for that field as an extremely or very important reason for rejecting qualified applicants.

Given the uncertainty of the state budget in the coming years, 60 percent of deans say they will probably or definitely not launch new programs, and nearly that proportion (57%) doubt they will increase the number of slots in existing programs.

The implementation of federal health care reform may also impact the future of allied health training programs. Three out of four (75%) deans believe federal health care reform will only increase the demand for allied health workers.

Allied Health and Cultural Competency

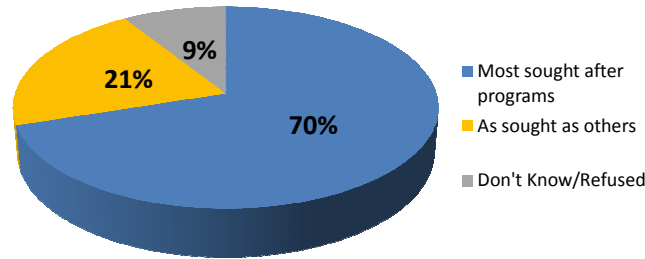
As policymakers and health providers look to diversify the health care workforce - in order to assure more culturally aware care for an increasingly diverse patient population - graduates of allied health can play an important role. More than eight in ten (82%) deans say their allied health students reflect the ethnic makeup of people in their area - those who they would serve as patients.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Allied Health Programs Most Popular

Seven in ten (70%) deans say the allied health training programs are among the most sought after programs at their colleges. Two in ten (21%) say they are as sought after as others. A minority of schools (9%) were unable to answer this question broadly for all of their allied health programs, stipulating that some programs were among the most sought after while others were less sought.

Compared to Other Programs, How Sought After are Allied Health Programs?



In support of this finding, two-thirds (66%) of deans agree that waiting lists for allied health programs are among the longest for their college (45% strongly agree). We also heard anecdotally over the course of the survey from many deans that they have substantial waiting lists for their programs.

Allied health programs are likely to be among the most popular because of the success graduates of these programs have in finding jobs in their field. Fully 97 percent of deans agree (55% strongly) that graduates of their programs are successful in finding employment in their field.

Agreement with Statements							
<i>Ranked Greatest to Least by Strongly Agree</i>							
	TOTAL AGREE	STRGLY AGREE	SWHT AGREE	TOTAL DISAGREE	SWHT DISAGREE	STRGLY DISAGREE	[UNSURE]
Graduates of our allied health programs are usually successful in finding employment in their field.	97%	55%	42%	3%	--	3%	--
Waiting lists for allied health programs are among the longest for our college.	66	45	21	21	6	15	12

While the vast majority of deans report that their students are successful in landing allied health jobs, we also hear some concern about the impact the current economic recession is having on immediate employment opportunities. Some deans say that the recession is impacting their students in that more of them are having difficulties finding employment than had previously been the case. They view this situation as temporary in that the recession is preventing doctors and hospitals from hiring new staff, despite their needs.

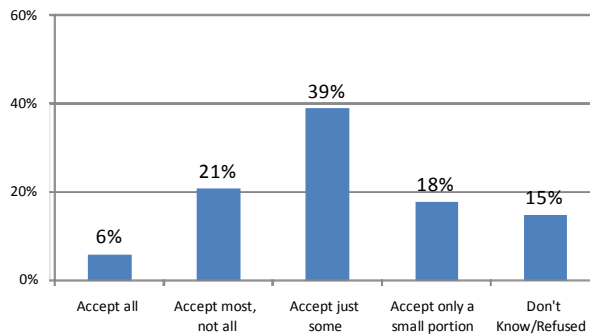
One dean explains that there is an aging segment of the allied health care workforce that is delaying retirement due to the uncertainties in their own economic futures and that this is impacting new entrants in the field. He expects this bottleneck to open up again in a few years and believes there will then be a shortage of allied health workers.

Another dean says he saw local hospitals hold off on hiring this past year because of the federal health care reform discussion and their uncertainties about its impact on their businesses.

Colleges Unable to Accept All Qualified Applicants

Just six percent of college deans report that they are able to accept all of the qualified applicants to their allied health training programs. Two in ten (21%) say they accept most, but not all of the qualified applicants. The majority report that they accept just some of the qualified applicants (39%) or only a small portion (18%). Fifteen percent (15%) are uncertain.

Qualified Applicants



Factors in Turning Away Qualified Applicants

Five possible factors in turning away qualified applicants were offered to the community college deans. Almost eight in ten (78%) deans cite lack of funding as an important factor in their having to turn away qualified applicants (43% extremely, 21% very, 14% somewhat important). Just 18 percent say it is not a factor at all and four percent are uncertain.

Three-quarters (76%) of deans say that too few partnerships with health care providers for training or internships are important factors, with 29 percent saying it is extremely important, 36 percent very important, and 11 percent somewhat important. One quarter (25%) say this factor is not important at all and no one is uncertain on this question.

A similar portion (75%) says that the lack of funding to hire the instructors needed for that field is an extremely (32%), very (25%), or somewhat (18%) important factor in these decisions. Just 14 percent say it is not a factor at all and 11 percent are unsure. In many cases, deans report that it is difficult to attract instructors in certain allied health fields because their colleges cannot compete with industry salaries which are much higher outside of academia.

Seven in ten (71%) deans say the lack of affordable clinical space available to help students finish their coursework is an important factor in turning away qualified applicants (32% extremely, 21% very, 18% somewhat important). Just over one in five (22%) say it is not a very important factor (11%) or not a factor at all (11%) and seven percent are unsure.

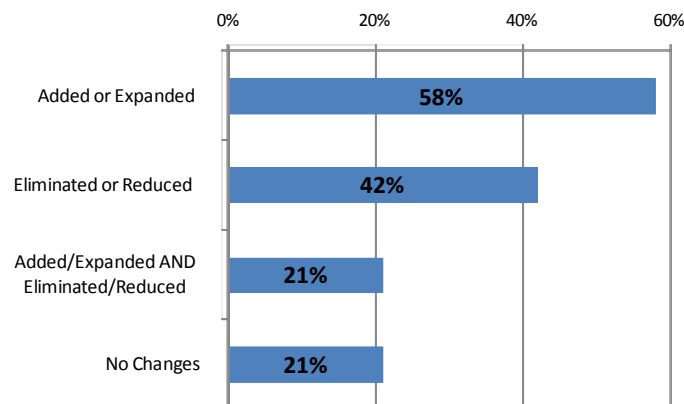
Less than half (46%) cite lack of financial aid or affordable financial aid for students as an important factor in turning applicants away - just seven percent say it is extremely important, seven percent say it is very important and 32 percent say it is somewhat important. One quarter (25%) say lack of financial aid is not very important and 18 percent say it is not an important factor at all. Just over one in ten (11%) are uncertain on this question.

Importance of Factors in Turning Away Qualified Applicants <i>Ranked Greatest to Least by Total Important Factor</i> <i>(n=28, asked of the 85% of deans whose schools turned away qualified applicants)</i>							
	TOTAL IMPORTANT	EXT IMP	VERY IMP	SWHT IMP	NOT VERY IMP	NOT IMP AT ALL	[UNSURE]
Lack of funding	78%	43%	21%	14%	--	18%	4%
Too few partnerships with health care providers for training and intern or apprenticeship opportunities.	76	29	36	11	--	25	--
Lack of funding to hire the instructors needed for that field.	75	32	25	18	--	14	11
The lack of affordable clinical space available to help students finish their coursework.	71	32	21	18	11	11	7
Lack of financial aid or affordable financial aid for students.	46	7	7	32	25	18	11

Changes in Allied Health Programs

Overall, nearly six in ten (58%) community colleges either added or expanded an allied health program in 2009 or 2010. Four in ten (42%) eliminated or reduced a program during this time. One in five (21%) report that they both added or expanded programs *and* eliminated or reduced other programs in the last two years. One in five (21%) also report that they made no changes during this time - not adding, expanding, eliminating or reducing allied health programs.

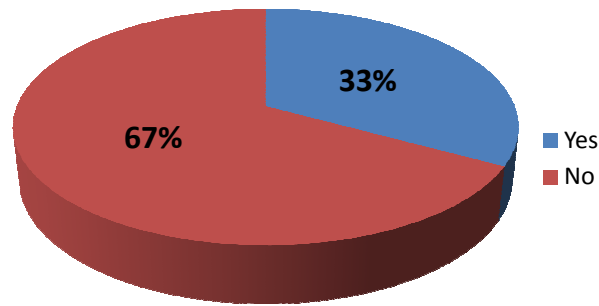
Changes in Allied Health Programs



Programs Added

Just one-third (33%) of community college deans say they added new allied health training programs in 2009 or 2010, while twice as many (67%) say they did not add programs during this time.

Added New Allied Health Training Programs



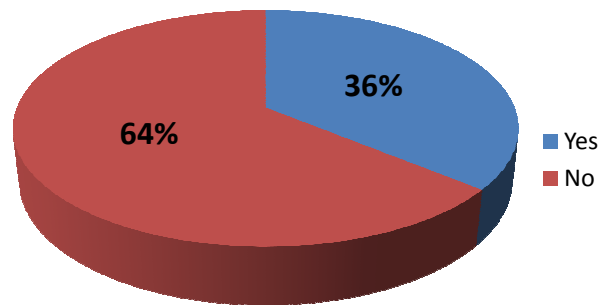
The following table shows that the 12 new programs added by these community colleges cover a variety of allied health fields.

<i>Programs Added (n=12)</i>		
	n = number who added that program	% among those who added programs
Medical Assisting - Administration	2	17%
Phlebotomy	2	17
Computed Tomography (CT)	1	8
Chronic Care	1	8
Health Care Interpreter	1	8
Medical Lab Technician	1	8
Paramedic Program	1	8
Pharmacy Technician	1	8
Physical Therapy Assistant	1	8
Radiologic Technology	1	8

Programs Expanded

Just over one-third (36%) of deans say they expanded allied health training programs in 2009 or 2010. Sixty-four percent (64%) of deans say they did not expand programs in the past two years.

Expanded Allied Health Training Programs



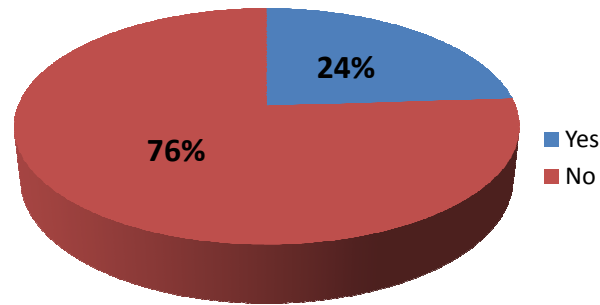
Of the 23 programs that were expanded, over one-quarter of these (6 programs) were Health Information Technology programs. Four Medical Assisting programs were also added. Other programs were mentioned two or fewer times.

Programs Expanded (n=23)		
	n = number who expanded that program	% among those who expanded programs
Health Information Technology	6	26%
<i>Health Information Technology (Electronic Medical Records)</i>	3	13
<i>Health Information Technology (Implementation Support Specialist)</i>	1	4
<i>Health Information Technology (Technology Software Support)</i>	1	4
<i>Health Information Technology (Practice Workflow & Information Management Redesign Specialist)</i>	1	4
Medical Assisting	4	17
Dental Assisting	2	9
Pharmacy Technician	2	9
Central Supply Sterile Processing	1	4
CAN	1	4
Computed Tomography Scan	1	4
EMT	1	4
Health Education	1	4
Medical Coding/Billing	1	4
MRI	1	4
Occupational Therapy Assistant	1	4
Speech Language Pathology	1	4

Programs Eliminated

One-quarter (24%) of deans eliminated one or more allied health training programs in the last two years. Over three-quarters (76%) did not have to eliminate any programs.

Eliminated Allied Health Training Programs



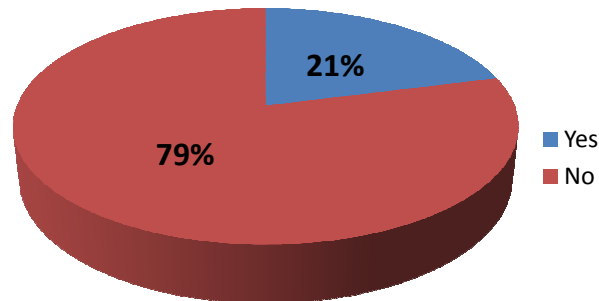
A total of 14 programs were eliminated in 2009 and 2010, according to the deans surveyed. These programs represent a variety of fields.

<i>Programs Eliminated (n=14)</i>		
	n = number who eliminated that program	% among those who eliminated programs
Phlebotomy	2	14%
Associate Degree Nursing	1	7
Diet Technician	1	7
Home Health Aid	1	7
Licensed Vocational Nursing	1	7
Psychiatric Technician (prisons, state)	1	7
Medical Assistant - Clinical	1	7
Medical Assisting	1	7
Medical Transcription	1	7
Multi-Skills Technology Program	1	7
Pharmacy Technician	1	7
Speech Language Pathology	1	7
Surgical Technology	1	7

Reduced Student Slots

Just two in ten (21%) community colleges reduced the number of available student slots in any of their allied health training programs in 2009 or 2010, while the vast majority (79%) did not reduce student slots.

Reduced Student Slots in Allied Health Training Programs



Of the eight programs that had reduced student slots in 2009 and 2010, two of these were Licensed Vocational Nursing programs and two were Phlebotomy programs.

<i>Programs Reduced (n=8)</i>		
	n = number who reduced that program	% among those who reduced programs
Licensed Vocational Nursing	2	25%
Phlebotomy	2	25
Dental Assisting	1	13
Medical Imaging	1	13
Psychiatric Technician	1	13
Surgical Technician	1	13

Reasons for Reducing or Eliminating Programs

The following summarizes the verbatim reasons deans offered for why they had to reduce available student slots or eliminate allied health programs.

The reasons that deans offered for why they either eliminated allied health programs or reduced student slots varied only slightly. Most say these actions were taken because of the reduction in their budgets. Some also say they did not see enough employer demand to warrant continuing programs in certain fields; they were uncertain whether their students would be able to obtain jobs upon completion of the program.

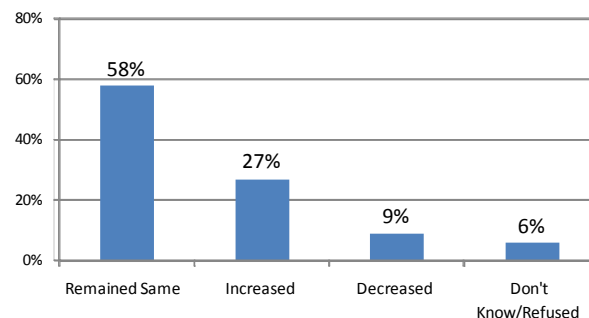
The difficulty in finding suitable placement sites was also a factor for some deans in why they reduced or eliminated programs. They report that the placement sites in their area were either at capacity or had been reduced.

Only a few deans say that low enrollment in programs or low-caliber applicants were the reason for these actions. One dean cited changing technology - the move to electronic medical record-keeping - as the reason for eliminating their medical transcription program.

Training Capacity

The majority of deans (58%) say their capacity to train allied health workers remained the same over the last two years. Over one-quarter (27%) say their capacity increased during this time, while just nine percent say it decreased.

Capacity to Train Allied Health Workers



Following is a summary of the reasons that deans offer for why their training capacity has increased, decreased or remained the same.

Reasons for Remaining the Same

Many deans say that the main reason their capacity has remained the same is due to budget limitations. They say with their limited resources, they cannot take on new students, hire additional faculty, or add classes or new facilities.

Another common reason that deans report their capacity has remained the same is that they have a limited number of clinical sites for their programs and they have not seen these sites able to take on more students.

Reasons for Increasing

Most deans who say their capacity to train allied health workers has increased in the past two years say this is a result of additional grant funding they received. This additional funding allowed them to expand existing programs, add new ones, or hire additional faculty.

A few deans also say that their capacity increased because demand from students for their programs increased. In one case, this increased demand was attributed to people seeking retraining because of the poor economy.

Reasons for Decreasing

Just three deans report that their capacity to train allied health workers decreased – the primary reason being a lack of funding for qualified instructors.

Looking to the Future

Future budget considerations lead the majority of deans to say that they will probably or definitely not make significant changes to their allied health programs in the next few years – whether that is launching a new program, eliminating a program, increasing the number of training slots or reducing the number of training slots.

Greater proportions of deans say it is not likely they will launch a new program (60%) or increase the number of slots (57%) than those who say it is likely (36% launch new program, 39% increase slots). At the same time, just 18 percent say it is likely they will eliminate programs and just 12 percent say it is likely they will reduce available slots. Over eight in ten say it is not likely they will eliminate programs (81%) or reduce slots (84%).

Likelihood of Allied Health Program Changes <i>Ranked Greatest to Least by Definite Likelihood</i>							
	TOTAL LIKELY	DEFINITELY	PROBABLY	TOTAL NOT LIKELY	PROBABLY NOT	DEFINITELY NOT	[UNSURE]
Launch a new allied health training program	36%	12%	24%	60%	36%	24%	3%
Increase the number of training slots that you have in allied health programs	39	9	30	57	36	21	3
Eliminate an allied health training program	18	6	12	81	33	48	--
Reduce the number of training slots that you have in allied health programs	12	3	9	84	48	36	3

Statements About Allied Health Programs

- * More than eight in ten (84%) deans agree that their college has in place specific efforts to better attract and retain students of color in allied health programs (42% strongly agree). A similar level - 82 percent - agree (58% strongly) that the mix of students in their allied health programs reflects the ethnic and racial mix of people in their area.

A similar portion agrees (81%) that more partnerships with health care providers would expand their capacity to train future allied health workers (39% strongly agree).

- * When asked if the federal health care reform legislation will increase demand for allied health care worker services and training programs, three-quarters (75%) agree that it will (36% strongly agree). Nearly two in ten (18%) say they are uncertain if the reform will increase demand for allied health programs.

A much lower 42 percent agree that a lack of consistency in prerequisites and transfer of credits is a problem for students looking to enroll in their programs (21% strongly agree). Over half (54%) of deans disagree with this statement.

Agreement with Statements
Ranked Greatest to Least by Strongly Agree

	TOTAL AGREE	STRGLY AGREE	SWHT AGREE	TOTAL DISAGREE	SWHT DISAGREE	STRGLY DISAGREE	[UNSURE]
The mix of students in our allied health programs generally reflects the ethnic and racial mix of people living in our area.	82%	58%	24%	15%	9%	6%	3%
Our college has in place specific policies or efforts to better attract and retain students of color into our allied health training programs.	84	42	42	9	9	--	6
More partnerships between our college and health care providers would expand our capacity to train future allied health workers.	81	39	42	15	6	9	3
The recently-passed federal health care reform legislation will increase demand for allied health care worker services and training programs.	75	36	39	6	6	--	18
The lack of consistency in prerequisites and transfer of credits is a problem for students interested in enrolling in our allied health programs.	42	21	21	54	30	24	3