

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center Pipeline Programs

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About Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) is one of 14 teaching hospitals in the greater Boston area, and is affiliated with Harvard Medical School. BIDMC has 8,000 employees (6,100 budgeted full time equivalents), 649 patient beds and 650,000 annual patient visits. 19% of all jobs in Boston are in healthcare, 15% of which are in hospitals themselves, making the healthcare sector a prime candidate for workforce development programs.

The Problem

Prior to the implementation of the current workforce development programs at BIDMC beginning in 2004, the hospital was facing several major problems. Nurse vacancy rates were at 5%, along with staggering vacancies in surgical technologists (28% vacancy rate) and medical laboratory technicians (15% vacancy rate). The hospital's short-term responses were to do without a full complement of staff, which caused strain on employees and on patients, to staff shifts with employees paid overtime, or to work with agencies to hire temporary qualified employees at a high rate.

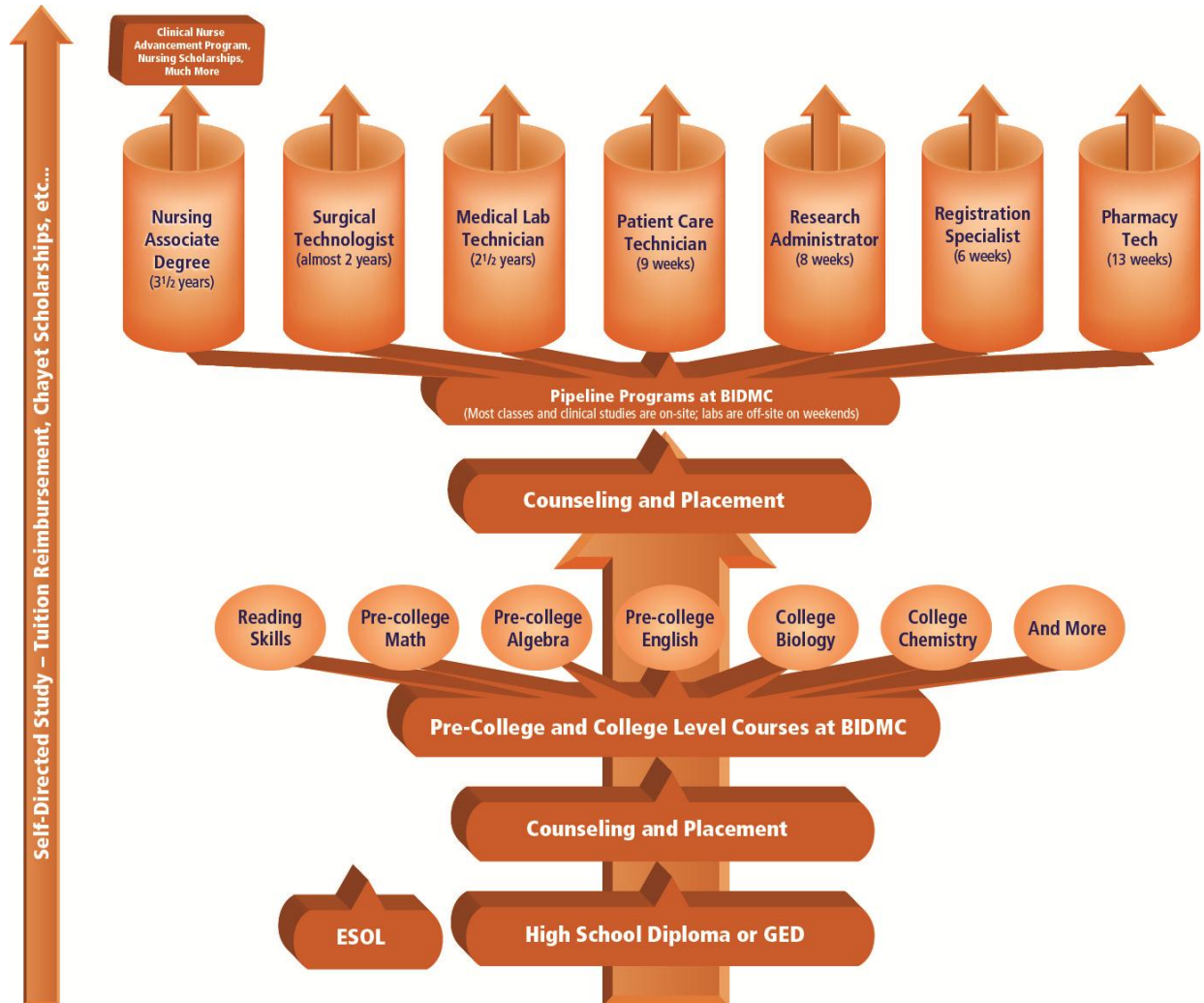
The Solution

The solution reached by BIDMC was to develop pipeline programs allowing for competitive selection of employees for training programs offered on-site, part-time (to allow for employees to continue working their current jobs full-time), and at little to no cost. Each participant is guaranteed a job with BIDMC at the end of successfully completing the program. Monetary support for the programs was provided by both grants from external funders and hospital operating costs. Pipeline programs include Research Administrator, Registered Nurse, Medical Laboratory Technician, Surgical Technician, Patient Care Technician, Registration Specialist, and Pharmacy Technician.

- **Patient Care Technicians** are nursing assistants in an acute care setting. The BIDMC nursing leadership made the decision to hire more career PCTs (as opposed to nursing students) to stabilize the workforce. A marketing strategy was developed targeting current food and environmental service workers, with the dissemination of brochures, staff meetings and information sessions. A cohort of employees was selected through a competitive process that included academic screening and interviews. Classes were taught on nights and weekends by a nurse paid by the hospital. The course was capped with a 3-week Practicum, allowing for participants to leave their current jobs and be paid as PCT aides on the nursing payroll. Students were guaranteed a job with BIDMC upon the successful completion of the course. Those who failed to complete the program would be allowed to return to their prior jobs.
- **Medical Laboratory Technicians** perform tests on body fluids and tissues samples, and analyze the results in the Pathology lab. The position requires an Associate Degree and certification,

with a Bachelor's required for a Technologist. With a 15% vacancy rate and 14% of the workforce aged 60+, the need for new trainees was imminent, yet there wasn't a MLT program in Boston. The hospital then partnered with a local community college to develop a 3 year part-time program to deliver what would be a 2 year full-time associate's degree curriculum. The process began by screening and selecting current employees. The first 6 semesters of the program encompassed courses taught after work and labs on Saturdays. The final 6 months included a lab practicum on site at the hospital. At this point, the employees were hired into a Med Lab Tech Aide role, maintaining their previous salary and benefits. Upon graduation and passing certification, he/she is hired into the Med Lab Tech role. Graduates have the further opportunity to earn their bachelor's degree over time.

Figure 1: Pipeline Program



Program Results

Figure 2: Patient Care Tech Program Results

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Applicants	23	34
Selected	9	10
Entered Clinical	8	10
Graduated/Placed	8 (June 2008)	10 (June 2010)
Still at BIDMC	6 (4 year)	8 (2 year)
Avg Starting Salary	\$12.45	\$13.44
Avg New Salary	\$13.47	\$13.96
Increase	8%	4%
Cost of Program	\$17K (\$12K was PCT aide salaries)	\$20K

Figure 3: Med Lab Tech Program Results

Applicants	82
Met academic standards	38
Selected for program	25
Graduated & earned Assoc. Degree	17
BIDMC Hires	10
Average Salary increase	9% (\$1.58/hr)
Vacancy rate - 2008	9%
Vacancy rate - 2010	5%

Factors for Success

In order for a pipeline program of this nature to flourish within a large, multi-faceted organization such as a hospital, several factors are crucial to success. Firstly, it is critical that high-level management such as the senior VP of human resources, CEO and COO understand and champion the project in order to set a standard for trickle-down support. Furthermore, the staff as a whole must project a unified, supportive front, and be privy to clear communication of rules and expectations. A dedicated staff will be assembled inside the employer to undertake the everyday tasks required of the project. Participants must understand that their guaranteed employment is entirely dependent on the successful completion of the program, and not all who start will necessarily finish. And finally, the hiring department must see the potential benefits of such a program, and participants must be thoroughly screened.

Why Do This?

The benefits of the implementation of a pipeline training program of this nature are far-reaching and many. BIDMC saw many of their vacancies filled, and the amount of overtime pay needed for over-extended employees was greatly reduced. With the culture of opportunity cultivated by this program, an increase in employee morale and retention was noted, along with a lower turnover of new hires and more diversity along the career spectrum. Better problem solving skills for dealing with changing labor needs in healthcare were promoted, as BIDMC gained a greater widespread understanding of hiring needs. This program helped BIDMC become an employer of choice in the greater Boston area, and such results are expected when implementing similar pipeline programs elsewhere.