

FOCUS ON HEALTH CARE

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KEEPING PACE

Health care drives New York's economy

BY HARRIET R. FELDMAN

Health care jobs continue to drive the New York economy. According to state officials, private-sector jobs at hospitals and throughout health care exceeded 1.2 million last year, spiking more than 18 percent over the past decade. In the Hudson Valley, including Westchester and Rockland counties, about 130,000 jobs were in health care, or 17 percent of all private-sector employment in 2017.

Most Pace University College of Health Professions students in Pleasantville are from the Hudson Valley and work in New York state after they graduate. They take jobs

and earn more than \$75,000 a year, many over \$90,000. Attrition in our health professions programs is low and graduates who take licensure and certification exams pass at rates of 95 percent to 100 percent, depending on the program. They leave with the skills and knowledge to provide primary, acute and chronic care management, and pursue leadership in practice, education, research and health policy. In Pleasantville, they are nurses, physician assistants, nutritionists/dietitians, and in the near future, occupational therapists. In New York City, they are also speech/language pathology majors.

Change is a constant in our increasingly diverse and aging population. These reali-

ties confront us as we educate future and current health professionals. The next generation of health providers must be smart, flexible, confident and culturally competent. They need the tools to provide care that is both evidence-based and sensitive to resource availability. Today's health providers must be prepared to lead, both at the bedside and at the top of the organizational ladder to ensure quality outcomes.

Health professions programs collaborate with health care facilities. We partner on many levels, not solely through our clinical placements, which we depend heavily on to mentor our students in the skills they need to be successful, but also as caregivers, researchers and propo-

nents of higher education.

Three of our clinical partners have co-developed individual elective courses with our nursing program to help meet the workforce needs of their institutions, one in oncology, a second in neonatal intensive care and a third in perioperative care. In exchange, we have provided a variety of supports to these institutions, including an opportunity to use our Center of Excellence in Healthcare Simulation to train their staff in a variety of essential procedures. In another instance, we are providing the services of one of our senior faculty to support their nurse residency program.

We depend heavily on those health professionals who act as preceptors to our

students. Many are not familiar with this term, so I will explain. A preceptor is an expert in a specific field, such as a nurse practitioner, physician, physician assistant or occupational therapist. They mentor students in these fields of study by demonstrating best practices and guiding the students to do likewise. They are critical to student learning and health professional programs depend heavily on their participation in the education of our students. A number of our preceptors serve in this capacity at no cost to the student and/or educational institution. However, some charge exorbitant fees to serve in this capacity, much of which increases the cost of the education for our students. Pace students

are typically first-generation college students.

There is pending legislation in New York to help remedy this situation by offering tax credits to health professionals who serve as preceptors to students in our programs. The bill passed both the Assembly and Senate last year, but Gov. Andrew Cuomo did not sign the bill. We continue to work to move this initiative forward as it would make a difference for many students studying health professions.

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