Workforce Development Program
Student Testimonials

Learn About Our Students – Recent Student Biographies

Brian Rice
Gateway Community College, AZ

Rice has a PhD in Counseling Psychology from the University of Missouri-Kansas City and worked in a variety of health care settings before coming to GateWay Community College. However, he realized that he needed to remain current with shifting economic and health care trends, so he enrolled in the Management of Clinical Information Technology Program at the college to complement his strong health care background with much-needed IT skills. After completing his seven-week certification in March 2011, Rice began teaching in the program while he continued to pursue additional opportunities in the field. *June 2011*

Amy Mund, LPN
Lake Region College, ND

Amy Mund completed the Clinician/Practitioner Consultant Certificate at Lake Region College at the end of March 2011. Because of her health information technology (health IT) training experience, she now conducts training workshops in health IT at her workplace. Along with her added responsibilities, came a raise in pay! *October 2011*

Cassie Hodges
Montana Tech, MT

Cassie Hodges graduated from Montana Tech in May 2011 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Care Informatics and an HIT Certificate. After completing her internship with the Mountain Pacific Quality Health Foundation, the Regional Extension Center (REC) for Montana and Wyoming, she was hired as a health information technology trainer for the REC. She is currently contracted to work with Billings Clinic Computer Information Systems Lab. Billings Clinic provides operational and technology support for seven branch clinics, six affiliated hospitals, and more than 20 specialty outreach clinics across Montana, Wyoming, and North Dakota. *June 2011*

Mark Miller
Bellevue College, WA

Miller has been involved with technology and training since 1978 in the military, aviation, electronics, and computer fields. He discovered the Bellevue College health IT program at a job fair in Renton, WA, and decided to enroll. After working on a successful launch of a major update to EHRs in a large area hospital, Miller has moved onto creating e-learning courses for the Certification Commission for Health Information Technology (CCHIT). In this position, he has been able to directly apply the Bellevue College program information, helping hospitals navigate their way through EHR implementation and meaningful use. *June 2011*

Brian Weathersby
Consumes River College, CA

Brian Weathersby served five years in the U.S. Air Force and earned a Bachelors of Science in Information Technology and a Master of Business Administration with an emphasis in technology management. He finds that many of the lessons he is learning in the health care information technology certificate program at Cosumnes River College are immediately applicable in his current work. He believes the program will prepare him to move into a new career in product or process management. *June 2011*

Lee Daniels
Gateway Community College, AZ

Daniels worked as a precision layout inspector for Honeywell for 28 years. He became interested in the human body and the health care professional after interacting with two family doctors. Hoping to integrate his strong IT background with his newfound interest in health care, Daniels enrolled in the Management of Clinical Information Technology Program at GateWay Community College. After he completes the program, Daniels hopes to become a health informatician who utilizes technology to construct and maintain information systems and databases in an effort to better manage the ever-increasing volume of medical data. *June 2011*

Tory Berger
Santa Monica College, CA

Berger earned his certificate in Implementation Management at Santa Monica College (SMC) in February 2011, came into the program with an IT background. The program enabled Berger to connect with leaders in health IT, including the Southern California chapter of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society. Before he received his certificate, he conducted a webinar for students at SMC and other colleges on how to find employment and internships in the field. *June 2011*

Michael Seals
St. Louis Community College, MO

A student at St. Louis Community College, Seals capitalized on his IT background and expertise to train as a Practice Workflow Redesign Specialist. Leveraging his experience in computer support, as well as years in IT business ownership and analyst work, Seals built on his existing skills and knowledge to prepare for a career in health IT. Seals now works with Mercy Health Systems supporting EHR implementation efforts. *June 2011*

Sandi Johnson
Gateway Community College, AZ

Johnson worked in IT for Motorola for over 30 years and then for Baxter Healthcare. She was looking to change careers when she discovered the Management of Clinical Information Technology Program at Gateway Community College. With the financial assistance of the Health Information Technology grant, she was able to enroll in the program and complete her seven-week certification in March 2011. *June 2011*

Ellen Arnold

Indian River State College, FL

Arnold is a student at Indian River State College who has a degree in Health Information Management and is a Registered Health Information Administrator. She has worked as a Business Analyst with McKesson Corporation for the past 25 years designing and implementing health information management and coding solutions for McKesson's revenue cycle products. Arnold saw the Community College Consortia Program as an opportunity to go back to school to enhance her performance at McKesson. *June 2011*

Leslie Tsosie

Gateway Community College, AZ

Tsosie had minimal work experience in the hospital and medical record profession but became interested the value of IT skills as they relate to the health care field. After sharing this interest with a workforce specialist, she was referred to the Management of Clinical Information Technology program at GateWay Community College, where she began taking classes in 2010. Tsosie expects to achieve her certification in Fall 2011, but she is already employing the knowledge she has garnered from the program. She currently works at Native Health in Phoenix and is also trying for her RHIT (Registered Health Information Technician) license with the hope of one day becoming a medical director. *June 2011*

Karen Dunn, LPN, CHCA, CPC, CPUR, ACS-E/M,

Delgado Community College, LA

Dunn is a student at Delgado Community College. She has more than 19 years' experience in the medical field and has worked as a licensed practical nurse in hospitals, nursing homes, physician offices, and an insurance company. Dunn also has experience with coding, auditing, billing, and practice management. In addition to completing the health IT program at Delgado Community College, Dunn is also seeking an associate's degree in Information Technology. *June 2011*

Monique Washington

James Madison University, VA

Washington, of York County, VA, had worked in retailing because she was unable to find a job after graduating last spring with a degree in Health Services Administration from James Madison University. She enrolled in the Community College Consortia Program, and before graduating was hired as an Information Technology Services Business Analyst for Amerigroup. *June 2011*

Hear From Our Students

Jodi Kodish-Wachs, M.D
Oregon Health and Sciences University, OR

"After implementing and utilizing an electronic health record (EHR) as chair of the Department Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the VA, the dichotomy of practicing medicine in a university outpatient environment with a seven-year unfulfilled promise of an EHR was frustrating.

I sought new opportunities that would satisfy my desire to improve the ability to obtain clinical information at the point of patient contact. I learned about the Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU).

The Internet was my gateway to learning about informatics, ONC, and Dr. Hersh. Dr. Hersh's program at OHSU is top in the nation. He is a wealth of informatics information and had acquired the University-Based Training (UBT) grant funding for students.

Of the ONC's six workforce roles in biomedical and health informatics, I selected clinical informatics. The OHSU UBT clinical informatics program has exceeded my expectations. The expertise and academic openness of the professors is exceptional. Networking and employment opportunities are abundant. My new knowledge is directly applicable to both clinical medicine and industry.

I recently transitioned from clinical practice to employment with a vendor. I use my new information daily, applying it to the current use and future development of EHR solutions. My OHSU UBT program experiences are invaluable to my new career in clinical informatics. "

October 2011

Paul B Baker, M.D.
Oregon Health and Sciences University, OR

"I'm an emergency physician in suburban Washington, D.C., and have always been interested in the application of information technology to the medical environment, especially a very chaotic one such as the emergency department. I took an American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA) 10 by 10 introductory seminar with Dr. Bill Hersh at Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU) in the spring of 2010.

When I learned through the university that the training funds would become available, I knew it was a great opportunity for me to move into the field of medical informatics. The one-year certificate program at OHSU has been excellent and very comprehensive, and I probably couldn't have done it without the assistance of the ONC funding.

Right now I am transitioning into the role of a clinician that is able to take part in the information technology revolution in health informatics. I like the program and the subject so much that I have decided to stay on at OHSU and get my Master's Degree in Medical Informatics.

October 2011

Julie Pefferman
Oregon Health and Sciences University, OR

"I have had a long-standing passion for both health care and technology, but I had never gotten the chance to merge them, or to use them as a career. Although, it seems silly looking back, I never really thought of combining these fields until I had the opportunity to implement an electronic health record (EHR) at a clinic where I was working. Prior to finding out about the University-Based Training (UBT) funding, I had just had a baby and was staying home with my son. I had thoughts of continuing my education, but finances remained a big barrier. I think it was fate as I was doing my usually internet searching and somehow saw a web banner about funding for a Master's in Biomedical Informatics at Oregon Health & Sciences University (OHSU).

OHSU has an excellent reputation for informatics, which was very appealing. I have been impressed with both the caliber of students and the faculty. Many students come into the program with specific skill sets, and this program broadens and deepens their knowledge preparing them for a career as an informaticist. The core curriculum is well designed to keep your interest and provide thought-provoking challenges. Many classes have real-world components, where I have had the opportunity to work on projects that really matter to someone. I particularly enjoy the department's weekly informatics sessions, where I am exposed to topics I wouldn't have had the chance to learn about otherwise.

Right now, I am doing my internship in Washington D.C. at ONC. I am working in the Office of the Chief Scientist, where my current focus is clinical decision support (CDS). I even had to opportunity to go to Boston, where I met the leaders in the CDS field and learned from them hands-on.

October 2011

Tom Durkin
Oregon Health and Sciences University, OR

"The University-Based Training (UBT) program was brought to my attention by a friend at Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU) who was working on the grant. In particular, she researched the job role description needs in the region. The process included interviews with organizations with informatics skills requirements. Based on this information and an understanding of my background, she informed me of the grant and its award to OHSU. My background is in people contact and skills. I was a stockbroker for many years and made the transition from paper-based client records to electronic trading and books. I assisted my branch office brokers and management through this difficult time and participated in a client record management start-up. More recently, I received a Master's of Education and taught in mid-level science and mathematics. With budget cuts for K-12 education, I was ready for this new and exciting field.

The OHSU informatics program is well developed and contains depth both in academic and applied disciplines. My experience included the wide scope overview courses with their insight into the major aspects of biomedical informatics. Of particular interest is the course, "The Practice of Medicine," where non-clinicians are exposed to the thought processes that medical students are inculcated into. This gives me a greater appreciation to the exploratory thinking of physicians. The drill down for my job role focused on the business side of health care informatics, with excellent detail on organizational requirements at both the large institutional and individual practitioner levels. A feature of the OHSU Department of Medical Informatics and Clinical Epidemiology is the weekly luncheon speaker series. With a large pizza budget, Dr. Hersch hosts a wide scope of presenting ideas. The series focus during my studies was on improvement of clinical outcomes with improved informatics tools and processes."

October 2011

Karen Monz
The George Washington University, Washington D.C.

"One of my fellow students put it best by saying my story is like a Cinderella story. I lost my job of 12 years in June 2010. I had been working as a programmer for a hearing care company. Considering the job market was bad at the time, I decided to take some one-day seminars to enhance and update my skills. I was in Ft. Lauderdale for a training seminar and called a friend to meet for dinner, since we hadn't seen each other for a while. She asked me what had happened with my job, and I told her, and then I mentioned that everyone kept telling me that I needed to get into the health care side of information technology. That comment started it all. She said she had recently heard about a health IT program that had a government grant at The George Washington University (GW). She and a friend were enrolled and told me I should give them a call. We called that evening, and Katelyn Fleming called us back an hour later, even though it was a Friday night. I scrambled to get everything together and got my transcripts and application off to GW as soon as possible. The course was starting in two weeks, and I booked my flight and hotel and crossed my fingers that I would get accepted. I received my acceptance letter from GW two days before my flight was leaving.

I am currently working for AZZLY as its Operations Manager. AZZLY has developed an electronic health record (EHR) application that is ONC-ATCB certified. Its application is an all-inclusive EHR/PM/PHR system.

I owe a great debt to GW University for accepting me into this program, and to the ONC for offering a grant to help train professionals like myself to not only further our careers, but to train us to participate in such an important change in our health care system going forward. The program was fantastic, the professors were excellent, and I graduated with the knowledge needed to make a difference. "

October 2011

Linda Gebaroff
Bellevue College, WA

"I recently accepted an offer for the position electronic health record (EHR) implementation and training specialist! This is exactly the kind of role I envisioned for myself when I started the health information technology (health IT) program at Bellevue College last year. I'll be training new users to the system and working with their regional clinics to train physicians and nurses.

I originally came to the program as a displaced IT worker. My job had been outsourced, the economy was terrible, unemployment was at an all-time high, and my prospects of finding work in my field were grim. I had my eye on the growing trend in health IT and was searching for a program of study where I could acquire the necessary skills to take my background in nursing and my years in IT and launch a new career in health IT.

Enrolling in this program was the best move I ever made. I'm really excited about my new career.
If there is ever a success story for your program, this is definitely it!"

October 2011

R. Louis Murphy, M.D.
Dyersburg State Community College, TN

"I just completed the HITECH Workforce Training Program through Dyersburg State Community College (DSCC). At first I was a little concerned. I had only taken one computer class when I was in college, which was in 1976! However, I found that the instructors were able to tailor the course to meet my schedule. They were also readily available by email and phone. By taking the course I was able to learn the information I needed to understand electronic health records (EHRs). This not only made me feel secure in starting my own EHR system, but I actually was able to pick and choose the various modules I needed for my specific practice. This helped me avoid purchasing a system that was not really suited to my needs, which saved thousands of dollars. I found this class through DSCC to meet and exceed my expectations. I recommend it to anyone who will have a mid-level or above involvement in choosing, developing, maintaining and/or marketing EHRs."

June 2011

Andrew Zydel
Bellevue College, WA

"Prior to attending Bellevue College's HIT program, I worked at a major pharmaceutical company as a software development manager. In August 2009, I was laid off when the company moved my department. Through a combination of my background and the education and expertise I gained at Bellevue College, I was able to find a position as an Informatics Manager at Swedish Health Services, a major health care service provider in the Seattle area."

June 2011

Kathi Dahlberg
Lansing Community College, MI

"I took a course in Implementation Management and got involved in health information technology because as a nurse, the technological revolution has hit me on the ground level. From working with a variety of software applications to the implementation of full-blown electronic health records, the world for medical personnel was changing right before my eyes. There is a need to align the strategic plan of the organization with workflow planning to achieve smoother transitions for staff and patients. That can only come from a well prepared, knowledgeable, and clinically oriented person with the skills, abilities, and desire to oversee a smooth and effective implementation for providers and their staff. The Implementation Management class helped me develop an understanding of the core concepts of health information technology, health care, and project management. Each student from the class will be well equipped to take a paper-based system and turn it around effectively and efficiently, using the principles of project management, and appropriate technologic options best suited to the organization."

June 2011

Rita Bowles Florence-Darlington

Technical College, SC

"I am a success story! At the age of 55, I chose to take a different career path using my background in public health and my interest in technology–and my faith that my future could include both. I enrolled in the Health Information Technology course at the Florence-Darlington Technical College in South Carolina. My most recent work experience has been in real estate–a far cry from the nurses and IT people that make up the majority of our class! Fortunately, I've learned that most of our lessons can be translated from any business into health care...customer service is customer service, regardless of the industry."

June 2011

Edith Sloan

National Park Community College, AR

"I was interested in taking these [health IT] courses because it seemed as if there was a need for this type of expertise in the health care field, and I thought I could be involved in meeting that need. This curriculum will impact my future, because it creates a better understanding of the process of adopting electronic health records.

June 2011

Shahla Salemi

Dyersburg State Community College, TN

"When I was told the HITECH course is being offered by DSCC, I immediately wanted to participate. With the new requirements of everyone going to have to move to electronic health records, I believe it is very beneficial to everyone in the field of HIT to take this training. I also believe this training is a very worthy asset to my resume."

June 2011