



# human capital portfolio



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People are the heart—and the backbone—of our health system. Since its founding in 1972, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has made strategic investments to prepare promising health professionals for leadership; improve the skills and enhance the careers of frontline and allied health workers; train scholars to conduct research in health policy, systems and services; and encourage young people to pursue health careers. The Foundation also aims to increase the diversity of people working in health and health care and to promote best practices and teamwork across disciplines and job descriptions, to better serve the health needs of a demographically and culturally changing America. We believe a diverse workforce is a better workforce.

## THE PROBLEM

Multiple factors contribute to the challenges facing the nation's health and medical workforce. The emergence of new diseases, the threat of bioterrorism, as well as technological and scientific advances demand that health workers continually adapt and update their skills. The population is aging, as is the health care workforce, setting the stage for shortages and a sweeping loss of experience in all health fields—particularly

in nursing—as the baby boom generation retires over the next 20 years.

The growing ethnic and racial diversity of the United States challenges people in health care organizations to deliver more culturally competent care. Millions of immigrants are arriving, bringing with them distinct cultural, linguistic and healing traditions. At the same time, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, African Americans, Hispanics and other racially or economically isolated

groups continue to experience disparities in health and health care—differences that persist even when these groups gain equitable access to health services. Thus, we face a constant need to develop new skills among existing workers and to cultivate a new generation of highly efficient health and health care workers and leaders who reflect the changing face of America and are committed to addressing disparities in health outcomes.

## OUR APPROACH

The Human Capital Portfolio is committed to attracting, developing and retaining a diverse and adequate pool of capable individuals to work in the health, medical and dental fields. We recognize that our investments are long-term, yielding results over decades and generations. Our approach is to identify promising individuals from varied backgrounds, give them the tools and expertise to take a fresh approach to health issues and clinical practice, so that they can become catalysts and creators of change. Many longstanding RWJF programs—launched at the Foundation's inception—have paid

dividends in career success and meaningful leadership. For example, along with deans of nursing and medical schools and top-level policy-makers in government, the 1,100 graduates of the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholars*® program include former U.S. Surgeons General as well as leaders in philanthropy and other fields. A recent survey revealed that 25 percent of leaders in health and health care are alumni of RWJF scholars, fellows and leadership programs. We also prime the pipeline to health careers, with our *Summer Medical and Dental Education Program*, which has provided entrée for more than 20,000 undergraduate college students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds.

#### WHAT WE FUND

In keeping with our focus on the health care workforce, the Human Capital Portfolio funds programs that: build and expand the skills of individuals; support research to identify and validate best practices to improve health status and the quality of care; introduce young people—particularly those from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups—to health career opportunities; and encourage creative thinking at every level of the health care system, so that all workers contribute to improvements in the quality of care patients receive. We will continue to launch programs strengthen and diversify the workforce, a commitment that cuts across all of the Foundation's work. We are also working to engage alumni of RWJF scholar, fellow and leadership programs in these efforts,



and to create opportunities for our “graduates” to share their insights and experience with the Foundation and American society.

**Leadership Training.** We are working to create new methods of leadership development and mentoring. For example, the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Fellowships* program allows mid-career health care practitioners to apply their skills toward improving health policy by working with the U.S. Congress. The *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Executive Nurse Fellows* program offers advanced leadership and mentoring to nurses in senior executive roles in health services, public health and nursing education who aspire to help lead and shape the U.S. health care system. The *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Community Health Leaders* program recognizes outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to health in their communities; a new phase of the program will encourage current and past awardees to work together to advance public policy

in the health arena. A new initiative, *Ladder to Leadership: Building the Next Generation of Community Health Leaders* will prepare mid-career community health advocates for leadership, as the current generation of community health executives approaches retirement.

**Field Building.** We are also engaged in training and education aimed at building specific fields within health and health care. Our *Pipeline, Profession and Practice: Community-Based Dental Education* initiative exposes dental students to the challenges and rewards of dental practice in poor and underserved communities, an experience that has led some to choose to work where their skills are needed most. The *RWJF Scholars in Health Policy Research* program provides fellowships to creative thinkers in economics, political science and sociology to pursue research in health policy. A newer effort, the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health and Society Scholars*, focuses on building expertise to address the genetic, behavioral, environmental, economic and social factors that affect health.

**Quality.** Our *Interdisciplinary Nursing Quality Research Initiative* is filling gaps in knowledge about nurses' contribution to quality of care by supporting research to document the impact of nursing on health systems and patient outcomes. We are funding *Quality and Safety Education in Nursing* (QSEN) and plan to support other programs to spread knowledge of quality improvement methodologies across the health professions workforce.

**Diversity.** The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation supports efforts to promote diversity and cultural sensitivity at all levels of the workforce—among health leaders, managers and researchers as well as clinicians, support personnel and community health workers. For a quarter century, the *Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program* has supported scores of outstanding underrepresented minority physicians in their academic medical careers. The *New Connections: Increasing Diverse Perspectives in RWJF Programming* initiative was created to bring diverse perspectives to RWJF grantmaking and to expand the contribution of junior researchers and senior consultants from historically underrepresented groups to Foundation programming. The new *RWJF Center for Health Policy at the University of New Mexico* will help promising Hispanic and American Indian students and others from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds to get the training and research opportunities they need to join discussions and debates about health policy.

**Frontline Workforce.** A collaborative initiative between RWJF and the Hitachi Foundation, *Jobs to Careers: Promoting Work-Based Learning for Quality Care*, is establishing systems that train, develop, reward and advance current frontline health and health care workers to assure that patients and communities receive high-quality services.

**Solving the Nurse and Nurse Faculty Shortage.** Nurses are the majority of the health care workforce and key arbiters of health care quality. The Foundation is committed to expanding their numbers, building their leadership capacity, sharpening the skills of nurses and those who educate them, and building awareness among policy-makers and citizens of the crisis that lies ahead if we fail to boost the supply of well-educated nurses to meet care demands. The U.S. nursing shortage is intensifying, even as thousands of qualified candidates are turned away from nursing schools because there aren't enough faculty members available to teach them. The *Center to Champion Nursing in America*, a partnership between RWJF and AARP, will amplify and disseminate information about nursing issues and advocate for policy changes. The *RWJF Nurse Faculty Scholars* program will prepare junior nurse faculty members for academic leadership with intensive mentoring and other supports. The *New Jersey Nursing Initiative* is a series of innovative programs designed to provide accelerated education and clinical training for nurse faculty in New Jersey, using scholarships, simulation centers and collaborative support from nursing schools in the



state. In partnership with the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, the initiative aims to build public awareness and a constituency for policy change. The *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation New Careers in Nursing Scholarships* will enable students from underrepresented groups in nursing or disadvantaged backgrounds who already have baccalaureate degrees in other disciplines to enroll in accelerated baccalaureate or masters degree nursing programs and encourage them to pursue careers as nurse faculty.

#### **WHAT WE DON'T FUND**

Because considerable time is required to cultivate leadership abilities and build expertise in specialized fields, the Human Capital Portfolio rarely funds unsolicited proposals. However we expect to issue specific solicitations for proposals on an occasional basis. If you are registered to receive content alerts through the Foundation's Web site at [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org), you will receive notices of funding opportunities through these alerts.

Further information about RWJF scholars and fellows opportunities also is available on the Web site.



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