

Rutgers-Rowan board to use federal grant for a medical assistant training program for Camden students

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A group of Camden high school seniors will have the opportunity to complete a medical apprenticeship and training program with the hope of landing jobs in the city's growing health-care field.

Ten to 15 seniors will be selected in December to participate in a paid apprenticeship at an area health-care organization and then go on to a training program to get officially certified as a medical assistant.

The program is the first launched by the Rowan University/Rutgers-Camden board of governors, created in April.

At a meeting Tuesday the resolution to create the program passed unanimously. "What's incredibly important is getting [students] an employment opportunity," said the board's CEO, Kris Kolluri. "The goal here is not only to educate a child, but provide training, education, and an opportunity to stay within the city. When you do that, I think you complete the circle for one cohort. It's a small program but an important one."

Medical assistants are typically cross-trained to perform administrative and clinical duties. They may greet patients at the front desks of health-care facilities and also be the first person in patient rooms, taking down notes to give to the doctor and recording vital signs.

Dozens of certification programs exist in the region at local community colleges and private companies. The Rowan/Rutgers program would offer students who complete the apprenticeship free training (expected to cost about \$4,000 per student to be covered by the federal Workforce Investment Act grant money). Curriculum will be taught by professors from Camden County College and staff from the Camden Coalition of Health Care Providers - many of them AmeriCorps volunteers who are mostly premed or pre-nursing students.

Any high school senior attending one of the district's five high schools is eligible for the program, Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard said. Kolluri said at the meeting that with the growth of "eds and meds," the demand for health-care professionals is expected to increase.

The board expects to spend \$30,000 of its academic program budget on the project. It allocated \$315,000 for academic programs in 2015.