

Increasing the Supply of Health Care Workers to Strengthen Communities and Improve Health Care

State Need:

- The decreasing ability of rural communities and health care facilities to attract and retain health care workers has threatened and will continue to threaten the viability of rural health care facilities.
- Loss of these important community organizations, which provide many of the best paying jobs in their counties, has a negative multiplier effect on the jobs, income, and survival of the communities in which they exist.

Market Reality:

- The Governor's Health Care Task Force has identified shortages in the availability of trained health care workers, particularly east of the divide and most critically in rural areas.
- The paucity of health care workers, especially RN nurses, forces rural health providers to hire agency or "traveling" nurses at rates that are 2 ½ times the cost of a normally hired nursing FTE.
- New Programs are too costly to create from existing resources.

Current Problem:

- All the citizens willing and able to make a contribution to rural health care are not able to come to our campuses.
- All areas of health care education are very costly and supervision-intensive.

Proposed Solution:

- An infusion of new money, specifically directed toward rural delivery of health care education, can produce significant financial and cultural returns by enlarging the pipeline of workers for rural facilities
- The Montana University System is in a position to assist communities in remaining viable by making education and training in the health professions more accessible to an existing pool of talented, but place-bound citizens in rural areas.

Required Investment:

- For a biennial infusion of **\$1 million**, the Governor and the Montana Legislature can make a targeted investment in the health and future of the state's rural communities. This investment will result in the employment of health care workers, locally recruited and trained.
 - **\$675,000** for education and training programs
 - **\$325,000** for organizational enhancements to ensure lasting statewide impacts

Return on Investment:

- Significant financial and cultural returns by enlarging the pipeline of workers for rural facilities and, thereby, saving those facilities money by preventing the need to hire hugely expensive temporary workers and, ultimately, strengthening those facilities and the communities in which they exist.
- Strengthening the ties between MUS units, the health care providers and Montana's rural communities.

Selected Examples of Return:

- Increased delivery of educational and public health programs, applied research and administrative expertise.
- Increased employment of Montana citizens in high paying jobs
- Savings to health care providers of, with RN nurses, up to \$40,000 per FTE
- Improved bottom line for health care facilities and the multiplier effect that has on rural communities.
- Increased personal and corporate tax yields to the State.