

January 5, 2010

Ms. Saba S. Brelvi, Program Director
Diversity in the Health Professions
The California Wellness Foundation
6320 Canoga Avenue, Suite 1700
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Dear Ms. Brelvi:

On behalf of the Associate Degree in Registered Nursing (ADRN) program at Los Angeles City College (LACC), I would like to thank the California Wellness Foundation for this opportunity to submit a proposal for a grant of \$100,000 to provide scholarships for students who need financial assistance to complete the ADRN program and become licensed Registered Nurses (RNs). The mission of Los Angeles City College's ADRN program is to educate students for registered nursing positions in a variety of multicultural health care settings within the local community, and according to recent Nursing Department surveys 86 % of ADRN graduates pass the Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN) and 100 % find employment within six months. LACC is applying to the California Wellness Foundation because this program shares the same goals as the Foundation; that of addressing the issues of diversity in the health care professions and improving the health of the people of California.

Currently, there is a critical shortage of qualified nurses in the United States, and in California in particular. California has the lowest ratio of nurses to population among all the states, with only 590 nurses per 100,000 residents, as compared to the national average of 825 nurses per 100,000 residents (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). A recent article in "Healthcare Finance News" pointed out that "the average age of an RN in California is over 47, so as they approach retirement, the statewide shortfall will worsen. CINHC [California Institute for Nursing and Health Care] projects California will have a shortfall of 108,000 nurses by 2020" (May 22, 2009). In addition, because of the even larger disparities of access to health care within minority communities, research has shown that greater diversity among health care professionals "can improve access to healthcare services for underserved minority populations."

Studies also conducted by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Aid for the U.S. Congress have found that "financial barriers still keep many of the neediest students from pursuing a higher education." The report "Access Denied" revealed that "the main economic obstacle to financing a college education faced by students from low-income families is 'unmet need,' the price of attending college after all federal and state aid, including loans, has been expended." Indeed, the cost of college tuition continues to outpace available financial aid in the forms of public and private loans. Furthermore, a vast number of racial and ethnic minority students still have unequal access to higher education and professional training, and enrollment statistics show a high dropout rate among minority college students due to numerous obstacles and barriers including inadequate financial aid and the need to work full-time.

In order to meet these significant challenges facing California's health care system, and the shortages in trained, qualified professionals, it is essential not only to increase recruitment and retention in nursing education and other health-related professions, but to facilitate greater access for more minority students in these fields to end the health care coverage disparities seen among ethnically diverse communities. Consequently, the Nursing Department at Los Angeles City College is dedicated not only to training as many qualified nurses as possible to fill this critical gap in California's health care system, but to providing greater access for minority students to these important health care professions.

Los Angeles City College was founded in 1929 as a public, two-year coeducational facility that offers Associate of Arts Degrees, non-degree programs, and career and vocational training. The campus is uniquely located at a multicultural crossroad where Little Armenia, Koreatown and Latin-American communities meet. At present, LACC serves more than 18,000 students and prides itself on being one of the most diverse campuses in the United States, with more than one hundred languages spoken on campus every day. Many students, young and old, come from the surrounding communities and rely on various means of public transit to access the resources at City. Currently, the student population consists of 12 % African American, 21 % Caucasian, 42 % Hispanic, 23 % Asian and 2 % Native American and a balanced number of traditional-age and older students.

LACC also has had a long and distinguished tradition of helping students transfer to competitive universities as juniors, entering high-paying careers and advancing on the job. Indeed, many of LACC's students have gone on to become notable educators; civic leaders and politicians; business leaders; Oscar, Emmy and Grammy winners including: Federal Judge Lourdes Baird; Renowned Architect Frank Gehry; Congresswoman Diane Watson; Nobel Prize Winner Lawrence Klein; and Oscar winners Morgan Freeman and Clint Eastwood.

The ADRN program was launched in 2002 with the first class graduating in 2004. The program is based on the Roy Adaptation Model; a concept for the study and practice of nursing that perceives the person as a total being and focuses on the physiological, psychosocial, and spiritual care of the individual. The model's framework prepares the nursing professional to understand the person as a total being and to recognize and respect human values. Participants in the ADRN program graduate with an Associate of Science Degree, and because of the quality and strict requirements of the program, graduates may sit for the NCLWX-RN Licensure exam. If they pass the exam, as 86 % of LACC graduates do on their first attempt, they earn their RN status.

At present, there are 105 students in LACC's ADRN program, 67 % of whom are minority students who mostly have English as a second language (ESL). In addition, the majority of students enrolled in this program are below or at the poverty level. Students must take an initial 36 units of prerequisite classes before enrolling in the program and another 39 units of nursing-related courses in order to complete the degree. Once in the ADRN program, students must attend clinical settings two days a week, and lecture courses two days a week in order to graduate. In addition, students must attend skills courses and labs, which mean the program requires full-time attendance by the students. LACC's tuition costs in comparison to nursing programs at other institutions may be lower; approximately \$3,100 for tuition and another \$2,000 for books a year, but the rigors of the program require that students drop most of their outside employment, making it extremely difficult for them to make ends meet. In fact, many ADRN students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds have become homeless due to financial hardships while still attempting to complete the program. **Currently, 85 % of students graduate from the ADRN program; the 15 % attrition rate can be directly attributed to a student's lack of financial resources to complete the program.**

The Los Angeles City College Foundation does offer a broad array of scholarships to its students. In 2009, 1,459 applications for financial aid were received from students by the Foundation, but given its present resources only 232 scholarships could be awarded, which is clearly not adequate to meet the overwhelming financial need facing most of LACC's students. As a result, Los Angeles City College is bringing this request for scholarship funding for its students in the Associate Degree in Registered Nursing program to the California Wellness Foundation.

In awarding these new scholarships to students pursuing their ADRN degree, the key goal would be to identify minority students with financial need, who are working excessive hours to support themselves while in the program or who might be at risk of leaving the program due to financial hardship. Subsequent criteria for students applying for the scholarship would be: 1) a cumulative GPA of 2.5; and 2) live, as shown by home zip code, in a community suffering from a critical nursing shortage. The success of these new scholarships will be measured by using the following data. The recipients will: 1) graduate from the program within two years as measured by the degree posted on their transcripts; 2) pass the NCLEX-RN as measured by the students' submission of NCLEX results; and 3) obtain a job in an institution within the Los Angeles area as measured by verification of employment from the hospital.

In conclusion, a grant award of \$100,000 to meet the tuition needs of ADRN students at LACC would make a significant difference, not only in the lives of the students, but in the quality of health care in the Los Angeles Basin where qualified nurses are in extremely short supply. Los Angeles City College is grateful for this opportunity to submit a proposal to the California Wellness Foundation and would like to thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

David Ambroz
Executive Director