

Emily DeMent (00:00):

Hello and welcome to today's webinar, Advancing and retaining the health in our workforce through partnerships with academia. My name is Emily DeMent, program associate here at NACHC, and I'm pleased to bring you this webinar alongside my colleague, Gerrard Jolly, director of career advancement strategies who you will get to hear from in just a moment. Before we get started, let's review a few housekeeping items.

Emily DeMent (00:23):

You have joined this online event by either calling in on the phone or via your computer. All the lines have been automatically muted. The duration of this webinar is approximately 60 minutes including presentations and Q and A.

Emily DeMent (00:36):

We encourage you to ask questions and use the chat feature on the right side of your screen at any time during the webinar. This event is being recorded and will be available online and approximately two weeks without any further ado, we will begin and I will turn things over to Gerrard.

Gerrard Jolly (00:50):

Thank you very much, Emily. I greatly appreciate that and want to welcome everyone again to this second in our advancing or retaining the health center workforce through partnerships with academia, a webinar series. Today's focus will be on creating training partnerships with academia for health center operational workforce advancement. As Emily mentioned, my name is Gerrard Jolly. I'm the director of career advancement strategies here at NACHC. I'm joined today by our presenters, Heather LaDue who is the virtual events manager of workforce partnerships with Southern New Hampshire University and Suzanne Smith whose health center operations' director with Colorado Community Health Network.

Gerrard Jolly (01:40):

So let's consider why we are here today. Undoubtedly you are all here because you agree with the authors of the quotes that are on your screen. That training and education are critical to the success of any organization. But to your health center or primary care association and as you think about it in two particular ways, one it is a way to engage your employees. And it's one of the top ways that employees indicate that they want to be engaged. There was an article published in May of this year in Inc. magazine. I was an interview of Eleanor Estes who's the CEO of TPI Incorporated, which is one of the top IT and the engineering recruiting firms in the country. The article was entitled here's what employees want that employers don't understand. And in that interview what Estes notes is that one of the top five things that employees indicate that they want is a path for growth and continued education.

Gerrard Jolly (03:03):

And I'll just note what it mentions here is that people are attracted to companies that show a clear path for advancement. People are okay with coming in at an entry level, but what is the longterm career path? Is it clearly defined where they have an opportunity to advance? Is their management structure in place as clearly communicating the growth and goals of the company? Estes asks. And it doesn't stop there, and this is particularly ventures for webinar today. Along with path for growth, competitive companies are offering skill training, continuing education and enrichment to their employees to keep

skills current in this constantly evolving world of technology that we live in. People appreciate the interest and investment in them, Estes says. And certainly we see that in the various different technology platforms, the various EHR that are being developed. The health students are utilizing the move to value based care.

Gerrard Jolly ([04:09](#)):

It makes the work of operations staff much more complex with each passing day. And so that continued education is a critical aspect that employees who are engaged will certainly want to have. And then when we consider the various social determinants that affect the living conditions of the patients that you serve. We can clearly see that really you are changing the world for those individuals in various ways. And so education is a powerful weapon in doing that. And universities are the pillars of education. They always have been, they are the experts in that area. So partnering with them can be an effective approach to be able to meet the professional development needs of your staff and to retain them for their careers. And we're going to consider the course of this webinar.

Gerrard Jolly ([05:21](#)):

We're going to highlight a few case studies that you all received an advance of this webinar, hot off the presses, a recently approved case studies. We're going to do a deep dive with into the case study of the partnership between Colorado Community Health Network and Southern New Hampshire University. And we are going to answer any questions that you may have about these training partnerships. What are some of the key lessons learned. What are some things that you may need to know if you were interested in engaging with an academic partner as well. I do want to take a moment to credit our colleagues over at HRSA and the Bureau of Primary Health Care for their support both for the development of the case studies that you received as well as for the support for this webinar.

Gerrard Jolly ([06:34](#)):

The Bureau of Primary Health Care at HRSA, which is part of the US department of health and human services, as I'm sure you're well aware has provided a national cooperative agreement award to NACHC, to support this effort. They do want us to make sure that you're aware that the contents of this webinar and of the case studies are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of nor an endorsement by HRSA HHS or the US government. And if you want to learn more about HRSA, so please visit [HRSA.gov](#), so we want to thank them for their participation. By the end of this webinar, what we expect is that you'd be able to recall reasons why health centers and establish partnerships with colleges and universities. You'd be able to describe some barriers to creating those partnerships, recognize why and how those partnerships may change over time. And you'll be able to note and examine some of the benefits as well as the risks of developing a training partnership at your health center or primary care association.

Gerrard Jolly ([07:59](#)):

To highlight or briefly highlight just the case studies that you received at the partnership between East Boston Neighborhood Health Center and Bunker Hill Community College is for the auxiliary certified interpreter and certified nursing assistant training programs. You can see that program is geared towards providing professional development and employment opportunities, education and training in the health care field at low or no cost. And to enhance job skills and learning power for employees at preemployment and entry level positions. We do encourage you to take a good look at the case studies. Feel free to reach out to us with any questions that you may have about them as well as to share your

feedback on the value of the case studies to you and to your work. We certainly do look forward to hearing from you about those case studies of the next case.

Gerrard Jolly ([09:09](#)):

The next case study we will highlight is the Washington Association for Community Health Centers Partnership with South Seattle College for the medical assisting apprenticeship program. This program combines online coursework, hands on technical instruction, support from health center staff that serve as coaches. And is designed to really serve as a pipeline to hire new staff either directly from the community or to provide a career ladder for staff who are already on board for non-clinical staff into MA roles. So we're excited to highlight that partnership as well and in a case study. And then, I won't go much into the case study here between Colorado Community Health Network and Southern New Hampshire University because we are happy to have representatives from both of these organizations, on this webinar with us today who we will hear from learn a little bit more about their organizations as well as The College for America Program and Partnership as well.

Gerrard Jolly ([10:31](#)):

But this is a competency base motto, which allows folks to be able to build on the knowledge that they have already gained and apply that towards their education. And really again, it helps to build that educational ladder as it helps to build a career ladder for, a health center and PCA employees as they will to, as they earn a certificate and to lead right into an associates degree and from an associates into a bachelor's degree. So we're going to look forward to hearing from our colleagues who are on the phone with us today to learn more about The College for America Program and their partnership. So with that being said, why don't we go right ahead and hear from them again, want to encourage you, if you have any questions along the way, please post those questions into the chat box and we'll be happy to respond to those questions, as they become available.

Gerrard Jolly ([11:47](#)):

Our first presenter here for today is Suzanne Smith. Suzanne is the director of Health Center Operations Division for the Colorado Community Health Network. Suzanne joined CCHN in May 2008. Her primary responsibilities are to help community health centers sustain and strengthen existing operations and to help expand the CHC model across Colorado. Specifically, Suzanne manages and supports the vision staff around CCHN community development, workforce development, operations assistance and training and technical assistance programs. Suzanne is the lead for the strategic data committee, the strategic workforce committee and the Colorado Operations Directors Advisory Network. Suzanne is busy. Suzanne attended The University of Denver where she earned her Master's of Arts degree in international studies, concentrating on health and gender issues and her Bachelor of Arts degree in international studies and Spanish. So we're excited to have Suzanne with us who we'll hear from her momentarily.

Gerrard Jolly ([12:59](#)):

And also we have with us Heather LaDue, who currently serves as Southern New Hampshire University's Workforce Partnerships, Director of Strategic Partnerships Virtual Events. In this role she helps employers strengthen their workforce through non-profit accredited learning solutions designed for working adults. Prior to joining SNHU, she spent over 15 years as a business to business director who has worked with fortune 500 companies and financial services, outsource HR services and technology solutions. Heather successfully launched tech women, tech girls, which is a New Hampshire Tech

Alliance initiative focused on building a strong community of female professionals, enthusiastic about technology. Heather has a bachelor's in marketing from Plymouth State University, several sales certifications and is currently enrolled at SNHU pursuing her Master's of Science in organizational leadership. So she puts her money where her mouth is. She resides in Southern New Hampshire and while not working, Heather enjoys outdoor activities with their families, social engagements and traveling across the globe at every opportunity. So we're excited to have both Suzanne and Heather with us today. And let's hear from Suzanne to start about the Colorado Community Health Network. Suzanne, I am going to hand the ball over to you. And Suzanne, you may be muted. So if, you would unmute yourself.

Suzanne Smith ([14:42](#)):

Good morning everybody, or afternoon in some cases. And every case. Can you all hear me?

Emily DeMent ([14:51](#)):

Yes. Well we can. Yeah, I think we can all hear you. Thanks.

Suzanne Smith ([14:54](#)):

Great. Thank you so much. So as Gerrard said, I'm with the Colorado Community Health Network where the primary care association in the State of Colorado and we represent the community health centers here are a federally qualified health centers here in Colorado. Unlike some other primary care associations across the US we're only representing the health centers. We're committed to educating policymakers, stakeholders about the unique needs of community health centers and their patients, providing resources to ensuring that health centers are strong organizations and supporting health centers and maintaining the highest quality care. We're really driven with our mission to increase the access to high quality healthcare in Colorado. And you'll see that reflected in all of the slides I have today for you all. We're guided by our Access for All Colorado plan and I'll get into this a little bit later and it will drive some of the remarks.

Suzanne Smith ([15:48](#)):

When we talk through some of the questions that a NACHC has for us around why we pursued this partner with SNHU. And it's really about that high quality healthcare for people in need in Colorado. For Colorado health centers in general. Some kind of background information on them. There's 21 health centers in the state of Colorado as of October 2018 and they're operating 200 plus clinic sites across the state. You can see a map here representing all of the health center sites. The counties where our patients come from. And then the few counties in the state where other safety net providers are providing care. Health centers are serving about one in seven Coloradans. They're employing more than 5868 FTE. And they're supporting staff through insurance benefits, retirement plans, paid time off licensure fees and professional association dues, and then continuing professional education, which will kind of reflect on here.

Suzanne Smith ([16:52](#)):

As I referenced earlier, we're guided through our work in our strategic plan, through the Access for All what we call the Access for All Colorado plan. The overall arching goal of this is 1 million Coloradans will have a health center, will call a health center their healthcare home. And one of the legs of the strategic plan is our workforce pillar and it focuses on ensuring community health centers in Colorado are the employers of choice in their community. And then there's three main goals under this workforce plan, to

strengthen retention of staff, to implement effective recruitment strategies and improve the workforce pipeline. A lot of the work we did with SNHU was really about number one on this. And of course number two can support number two related to recruitment strategies as it makes the health centers look like more attractive employers.

Suzanne Smith ([17:44](#)):

Within this kind of, these goals were supported by further 10 tactics. And a lot of this is really driven to move these goals forward. When we think about workforce at the health centers, we're thinking about both the administrative and the clinical staff. I shared earlier that health centers in the state are employing, about 5800 FTE and this is made up of roughly, a good majority, about, 4400 of them are clinical. So this is the providers to enabling staff to QI staff with about 30% of those as providers only. And then the other remaining staff are the administrative and FTE. We see in Colorado, at least, there's a lot of effort made to engaging the clinical staff in different things. There's a lot of grants and other efforts that, can help improve and support the providers.

Suzanne Smith ([18:42](#)):

But we are always looking for things that can support all levels of staff regardless of their providers or administrative. And this was something that we looked for when we partnered with College for America and SNHU. I'm gonna skim very, very briefly over the next two slides cause there's something that we'll be addressing more in the Q and A at the end of this. So you can see very briefly some of the background for our partnership, around this connection's made. This was something that we did in May 2015. I was actually not the lead on this, it was someone else. And so I get the joy of talking about and really talking up the work of someone else that made this connection with us, for us and for on behalf of the health centers.

Suzanne Smith ([19:28](#)):

And so well we can return to these sides leaders with the question. And as well, just very briefly, the type of things we were looking for when we did this partnership was the interest from the health center staff. And that there would actually be an enrollment and graduates from this. But there's a lot of challenges that are going to look the same to many people, but I'll talk through some of the details later. But there's changing and competing priorities for health centers all the time and the staff at the health centers. And then you get turnover both at CCHN and in the health centers and even possibly an SNHU that can impact the project. Funding, whether there's funding for either the staff to go to continuing education or even the funding at Colorado Community Health Network for the work we're doing. And then just time, the technology and people's interest in things change very quickly as time passes. And so we do have to tackle that. I'll take questions here, but I know that Gerrard and others will be asking some in a little bit and so I can hand the ball back to you Gerrard.

Gerrard Jolly ([20:40](#)):

Thank you very much, Suzanne. I really appreciate you highlighting those aspects of Colorado. And I have to admit, I know you guys have a lot of challenges that the health centers face as they do everywhere else in the country. But you do have a beautiful environment in which you face it in. And I mean, those mountains are just tremendous. And so anyway, I'm a little bit off topic, let's move on here. Thank you very much Suzanne. And now we're going to go on to hear from Heather LaDue, and Heather we're going to hand the ball off to you as well.

Heather LaDue ([21:30](#)):

Thank you, Gerrard.

Gerrard Jolly ([21:31](#)):

You are very welcome.

Heather LaDue ([21:31](#)):

You hear me Okay?

Gerrard Jolly ([21:33](#)):

Yes we can hear you just fine.

Heather LaDue ([21:36](#)):

Thank you. Great, thank you. Well, as you could see, SNHU has a long history of aligning itself with the needs of the workforce. We were originally founded in 1932, but in 2012, our president Paula blank realized that SNHU could do even more to serve the needs of two important groups, the employers and then working adults. So with this in mind, College for America was born. We offer competency based programs are built specifically to serve working adults by providing highly flexible and radically affordable education.

Heather LaDue ([22:07](#)):

And SNHU was one of the original universities participating in what we call competency based education network, CBEN which is a group of colleges and universities working together to find the best practices in this emerging competency based education field for higher education. So with innovation as a core aspect of our culture SNHU took another step in 2017 to bring increased value to employers by launching our workforce partnerships division. And this helps SNHU better leverage our unique work force expertise services and broad education offerings to really help employers better run their businesses and achieve their strategic goals. So today we have over a hundred thousand students and alumni and over 250 programs available online and on campus. And we're widely recognized as one of the nation's most innovative organizations and fastest growing universities, including recognition for the third consecutive years, the most innovation university in the North.

Heather LaDue ([23:11](#)):

So this is our mission in workforce partnerships specifically. The partnership was formed to build new ways for SNHU to connect with students where they are, through our partnerships. We use the power of learning to drive success in the workplace and transform people's lives. So work force partnerships was formed to serve students through our employer partners just like CCHN. And over the past five years you've grown rapidly doubling in size each year. And our goal over the next year is to add about 8,000 new students to our existing partnerships. As you can see, some that are highlighted here in front of you, including Anthem and TriHealth and University Hospital. So a long history in the health care.

Heather LaDue ([24:02](#)):

So let's take a little bit closer look here at College for America programs and how competency based approach. We focus on learning not seat time or credit hours. So it's a little bit different than traditional online programs. Students will progress at their own pace, which allows them to move more quickly

through areas in which they have a strong preparation and spend more time in areas in which they don't. And tuition is a flat rate per term like Suzanne had mentioned. And the students can master as many competencies as they're able to in a given term. And I know we'll get probably more into that during the Q and A, but just wanted to mention that it's all inclusive in that flat rate. And so no matter where they start, all graduates leave having demonstrated mastery of competencies in the most critical areas including communication, critical and creative thinking and collaboration and teamwork.

Heather LaDue ([24:59](#)):

So our programs are stackable, so College for America programs you can start depending on where you are in your education cycle, you start with a smaller program, we have our healthcare certificates. You can build upon those, build skills and confidence and continue to grow in your education with whatever your needs are. So you can stack it, go from a certificate to associates of arts to a bachelor's degree. And I know we're going to get into more of the details without, that's a highlight of what CFA is all about. And I'll pass the ball back to you Gerrard.

Gerrard Jolly ([25:43](#)):

Thank you very much, Heather. I appreciate you highlighting and particularly given us more details around that competency base learning. I think folks appreciate them being able to you know, use their time in the most wise way possible. Without just having a set number of seat time, as you noted there. So we appreciate you highlighting that was Southern New Hampshire University. And so you've been able to hear a little bit about background and just an overview briefly of Colorado community health network. PCA, they're in Colorado and Southern New Hampshire university. And now let's take a little bit time to learn more about their partnership and the work that they've done together as Heather noted. I mean, as a Suzanne noted and I think the individuals who started this partnership were predecessors or preceded both Suzanne and Heather if I'm not mistaken, but they are our champions for the work.

Gerrard Jolly ([27:04](#)):

And we're glad to have him here to highlight the work that's been accomplished and been done with the partnership. So why don't we go ahead and get right into the interview. And the questions are for both of you. Perhaps if you can share from the PCA, or health center perspective. Suzanne and Heather from the university perspective. I think that'll be helpful for our learners today to hear those different perspectives. So why don't we get started? First question, why did your organization perceive that there was a need for training partnership? So Suzanne, why don't we start with you?

Suzanne Smith ([27:59](#)):

Yeah. So this is something as Gerrard referenced than I did before since there's been turnover in the position that was really key to forming this partnership. I had to look back through some of our notes and other things. But I do actually remember the first time that the SNHU and presented. And so that's, I guess the benefit of having a long tenure at CCHN. I do remember the origins. I just had to find the details. So I'm looking back through things. Some of the kind of impetus for us to pursue the partnership was that we had CCHN's gathered trends in staff turnover salary and benefits for many years. And we had been trying to really understand the trends in staff tenure and what made turnover happen and then exploring strategies that we could try to impact what was happening with turnover.

Suzanne Smith ([28:56](#)):

And one of the things or two of the things we found was that PTO and other benefits can impact our paid time off. Sorry for those who don't know the lingo and other benefits can really impact retention and the importance of having continuing education and career ladders for staff as those other benefits is really key. And so this partnership really allowed that staff at the health centers could pursue continuing education in the health center, could support that. And then as a staff worked through a further degree that was being offered, then it would offer a career ladder for the staff at the health center. And then CPHN can't, of course, provide these types of continuing education opportunities beyond some really basic trainings. And so staff are looking for pursuing a higher degree. We needed to have a partnership outside of CCHN in order to provide those education opportunities for the staff at the health centers and college for America. And SNHU really fit this model.

Suzanne Smith ([30:01](#)):

And then I guess the thing, I kind of emphasized this before, but outside of the tactics that we are kind of focused around for impacting turnover and retention of staff we're often find that funding and programs are really focused on the recruitment and retention of providers at health centers. And so we're always seeking out opportunities to support all levels of staff at the health center, not just the providers in this partnership really fit that. And we wanted to be able to identify opportunities that would allow staff to continue working full time if they could and were affordable to the students and provided the training and skills that the health centers needed, not just the staff. And so my colleagues that used to work on this is it really helped the health center to have more professionally developed and educated staff and created opportunities for advancement in their careers, if they chose. I can hand it off to Heather now.

Heather LaDue ([31:04](#)):

Thank you Suzanne. I appreciate it. Yes. So from our perspective, I mean those are sort of the typical things that we hear from our partners on why they're looking to partner with us is that there is some sort of paying points Suzanne talked about that they had turnover you know, as a main paying point. So I wasn't here as you mentioned, when the partnership was originally formed. But talking from our typical partner perspective and what we've seen, but that's exactly why they formed that so that we can provide those via a path and an Avenue for those working adults like Suzanne mentioned to you don't have different things going on in their lives and to be a vehicle to be able to do that in different modalities. In the competency based education is, can be flexible and at their time.

Gerrard Jolly ([32:03](#)):

And Heather, if you... Thank you Heather, and if you would, my sense is that not everybody who comes to you at SNHU you saying, Hey, we want to be your guys partner, is necessarily a good partner or is a good partner candidates. So how do you guys make that determination as an institution that Hey, this say when an organization like CCHN approach you, how do you make that determination that Hey, this is a good partnership for us as well?

Heather LaDue ([32:43](#)):

I'm glad you brought that up cause that's absolutely true. And we have different levels of partnerships. So we have our enterprise partners companies that have over 10,000 employees. And so depending on their goals and their effort that they want to put in with their employees and value of that. We partner with them to provide that and make the path easier for their employees. And then we have our self service model for our smaller partners. So it's more just self service driven, like they have it, they have a



need, they have to be important. They want to have this as a recruitment and retention tool. So it's more self service driven. Where we'll provide some tools for them to promote it internally to the partners.

Heather LaDue ([33:30](#)):

And then for the large organizations that really want to be engaged and they have metrics that they're trying to meet where they want to upskill their employees. We can provide more marketing support as far as campaigns, marketing campaigns, flyers and posters and all kinds of events. Onsite events and educational events and information session webinars and so forth. But we don't, if a company wants to partner with us, no matter what their size is we'll absolutely partner with them. You know, we're mission focused. We're a non-profit and like I said before we're trying to, we're trying to improve people's lives through education. So we're not turning away partnerships. It's a matter of the amount of level of involvement, that bandwidth that we have internally. Right. You know what I mean? We only have so much bandwidth to support people.

Gerrard Jolly ([34:23](#)):

Thank you Heather. It sounds like a folks should be looking for a good mission focused partner as an academic partner that can be able to work well with them in that respect. It seems like both of you touched a little bit on how the partnership was pursued or how it came about. There anything further that you'd like to add about the pursuit or the development of the partnership?

Suzanne Smith ([35:00](#)):

I can go first a little bit.

Gerrard Jolly ([35:03](#)):

Go ahead.

Suzanne Smith ([35:04](#)):

Gerrard. I think this was referenced in one of my slides when I was giving a really brief overview. I think the kind of interesting thing for how the partnership originated is we had two of CCHN's Vice Presidents attended to the Clinton Global Initiative was in Denver, and they made connections with staff at SNHU when that happened or at that event. And then that then led to our former workforce manager working with the partners to determine what we could offer at Colorado to Colorado health centers. And so I guess I just call that out because you mentioned that you can look for a mission driven partner, sometimes you don't know where you'll meet them. And that event was definitely one that led to some good partnerships.

Suzanne Smith ([35:50](#)):

And then we invited former staff some of Heather's former staff members to present to the health centers about the types of services that they offered and the cost that would come to. And then this led to a discussion by two of our HR peer group and our operations peer group around like, will it really benefit in pursuing this? And what are the challenges and solutions? CCHN we operate very much on our model of are we going to offer something based on the health centers wanting it? And we pursued it because the health center said yes. Like, this sounds like a good program. Let's try to pursue it. I think

the other thing that I'll just emphasize, there's a lot of a proliferation of online degree programs now. And so some of the benefits we saw in this particular partnership was the affordability of the program.

Suzanne Smith ([36:38](#)):

We really liked the competency based approach to how they were doing the teaching. That they offered certificates up through bachelor's degrees in higher. And it wasn't just a program that you could only get one kind of degree in. And so then it could help if you had a front desk staff who only had their associate's degree and needed a bachelor's to move up into a different role that they could view this program as something that would really help them with their career ladder. And so I just like the reasons behind why we pursued the partnership are more than just the connection and mission, but also about what the health centers were telling us they wanted.

Gerrard Jolly ([37:23](#)):

Thank you Suzanne. That sounds like a critical element, certainly for PTA to make sure that you considering the needs of the health centers. And I'm sure the health centers online will consider the needs of their staff to make sure that any partnership is helping to address what that critical need is. Did you want to add anything? To that question, Heather?

Heather LaDue ([38:01](#)):

I think Suzanne did a lovely job covering all that. And that, I think that's one of the key things is the competency based education. Being able to stack it, some people who don't even necessarily think that higher education is for them. And then they look into competency based education and they realize, okay, I can start with the certificate or go right into associate's degree. And then as they're moving forward with it most people actually move from their associates under the bachelor's, but not necessarily with that intent when they first start. But I think Suzanne covered it pretty well. Thank you.

Gerrard Jolly ([38:39](#)):

Thank you. All right, that's a good segue into our next question. This I've heard that whenever someone comes up with a new idea, there's someone who steps up and says, let's be reasonable. That sucking force of reasonableness will raise barriers all the time. So I'm sure there were someone who pointed out the barriers to you as you were thinking about this. What are some barriers that had to be overcome that you can recall in order to get this program started?

Suzanne Smith ([39:27](#)):

I can go first, Heather, and then if you want to add anything. I think there's two main barriers to getting off the partnership off the ground. One was of course, determining the health center interest and how information would be shared. I think that this can't be underlined enough that it's really gotta be something from CCHM's perspective as a primary care association. It really has to be something that health centers are interested in. Because we've seen when we don't have that health center interest, we don't get buy in into what we're doing. And then also making sure that information is shared. Our CEO at CCHN jokes that someone has to need to see something like more than 20 times to for it to really stick in their brain and resonate with them. And so we had to make sure that we were sharing information about the partnership and the potential for what it could do, not just in person presentation but also via email by a handout mentioning it in meetings.

Suzanne Smith ([40:19](#)):

And so that that information barrier could be overcome. And then the other thing that I think any, this will resonate with anybody on the call is funding and other priorities that really directed CCHN staff efforts. This was something we pursued because it was part of our strategic plan. But we didn't have a designated funding source that was saying yes, pursue this partnership. And so then another grant comes along and changes what your priorities are going to be for how do you, how you fulfill a strategic plan priority. And it can really then derail a partnership because that funding isn't there. And so even if you have the intent behind partnering it can get in the way sometimes. And yeah, I think those are the two main barriers. I'm sure. The health centers themselves and even the staff participating might have their own. But those from CCHN's perspective were the two big barriers.

Gerrard Jolly ([41:19](#)):

Thank you. Suzanne. Heather, might they be barriers from a university side of things in terms of pursuing a partnership like this?

Suzanne Smith ([41:29](#)):

Yeah. Educating the employees and staff on what the partnership is all about. So sort of getting the word out and how the word is going to get out too. Sometimes the best of attentions are out there, but that's a barrier. How are we going to go about letting everybody know that this is available to them? And that CCHN has this great partnership and that, they're willing to invest in their employees and that, it's available to them. So just a matter of getting the word out, that that's a barrier. And we work with our partners to do that. So, and I went to a little bit of that before. So we provide what we call toolkits and then we try to make our partner's job is as easy as possible, to promote it. So, by putting together email templates, if the staff has, everybody has access to email, sending those out flyers and posters doing, Suzanne mentioned, we've been out there for an onsite event. So if the partners, allows us to set up a table in the lunch room or a set time or even doing a Monday morning meeting. So really just getting the word out.

Gerrard Jolly ([42:48](#)):

Thank you very much. Let's consider then, if there are barriers that have to be overcome, who in the organization is critical. Then to helping potentially overcome those barriers and moving partnerships such as this forward. And, why would you say? Heather, why don't we ask you, if you would start on this one for us.

Heather LaDue ([43:12](#)):

So that would be the onus would be on us as part of it. So Southern Hampshire University. So whoever the partner representative is with the partner and then multiple levels within the partner. So different divisions and meeting heads. So allowing that access for promotion, so when we say partnership and truly, it truly is working together and in conjunction. So that employees know what's available to them and what the options are and being educated on that. So knowing what is competency based education, not a lot of people know what that is. They don't understand that you say it and it's a matter of like, let's explain it let's answer all your questions about. And so having access to answer all those questions. So it is a two way street, both on as an issue and then multiple levels within the partnership. So not just human resources could be learning and development and training development. Maybe even your corporate sustainability officer. So within multiple levels within the organization allowing access for educating the employees on their this wonderful benefit that their employer is providing for them.

Gerrard Jolly ([44:31](#)):

Thank you very much. Suzanne like to add to that?

Suzanne Smith ([44:39](#)):

Yeah, a couple like the in terms of critical to the launch and the partnership with the academia. It was the people to make the initial connection. I referenced the fact that it was via a Clinton Global Initiative conference that we made the first connection. And those VPs could have just put like, Oh, that's an interesting partnership, but if they're... Since they are listening for potential partners or collaborators that we could work with because they want to drive the work forward we're doing for the health centers. So that, those VPs were really key to making sure that then we got the connection afterwards. The workforce manager who was here at the time she had a lot of focus and drive to provide opportunities to all the health centers, staff. All levels of health center staff that's part of me. And so she was constantly kind of on the lookout for those and then would tell the VPs who made the initial contact that's what she was on the lookout for. And that was really key.

Suzanne Smith ([45:39](#)):

And then she also had the trust of the HR directors. So when she asked him should we pursue this, they were able to provide really direct feedback and it wasn't something that they hesitated and providing feedback around that. And then because we had the trust of the HR directors, then we were able to get the information out to the health center staff and they could kind of identify who might benefit from hearing about the partnership the most.

Gerrard Jolly ([46:05](#)):

Great. Thank you Suzanne. Let me ask you to move on to have you answer the next question for us. And it seems like you guys have been really talking about this all along the way. In terms of what are some of the benefits to your organization?

Suzanne Smith ([46:25](#)):

Yeah, so we had an initial goal of 25 or so health center staff to participate in it. And I believe if we look at our final outcome, I think it was about 17 from roughly seven of the 21 health centers. And we had a big enough group that we decided, okay if they get to if we have a big enough group that goes through and pursues education via this, we'll try to bring them together to share about their experience. Since we didn't quite have that 25, we weren't able to. But it really then it showed at least there was initial interest and so we could do more around it. Some of the other kind of benefits was... Sorry I'm like looking at my notes and trying to make sure I remember everything. That the staff that have graduated with their degrees are now pursuing, at least as far as we know at CCHN are pursuing further opportunities within the health center itself.

Suzanne Smith ([47:25](#)):

We haven't heard of anybody that had pursued a degree through this program that has left the health center to do other work. But I think that the huge benefit that they're staying, it allows health center staff to stay within their community. And this is something that Gerrard referenced Colorado's beautiful mountains before. Those beautiful mountains, along with the planes that accompanied them can create some major barriers to pursuing further education if you want to really remain in a rural spot in Colorado. And so the fact that this program is something that the health center staff could pursue while

at home, so they don't have to leave their community is huge. Because then they're not uprooting their whole life to go and pursue a further degree and instead they're staying in their home base and really being focused on that community. And serving the health center patients well there as well. So I'll stop there with benefits for now.

Gerrard Jolly ([48:23](#)):

Thank you. Heather, Are there benefits that the university has seen from the partnership.

Heather LaDue ([48:30](#)):

Well, we're only as... We define our success by our students who graduate, right. So, and I think a CCHN has had a four graduate thus far. So participation and graduation, I mean, that's success for us.

Gerrard Jolly ([48:54](#)):

Thank you very much. All right. It's good to hear that we've had some that have graduated from the program and of course it is a long term commitment on the part of the individual in order to go through the program and get through to graduation. But as Suzanne mentioned, there are benefits that come to them as individual employees to being able to do that as well. I think I'm going to probably encourage folks to take a look at the case studies more for some of the details around the structuring of the partnership. Is there data that's being collected to sort of demonstrate some of those outcomes and success? I think Heather, you mentioned graduation, it's like critical measure of the outcome and participation. Are there any other data that is collected to determine what the outcome and successes?

Heather LaDue ([50:06](#)):

Well, I would say because College for America is competency-based. So as employees, students are mastering said competencies that be the way it's set up. It's not your traditional grade structure of traditional online classes. It's either mastered or you haven't mastered it. If you've mastered it, that's equivalent of an A. So the success of that is as they're mastering them and they have... CCHN has I think I don't know, five or seven currently enrolled right now. That shows the employer or CCHN that they have that skill set already. They've mastered it. So those competencies and we're provide reports on how far the students are as far as mastering their progress. So that, right there in itself is results in success. Cause that means that they can immediately take that skillset that they've learned and they've mastered and apply it immediately to their job. So that's success right there.

Suzanne Smith ([51:16](#)):

Gerrard, I think the case study, the profile of the health center staff member that is shared in that case study is really showing some of that success. Her CEO was interested in what she was doing as she pursued her degree and was given kind of opportunities as she went along while taking the classes. And so I encourage people to read that case study to really see that from CCHN's perspective related to data, we have to rely on our partner to share some of the information on who's enrolling, who's taking classes cause otherwise it's just anecdotal say shared by our HR directors at our health center.

Gerrard Jolly ([52:03](#)):

Thank you very much for highlighting that story of Karen Lisa. And that's highlighted in the case study. So encourage you to check out Karen's story. It's quite inspirational. And it does highlight the benefits to individuals who are participating in this program. So we encourage you to check that out. Let's ask our

final question here. And this is about how partnerships change over time? And perhaps you can touch on how your partnership has changed, but how do you expect the partnership to evolve? And why?

Heather LaDue ([52:51](#)):

So I can start. So obviously it can change too, depending on the contacts, right? So both Suzanne and I weren't here for the initial launch of the partnership books. We're here today. So, it can involve just by making sure that we're staying connected as far as who the contacts are, and just like the old telephone game, sometimes things get lost in translation, when context can change. So, making sure that we're staying up to speed on what's going on. And then from my perspective on the partner's perspective, I'm readily available to talk to my partners, to engage with them and, and provide reporting, on an on demand basis as far as, how their students are progressing and who's enrolled. And I'd expect it to evolve by just doing, whatever we can and be an accessible to help expand the partnership to increase enrollments and not only increase enrollments but then continuing through graduation rates as well.

Heather LaDue ([54:07](#)):

Suzanne, do you have anything to add?

Suzanne Smith ([54:11](#)):

Yeah, I think the only thing I would add as something I spoke to earlier is about the changing and competing priorities and then the funding that kind of drives those things. So sometimes as an example the priority for the health centers is on but I'll say the fiscal cliff and funding for the health center program. And so then that is where all of the health centers staff attention is too. And so we can share the information about the program, but then it sits in the inbox because the of staff, because they're focused on another area. And so then that means that we have to change how our partnership is with SNHU. Okay, what should we get in front of the health center staff in a different way? I think yeah, the changing and competing priorities is probably the biggest thing that changes then how the partnership can evolve. Just because it can distract also from those staff that want to pursue further degrees if they have different priorities really forcing their work to go in a different way.

Gerrard Jolly ([55:13](#)):

Thank you, Suzanne. So if for folks who are looking to develop the partnership, perhaps you developed a partnership in the past and because of competing priorities, they may have it may have waned momentarily there don't be discouraged by that. Priorities continue to change pretty much over time. And so where the are opportunities to redevelop partnerships, then we encourage you to pursue those opportunities as different needs arise. So we appreciate you highlighting that evolution and reasons why partners ships may evolve.

Gerrard Jolly ([56:01](#)):

Why don't we move to... I don't see any questions in the chat box. So we encourage folks, if you have any questions too, feel free to share those. While you're thinking about that. Just want to highlight the health center resource clearing house at [healthcenterinfo.org](http://healthcenterinfo.org) which highlights where you can find materials and resources such as the case studies that we've discussed here today. As well as a host of other resources on finance operations, workforce, quality improvement, governance. HIT and the likes. So we encourage you to check out the health center resource clearing house as a sort of one stop shop for many of those various resources. And we do want to encourage you as well as we prepared our wrap this workshop up or this webinar up that you will receive any evaluations survey after we close.

Gerrard Jolly ([57:15](#)):

We encourage you to please respond to that. Share your thoughts with us both about this webinar. We'd also love to hear about your perspectives on the case studies when you have an opportunity to review those. Feel free to reach out to me at [trainings@nachc.org](mailto:trainings@nachc.org) or [Gjolly@nachc.org](mailto:Gjolly@nachc.org) to share your feedback and perspective on those resources. I do want to thank our presenters for today who taken the time to share the work that they're doing. Really appreciate hearing about the partnership both at Colorado Community Health Network as well as at Southern New Hampshire University. So we want to take the time to say thank you to Heather LaDue with Southern New Hampshire university and Suzanne Smith with Colorado community Health Network for sharing their insights and perspectives on partnering together with us and on the college for America program.

Gerrard Jolly ([58:24](#)):

If you have further courses about that, please feel free to reach out. I think Suzanne's contact information is here and I'll be happening to share Heather's with the follow up message to this webinar as well. So I want to just say thank you. We are at 3:02 right now. So we're going to go ahead and wrap this webinar up, but thank you for our learners, our attendees, as well as to our presenters. Everybody have a great rest of the day and a keep partnering.

Gerrard Jolly ([59:06](#)):

Take care everybody.

Suzanne Smith ([59:07](#)):

Thanks.

Heather LaDue ([59:10](#)):

Thank you. Bye. Bye.