Title: Addressing Barriers to Primary Care Work Force Needs in Rural and Underserved Settings with Academic-Clinical Partnerships and Innovations in Technology

Applicant Organization: College of Nursing, University of Utah
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Grant Program Funds Requested: $2.8 million; statutory funding preference; rural population

Utah has a primary care provider shortage. There are 29 geographic and 39 low-income Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) encompassing all or parts of each of the 29 counties in Utah. Twenty-six counties are designated as primary medical care HPSAs. All but six Utah counties are rural. Our proposed project will address the growing demand for primary care (PC) services in Utah's rural communities, specifically addressing the HRSA priority of "Transforming the workforce – targeting the need." Our overall purpose is to create sustainable academic-clinical partnerships that result in an increase in advance-practice nurse (APN) graduates who are well prepared to deliver high quality primary care in rural Utah communities. Our project goal directly addresses two barriers identified by the Utah Medical Education Council and HRSA to increasing APNs in rural settings; 1) limited didactic and clinical training on the health needs of rural populations, 2) limited training and support to develop quality preceptors. Our proposed project will leverage collaboration between the Utah Nursing Workforce Information Center, the Utah Area Health Education Centers (AHEC), the Utah Telehealth Network (UTN), and our College of Nursing Teaching-Learning program, to provide targeted support for both APN preceptors and students in rural communities. We propose 4 project objectives:

1. Increase the availability of rural immersive clinical training sites for APN students by strengthening existing academic-clinical partnerships that serve rural communities in Utah
2. Prepare primary care APN students to practice in rural community settings through enhanced didactic education, longitudinal immersive clinical experiences, traineeships, and scholarly projects that address the specific health care needs of rural populations
3. Train, support, and evaluate primary care APN preceptors in rural communities
4. Identify, implement, and evaluate approaches to connecting APN graduates with employment in rural and underserved communities

We will recruit and prioritize enrollment of APN students from rural communities in Utah into our PC APN specialty tracks: family nurse practitioner, adult-gerontology nurse practitioner, women's health nurse practitioner, and nurse midwifery. We build on a current HRSA-funded (NEPQR) project that creates a natural pipeline of rural BSN-prepared nurses who are already committed to improving access to primary care in rural communities. Use of the Rapid Cycle Quality Improvement model will ensure successful planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project. Collaboration with the Utah Nursing Workforce Information Center enables us to track, analyze, and report APN workforce data throughout the state, and beyond the completion of this project.

This Project **substantially benefits rural populations** by increasing the number of primary care APNs who are well prepared to meet the specific health needs of these communities. We therefore request statutory funding preference based on these criteria.