

**Committee on Oversight and Accountability, U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs**

**Hearing on “The Power of Apprenticeships: Faster, Better Paths to
Prosperous Jobs and Less Waste in Higher Education”**

**Testimony of Apryle M. Gladney, Associate Vice Chancellor, Office of Human
Resources**

***2154 Rayburn House Office Building
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Chairman Fallon, Ranking Member Bush, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to appear today and share the work of the Medical Apprenticeship Program at Washington University in St. Louis (WashU). I am Apryle M. Gladney, Associate Vice Chancellor in the University's Office of Human Resources.

The inception of our Medical Apprenticeship program at WashU came out of the School of Medicine and its interest in accomplishing dual priorities: (1) providing underserved populations a non-traditional pathway into a career in the healthcare industry; and (2) providing the university a means to fill critical patient care openings, meaning positions for those who assist patients during their health care treatment.

Overview

Our program was registered by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) in May 2018 and our first cohort began in October 2018. The program is currently led by Mrs. Kathy Clark, Director of Medical Apprenticeships for WashU.

Apprentices in our program can be new hires from the community or incumbent workers. Most apprentices are hired as full-time Patient Care Associate Trainees. All apprentices are benefits-eligible, full-time employees starting on their first day of employment. WashU's benefits for apprentices include health, dental and vision care, retirement savings, tuition reimbursements, family and well-being programming, and more for eligible employees. Offering a competitive starting salary as well as immediate access to enroll in a full array of benefits helps set us apart from other apprenticeships.

The program is designed so apprentices learn their new roles through hands-on clinic experience for 36 hours per week and attend class four hours per week in a classroom setting to prepare them for the national Medical Assistant credentialing exam. Apprentices are expected to take the exam after they complete 12 weeks in their role.

The program enrolls apprentices on a monthly basis. Class sizes are kept small—typically between four and 10 apprentices in each cohort—in order to support apprentices through 1:1 mentorship. The program's instructors meet with apprentices before or after work, during lunch time, or even on weekends for study sessions prior to the Medical Assistant credentialing exam. WashU's program team stays connected with internal university departments to work together to help apprentices who may be struggling and ensure success.

As the apprentices pass the Medical Assistant credentialing exam, they receive a title change and increase in pay. At the end of the one-year program, the apprentices remain WashU employees and are encouraged to stay with WashU to continue their career. Each graduate is eligible to continue pursuing their education through WashU's employee tuition benefit, which covers 100% of part-time, evening program undergraduate tuition costs and 50% of part-time, evening program graduate tuition costs, subject to plan requirements. Registered

Medical Assistants are also eligible for the university's undergraduate nursing tuition benefits which allows them to complete their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) at the Goldfarb School of Nursing on the School of Medicine campus.

To help our apprentices succeed, WashU partners with community organizations that help the individuals gain additional support that not only covers the cost of tuition, but also provides access to our community resources to assist with daycare, transportation, among other services. Each apprentice must apply to gain access to these additional resources to help eliminate barriers that might hinder their success in the program. In addition to providing employment and connecting apprentices with other benefits, there are two noteworthy advantages to the program's structure for beginning apprentices: the Medical Apprenticeship program's classes occur during work hours and the program is free for all apprentices. This removes barriers for apprentices, such as family care and cost since no student loans are needed.

Program website: <https://hr.wustl.edu/careers/medical-apprenticeship-programs/>

Statistics

As of September 2023, WashU's Medical Apprenticeship program has enrolled 292 apprentices with 170 graduates. All of our 170 graduates have earned their nationally recognized credential for medical apprenticeships, a title change and an increase in pay. WashU currently has 73 apprentices enrolled either in their first 12 weeks preparing for the exam or in their first year. There have been 49 apprentices who did NOT complete their classroom portion or did not stay for the entirety of the one-year program, and therefore, do not count as completers.

For program reporting purposes, once an apprentice is hired and has accepted a role, WashU gathers protected demographic information. Of the 170 graduates, 94 apprentices selected Black or African American as their race, one apprentice selected Asian, two apprentices selected American Indian or Alaskan, one apprentice selected native Hawaiian, one apprentice selected multiple races, and the remaining apprentices selected White as their race. Four apprentices chose not to disclose their race. There are nine apprentices who listed their gender as male and 161 listed their gender as female.

Of the 73 apprentices currently in the program, 39 selected their race as Black or African American, two apprentices selected multiple races, 28 selected White and four chose not to disclose their race. Two listed their gender as male, two chose not to disclose and the other 69 listed their gender as female. Two apprentices chose to disclose they have a disability, three chose to not disclose and the rest answered they do not have a disability.

Opportunity for Continued Growth & Career Development

The majority of our apprentices have opted to continue their career at WashU. Seventy-four percent are still employed at the university at the one-and-a-half-year mark. This program has been used as a steppingstone to climb the proverbial career ladder. WashU now has one graduate who is now a clinic supervisor. Many graduates who meet the tuition requirements have benefitted from WashU's employee tuition benefit that pays for a bachelor's degree in nursing. Lastly, two former apprentices are now instructors in our program, sharing their real-life experiences with apprentices and offering guidance for success—who better to guide than someone who has been through the program successfully?

Outreach

As one of the program's primary goals, WashU continually looks throughout the greater St. Louis region for program participants. Multiple, separate initiatives have been implemented at WashU to increase our hiring from North St. Louis City and the County as one of several partnering institutions in the St. Louis Anchor Action Network (Network), an organization with a shared commitment to addressing longstanding economic and spatial inequities in the region. As a member of the Network, WashU has a dedicated focus on increasing employment opportunities for residents and expanding contracts with local business owners in 22 regional zip codes that have experienced decades of disinvestment.

In support of the Network's goals, the WashU Medical Apprenticeship program conducts extensive outreach within the 22-zip code geographical footprint. As such, we currently have 49 apprentices who come from the specific footprint in the St. Louis area. Outreach efforts include both traditional and creative connections to find suitable participants—from holding on-site job fairs and participating in online and in-person career expos, to participating in this fall's St. Louis Fire department Trunk or Treat community outreach event. As one of the region's largest employers, WashU's efforts are aimed at helping foster awareness for the program and showcasing WashU's commitment as an employer who remains dedicated to fostering local and regional growth and development.

Funding and Program Support

It goes without saying that to accomplish the goals set before the Medical Apprenticeship program, especially during tough economic times, the university continues to be grateful for generous funding from various state and local resources.

As a quick summary, the following are organizations that receive grant monies that WashU has directly benefited from:

- **American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA)** – In 1997, AHIMA’s Board of Directors established the foundation as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, who distributes grant monies it receives.
- **Better Family Life, Inc.** is a 501(c) not-for-profit community development corporation that works to stabilize inner-city neighborhoods. This organization also distributes grant monies it receives.
- **Healthcare Career Advancement Program** is a national labor/management organization that promotes innovation and quality in healthcare career education.
- **St. Louis County Workforce Development**
- **St. Charles County Workforce Development**
- **Missouri Apprentice Ready Request for Funds Grant (MARRFF)** | The WashU Apprenticeship program recently received approval for \$29,228.00 in grant monies through the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development’s Missouri Apprentice Ready Request for Funds Grant (*MARRFF*). The funds have been approved, but not yet released.

Over the last five years, the university has realized two-fold value in the apprenticeship program. One is to help find and employ talented members of the St. Louis region and the second is to create and cultivate a pathway to careers in healthcare, research and higher education that are not dependent upon a four-year higher education degree. While we hope our apprentices and graduates utilize the generous university benefits to continue their education, debt-free, in the program and field of their choice, we know this is not everyone’s pathway and we have helped many realize their dreams of working for a leading academic health center in the St. Louis region.

The following showcase a few of the accolades WashU’s Apprenticeship program has received that spotlight the program and its growth and impact over the years.

Awards and recognition

In November 2021, WashU was proud to be selected into the DOL’s initial Cohort of Apprenticeship Ambassadors, which recognizes the level of commitment and collaboration required to continue building more opportunities for those in our region who are underserved. Since being selected in 2021, we have received approval for two additional apprenticeship programs and have a third waiting for approval, which will bring our total to four apprenticeship programs. More information is available at:

<https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-ambassador-initiative/apprenticeship-ambassadors>.

Also in November 2021, WashU was honored to be selected as the *2021 Apprenticeship Missouri Provider of the Year* in recognition of our Medical Assistant Apprenticeship. Kathy

Clark¹, director of WashU's Medical Apprenticeship program, was a speaker during the National Apprenticeship Week at the Apprentice Missouri Summit.

Program Growth—On the Job Learning Opportunities

Our **Medical Administrative Apprenticeship** is awaiting DOL approval and will in some ways, mirror the Medical Assistant program. Both offer full-time employment and benefits, 12-weeks of classroom training at four hours per week, offer a wage increase and title change upon earning an industry credential on week 12. Pay increases received after passing the exam are commensurate with experience and vary person-to-person. The Medical Administrative also requires a one-year commitment from the apprentice, apprentices are encouraged to stay longer.

This program will focus on the administrative side of health care and include related instruction for a total of 2,000 hours of on-the-job Learning in their respective clinics. In addition to the back office clinical exposure, this program also includes 144+ hours of related instruction, consisting of topics such as medical terminology, patient intake, office logistics, compliance, general office policies and procedures, and some billing and coding procedures. Teamwork, customer service, computer basics and keyboarding are included training for this program. Understanding electronic health records is also an important skill to have as a health care worker in today's modern world. Qualified healthcare administrative workers are in demand and apprentices graduating from our program will be highly skilled and to complete tasks, such as recording data, scheduling appointments, prior authorizations, precertification, scheduling test(s) and insurance authorization.

We have also launched the Clinical Research Professional and Basic Research Laboratory Technician in support of our basic science and clinical research teams, which acts as a pipeline program suitable for their needs. The newly formed programs have a slightly different model than our original program. While each apprentice starts as a full-time benefit eligible employee, these programs are slightly longer and offer more on the job learning experiences. These programs accept apprentices who have a minimal amount of experience or a degree, but no relevant experience and provides on the job learning in addition to related instruction in areas that will help ensure success upon completion.

The **Clinical Research Professional Apprenticeship** is a year and a half apprenticeship and encompasses 3,000 hours of on-the-job learning and supplementary instruction of 240 hours of related technical instruction during the eight weeks of classroom training. New apprentices receive the Clinical Research Professional trainee title at a competitive starting wage, and upon successful completion of the proficiency exam, receive an increase in pay

¹ March 2023 | Kathy Clark, director of [medical apprenticeships at Washington University School of Medicine](https://source.wustl.edu/2023/02/clark-recognized-for-work-on-medical-apprenticeships/) in St. Louis, received the Innovation in Human Resources award, as part of the St. Louis Business Journal's annual HR Awards. The awards recognize individuals and organizations for influential work in human resources that benefits the St. Louis region. Read more about Clark and her award online: <https://source.wustl.edu/2023/02/clark-recognized-for-work-on-medical-apprenticeships/>

and job title change to Clinical Research Coordinator-I (CRC-I). Upon successful completion of the overall program and the passing of a certification exam, apprentices are also eligible to earn a one-time bonus payment and annual merit increases depending on their overall performance.

Apprentices in this program will receive training regarding in areas such as: Scientific Concepts and Research Design, Ethical and Participant Safety, Investigational Products Development and Regulation, Clinical Study Operations, Study and Site Management, Data Management and Informatics, Communications and Teamwork.

The **Research Laboratory Technician** is a one-year apprenticeship that includes 2,000 on-the-job learning hours. In addition, the on-the-job training will be supplemented by at least 256 hours of related instruction. Apprentices, during the instructional four-week phase, will hold the title of Research Laboratory Trainee with a competitive starting wage. Upon completion of the Instructional Phase (i.e., Related Instruction), the apprentice will be promoted to the Research Laboratory Technician 1 role and salary offers will be reviewed and commensurate with relevant experience. Each apprentice is eligible each year for a merit increase based on performance.

The 256 hours of related instruction include 160 hours accrued during the initial four-week instructional phase plus an additional 96 hours of skilled, hands-on learning opportunities provided to apprentices over the remaining 11 months of the program. Topics covered include Automation, Flow Cytometry, Single Cell, Histology, Spatial Transcriptomics/ Profiling, Mouse Training, Genetics in Medicine Seminar Series, and Journal Club.

Every aspect of on-the-job training includes sufficient, relevant workplace safety training, such as safe use of tools, equipment, and machines; personal protective equipment (PPE) usage; lifting safety; fall protection; emergency response procedures; etc.

In conclusion, we enthusiastically support the federal government in its efforts to ensure Americans have access to non-traditional pathways to careers. Washington University in St. Louis fully supports efforts to increase and diversify federal funding for the continued growth and development of apprenticeship programs.

Thank you,

Apryle M. Gladney, SPHR, SHRM-SCP

Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, Washington University in St. Louis

Appendix: Articles about WashU’s Medical Apprenticeship Program

April 2023 | Washington Magazine, The Source

Program prepares employees for high-demand, high-paying nursing jobs

Pre-nursing program, in partnership with Goldfarb School of Nursing, meets needs of working adults with little or no college.

<https://source.wustl.edu/2023/04/program-prepares-employees-for-high-demand-high-paying-nursing-jobs/>

November 2022 | Washington Magazine, The Source

Medical assistant apprenticeship program recognized by U.S. Department of Labor

The program has been dubbed an ambassador and will serve as a model program in that role, sharing its experiences through a national network and collaborating with the labor department to champion further apprenticeship opportunities elsewhere.

<https://medicine.wustl.edu/news/medical-assistant-apprenticeship-program-recognized-by-u-s-department-of-labor/>

June 2021 | Washington Magazine, The Source

Meeting the complexities of the times, together

Washington University wants to not only be “in St. Louis,” but “for St. Louis.” With that call to action, the university is taking its commitment to be a good partner in the region to another level.

<https://source.wustl.edu/2021/06/meeting-the-complexities-of-the-times-together/>

June 2019 | St Louis Post Dispatch

Washington U. apprentices learn medical assisting while on the job

https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/washington-u-apprentices-learn-medical-assisting-while-on-the-job/article_c0464370-fd97-5ecf-96f1-8640e56a069b.html

October 2018 | Washington Magazine, The Source

School of Medicine creates its own medical assistant apprenticeship

In an effort to spark more interest in the field and employ more medical assistants, Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis has created its own apprenticeship program—the first federally supported medical assistant apprenticeship at a Missouri university.

<https://medicine.wustl.edu/news/school-of-medicine-creates-its-own-medical-assistant-apprenticeship/>