



CTE Partnership Profile Template

Project Name:	Carreras en Salud (Careers in Health)
Location:	Chicago, Illinois
Partner College(s):	Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center, Wilbur Wright College
Partner Non-Profits:	Instituto del Progreso Latino (<i>lead partner</i>) Association House National Council of La Raza
Target Industry:	Health Care—direct patient care from pre-CNA to LPN
Target Population:	Participants are primarily low-income Latino men and women. They range broadly in age and represent a mix of longer-term Chicago residents and recent immigrants.

Project Innovations

» Progressive educational pathway with on and off ramps at many levels.

» Services designed to support a low-income bi-lingual, bi-cultural student population.

» Work with employers to address staffing diversity and increase recognition of bi-lingual nursing staff.

Partner Organizations:

Instituto del Progreso Latino (Instituto) was established in 1977 in Chicago to assist Latino immigrants and their families by providing education, training and employment services. Since that time, over 30,000 families have been assisted by Instituto to learn English, earn their GED or high school diploma, increase their job skills, find employment and/or become U.S. citizens. Today, the organization, which is contracted by the Chicago Workforce Investment Board to operate three one-stop type career centers including Manufacturing Works- the City's first sector-oriented one-stop center, plays a citywide leadership role with regard to workforce development and immigrant rights.

The Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center (HPVEC) of Wilbur Wright College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago, is located on Chicago's northwest side. The center opened its doors in 1995 and serves as an education and training resource for the Humboldt Park/West Town Community. HPVEC operates one of two Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) programs in the City Colleges of Chicago. Carreras en Salud program leaders report that the Illinois Department of Professional Regulations has listed

HPVEC as having one of the highest passage rates on the state licensing exam for LPNs.

Association House of Chicago is located in Humboldt Park and offers programs in both English and Spanish in the areas of child welfare, behavioral health and education and training, and emergency food and housing assistance. Association House was a founding partner of Carreras en Salud and continues to be active in the project.

National Council of La Raza, the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, has provided funding and guidance to Instituto and Association House for the development and ongoing growth and sustainability of Carreras en Salud. NCLR is using what it learns through the project to help inform the development and support of other sectoral employment programs nationwide.

Project Summary:

The goals of Carreras en Salud are to open up high paying jobs in the health care sector to low-income, Latino immigrants and their families in Chicago and to help the health care system develop a workforce that is culturally and linguistically appropriate to its client base. There is a critical shortage of all nurses, and in particular, bi-lingual nurses, in metropolitan Chicago. Yet the number of bilingual students enrolled in nursing programs in the city's community college system remains well below industry demand. The partners recognize the educational hurdles that many low-income Latino residents face in pursuing a health care career, and have set about building a set of courses and services to support people with financial, educational, cultural and other barriers to employment in their efforts to become health professionals.

Academic/Vocational Program:

Carreras en Salud provides education opportunities that facilitate entry into direct patient care occupations in health care. Together, the partners have developed a progressive series of training modules that uses an integrated approach, allowing participants to move from basic education and English language courses to Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) occupations and on to become Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and beyond. Participants enter and exit the educational training and career pathway at various points as is appropriate for each individual's goals, needs and abilities. It is not unusual for participants to discontinue their educational path for a time and return at a later date.

In this partnership, Instituto provides a pre-C.N.A. Bridge program, which offers the basic skills classes (GED courses, contextualized math and vocational English language training) that prepare students to meet HPVEC enrollment requirements and enter C.N.A. classes. HPVEC then provides the nursing education that leads to CNA and LPN certification. The Carreras training methodology relies on short courses to stimulate a sense of achievement and contextualized learning of core skills, such as English language and mathematics. All HPVEC nursing students are required to take two semesters' worth of pre-requisite college courses prior to the LPN program, and they may take them at any college in the city. Not all courses are offered at HPVEC,

but many students them at Wilbur Wright's main campus. Instituto stays in close contact with and supports students while in the pre-requisite stage helping them to pay tuition, choose courses, apply for financial aid, etc. While the first class of Carreras en Salud LPN students was filled through a variety of sources, Instituto now has enough students who have made it through the earlier steps of the career pathway that they are filling classes solely with students who have entered the program through Instituto's services.

HPVEC reserves a set number of slots for Carreras students in its LPN program, as long as the students meet college entrance requirements. HPVEC's LPN program has an excellent reputation and therefore attracts and has the luxury of admitting only the best applicants. While enrolled into HPVEC nursing courses, Carreras students are mixed into the mainstream student body and do not appear as a special cohort group. This integration model helps to avoid any risk of stigmatizing Carreras participants as different or less qualified than other students. Given that Carreras students, while qualified, nonetheless tend to have a weaker educational background than their peers, the Carreras program includes tutoring and academic support services. At the outset of the program, HPVEC staff was nervous that the admission of Carreras students would adversely affect its pass rate on the state LPN licensure exam. However, HPVEC staff report that Carreras students have been equally successful on the exam.

Supportive Services:

The partners recognize that Carreras students need strong supportive services in order to advance along the educational pathway. Instituto works with HPVEC to organize academic supports for Carreras students including tutoring, advisement and case management, and to help them navigate the financial aid system and access WIA supports. When needed, it helps identify additional financial support for tuition, books, uniforms and training materials. Instituto also assesses and helps connect students to a variety of sources of additional support, including Association House and Instituto's own Center for Working Families, for help with child care, transportation, clothing, management of personal finances, housing, utilities, physical and mental health care, domestic violence and other critical needs.

Advanced Educational Pathway:

HPVEC is in the process of organizing resources and space so that it can offer advanced nursing training, at which point the partners expect the Carreras educational pathway to extend to careers in Registered Nursing.

Industry/Employer Engagement:

The health care industry has been targeted by the Critical Skills Shortage Initiative in Metropolitan Chicago as one of three crucial sectors with growing demand for labor in increased skills standards. Carreras students who have graduated as Licensed Practical Nurses are employed at a range of hospitals, nursing homes and smaller clinics. The partners learn about employment opportunities for CNAs and LPNs through relationships with individual employers and their human resources departments, industry data and reports and interaction with the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council (MCHC) and the Chicago Workforce Board. Employers participate in the project

by providing clinical spaces for students, information about employment opportunities, and feedback on curricula and program design.

A number of Chicago-based health care employers have identified a need for greater diversity of staff and, in particular, expansion of multi-lingual/multi-cultural capacity to provide quality care to an expanding and underserved Latino patient population. Many Carreras students bring bi-cultural competencies and bilingual skills to their new jobs in health care. As a Latino-oriented advocacy organization, Instituto is well positioned to explore and press for appropriate changes in employer recruitment and hiring practices and state licensure policies that could provide greater recognition of these assets and expanded opportunities for Latino workers, while supporting employers to address a critical skill area and improving health care for the Latino community.

Notes on Funding Sources and Strategies:

The partners raise funds to support Carreras en Salud from a variety of philanthropic and public sources. Each level of the educational pathway is supported by a distinct mix of funding sources. Instituto has received some WIA Individual Training Account funds to support students in the pre-LPN levels of the career path. For students enrolled at HPVEC, Instituto and the college collaborate to help access Pell grants and other financial aid. For students who do not qualify for this financial aid, philanthropic grants to Instituto are used to support their study. In 2008, Carreras en Salud is a part of the U.S. Department of Education's ABE Career Connections project and the Joyce Foundation's Shifting Gears initiative. National Council of La Raza provides a limited amount of funding to Carreras.

CTE Project Contacts:

Madeleine Roman Vargas (HPVEC, Wilbur Wright)
Dr. Ricardo Estrada (Instituto)
Tom Dubois (Instituto)