

Bon Secours Mercy Health Creates the Future Workforce through Career Pathways

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A Not-for-Profit Faith-Based Health System

Bon Secours Mercy Health (BSMH) is one of the United States' twenty largest-healthcare systems, formed in 2018 by a merger between Bon Secours Health System and Mercy Health. Bon Secours Mercy Health's mission is focused on improving the health and wellbeing of the communities it serves, especially people who are poor, dying, and underserved. BSMH provides care for patients more than 11 million times annually through its network of more than 1,200 care sites, which includes 50 hospitals. In 2021, BSMH provided more than \$600 million in community investments, ensuring that cost is not a barrier to healthcare for patients in need. In addition to charity care, BSMH invests in programs that address chronic illness, affordable housing, access to healthy food, education and wellness programs, transportation, workforce development, and other social determinants of health that directly affect the communities it serves.

Addressing Future Workforce Needs

With a workforce of 60,000 associates, Bon Secours Mercy Health is not immune to the acute talent shortages impacting the entire healthcare industry in the United States. These shortages are expected to worsen in the next ten years, based on projections of needing more than three times the current number of healthcare workers in the next decade. To address these shortages and build a workforce that will support Bon Secours Mercy Health's future talent needs, the organization needed to devise a long-term talent strategy.

"Being an employer of our size, we have the ability and resources to create the workforce of the future. We need to attract talent straight out of high school and help them grow to their highest level of proficiency and potential within the organization," said Joe Gage, the chief human resource officer (CHRO) at Bon Secours Mercy Health. As part of the long-

term talent strategy, the organization will create opportunities for continuing education and skill-building. In addition, the health system is committed to building career pathways that will allow people to grow into new roles that utilize their freshly acquired education and skills, securing career pathways that will provide growth and economic mobility.

Summary

Challenge

- Addressing the acute talent shortages impacting the entire healthcare industry in the United States.
- Building a workforce that will support Bon Secours Mercy Health's future talent needs.

Solution

- BSMH launched an educational program to 48,000 of its associates to build future talent through education and skilling in two ways: academic programs and career pathways.
- Academic programs: Associates can choose from over 120 clinical certifications, undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, and nursing degrees at over 15 leading universities and educational institutions.
- Career pathways: Associates have access to clearly defined tracks with start and end points, explaining how an individual can get from an entry-level point to a specialized, highly skilled and higher-paying job.

Results

- Within a few weeks of the soft launch, over 2,000 associates, including more than 400 nurses, enrolled in various academic programs and clinical pathways.
- By facilitating access to education, upskilling, and formally designed career pathways, the healthcare system is building a workforce that will be ready to provide care to its communities in the future.

Pathways for Creating the Future Workforce

In October 2021, BSMH announced a collaboration with Guild—which connects employers and learning providers to drive education, skilling, and career mobility at scale. Guild offers partnerships with academic institutions and a curated catalog to help socioeconomically disadvantaged communities with education and upskilling.

Through this collaboration, BSMH launched an educational program that covers 100% of tuition and is available to all associates—part-time and full-time—from the first day of employment. The program supports education and skilling in two ways: academic programs and career pathways.

Academic Programs

Associates can choose from over 120 clinical certifications, undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, and nursing degrees at over 15 leading universities and educational institutions. The program also offers personalized coaching support from day one all the way through graduation to optimize participant success.

Career Pathways

Supplementary to the learning programs, in partnership with Guild, BSMH has mapped out career pathways that foster internal mobility. These career pathways clearly define tracks with start and end points, explaining how an individual can get from an entry-level point in their career to a specialized, highly skilled and higher-paying job by building specific strategic skills and with relevant certifications or degrees. For example, the health system has developed clinical pathways where an environment services technician can grow into nursing, medical assistants, and lab services roles.

A Closer Look at Bon Secours Mercy Health's Career Pathways

BSMH's career pathways extend beyond educational assistance by clearly defining career avenues that open up for an associate once they have developed a particular set of skills through education.

An Analytics-Based Approach

BSMH constructed these pathways using a data- and analytics-driven approach. There are three key components that can inform the development of specific tracks and pathways:

- **Workforce planning to predict future jobs:** The workforce-planning team did a long-range analysis on jobs and skills that will be most critical for the organization in the future.
- **Data on popular career paths:** Using Workday as their human capital management solution, the organization tracks popular jobs and programs that people explore when looking to transition roles internally. This information provides examples of tracks that emerge organically (e.g., people in nursing roles looking for roles as nurse supervisors).
- **Psychometric data on best-fit jobs:** The organization uses a psychometric tool for new applicants to the ministry that measures and matches their suitability for various roles based on their intellectual capabilities and personality traits. This data can potentially help people define their own personal career pathways.

Through this approach, the health system defines jobs that will be needed in the future, identifies pathways for getting to the jobs most in demand, and focuses on the most suitable people for filling those roles.

Progression Across Roles

Powered by data and analytics, Bon Secours Mercy Health crystallized a series of career pathways with clearly defined tracks and progression across different types of roles. Figure 1 (below) shows a wireframe of how these career pathways are developed. These career pathways start with entry-level or feeder roles that serve as the starting point (e.g., health screeners or technicians). Gateway roles serve as the transition point toward developing skills for a different career in the long term. Destination roles can be reached when a person becomes a specialist in that defined area. Finally, highly skilled roles represent highly valued roles individuals can attain once they have reached the highest level of proficiency. “We’ve always talked about empowering people to own their careers, and with these career pathways, I feel like we have finally given them the right combination of tools, insights, and direction to be able to do that,” said Gage.

Fully Funded Pathways Through Tuition Assistance

The program in partnership with Guild offers tuition “assistance” in addition to “reimbursement.” Assistance means

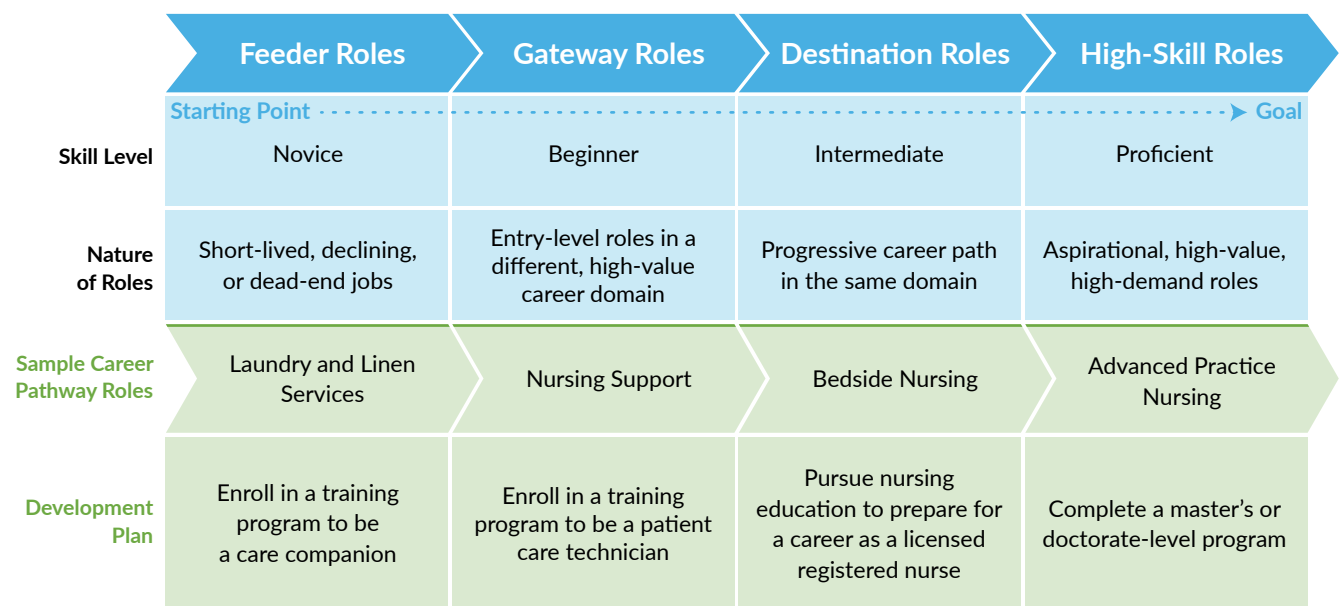
that associates are not required to pay any upfront tuition cost to enroll in a program. Bon Secours Mercy Health will directly pay for education to partnering educational institutions, therefore supporting the needs of those associates who may not have the funds to pay upfront. This is different from “reimbursement” programs that require program participants to pay partial or full program fees upfront and then be reimbursed later, often creating a barrier to entry.

The organization will pay 100% of the associates’ fees upfront across five career pathways, which include nursing, nursing support, lab managers/technical roles, respiratory therapist, and medical assistants. As an example, Figure 2 on the next page shows a visual trajectory of a career in nursing.

Next Steps: Eliminating the Internal Posting Process for Program Graduates

The initial roll out of the program in October 2021 was intended to be a soft launch without active communications and promotion. After a tremendous response and participation

Figure 1: Progression of Roles across Career Pathways



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022 (Developed in partnership with Guild Education and Bon Secours Mercy Health)

in the first phase, the organization formally launched a broad-based campaign to expand the reach and awareness of the program in early 2022. In addition to communication and promotions, Bon Secours Mercy Health will train its recruiters to insource. This will involve actively identifying individuals who are best suited for future jobs and initiating conversations about potential career pathways, as well as mapping them to the right skilling and educational programs.

“The goal is to eliminate the internal posting process for program graduates so that when an associate enrolls in a program, they’re already prequalified and preplaced in better jobs in the future. They don’t need to interview or apply for positions. Whenever they are ready, we are ready to place them in the promised roles,” said Gage. He explained further

in an interesting analogy: “I want them to have a sense of certainty. For example, at a deli counter, once you’ve taken your ticket, you’re in the queue, you can see the slots moving, you know exactly how far you are in the waiting list, and you know you will get there soon.”

This groundbreaking approach will not only positively impact BSMH’s workforce but also will create several strategic benefits for the organization. It will build an internal pipeline of talent for future roles, while also alleviating associate stress related to applying for internal positions. This approach will help recruiters fortify their role as trusted partners who encourage associates to get to the next stage in their careers, simultaneously freeing up a substantial number of recruiting resources that can be focused on external hiring.

Figure 2: Nursing Career Pathway—Visual Trajectory of a Career in Nursing



Source: Guild and Bon Secours Mercy Health, 2022

A Pipeline of Talent to Provide Care to the Future Community

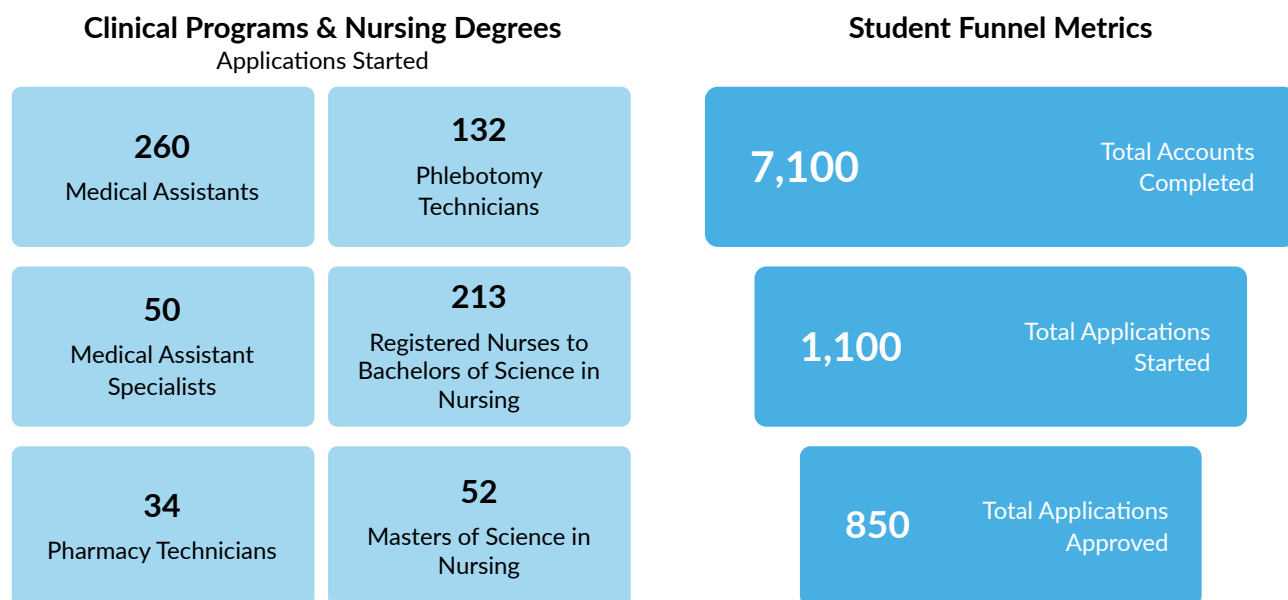
Within a few weeks of the October 2021 soft launch, over 2,000 associates, including more than 400 nurses, enrolled in various academic programs and clinical pathways (see Figure 3). The demand, as well as the tremendous reception of the program, has been a testimony to Bon Secours Mercy Health's approach to upskilling and education for building the workforce of the future. It serves the mission of the organization to expand care to the underserved communities through access to education and better careers and also helps create a workforce that will be ready to provide care to these communities in the future.

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Our approach to educational assistance and career pathways gives us the ability to change people's lives by providing access to education and upskilling, secure and future-proof careers, benefits, and the environment and support they need to unleash their full potential. It also creates a workforce supply for us, which is the biggest challenge in the healthcare industry as of today.

Joe Gage, CHRO, BSMH

Figure 3: Student Engagement Summary



Source: Guild and Bon Secours Mercy Health, March 2022

About the Authors



Josh Bersin

Josh founded Bersin & Associates in 2001 to provide research and advisory services focused on corporate learning. He expanded the company's coverage to encompass HR, talent management, talent acquisition, and leadership and became a recognized expert in the talent market. Josh sold the company to Deloitte in 2012 and was a partner in Bersin by Deloitte up until 2018.

In 2019, Josh founded the Josh Bersin Academy, a professional development academy that has become the "home for HR." In 2020, he put together a team of analysts and advisors who are now working with him to support and guide HR organizations from around the world under the umbrella of The Josh Bersin Company. He is frequently featured in publications such as *Forbes*, *Harvard Business Review*, *HR Executive*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *CLO Magazine*. He is a popular blogger and has more than 800,000 followers on LinkedIn.



Nehal Nangia

Nehal is the senior manager for research at The Josh Bersin Company. In this role, Nehal drives empirical research on key workforce-related topics and the development of actionable insights and powerful stories for today's talent executives. Nehal has almost 15 years of professional experience in human capital, with a focus on performance management; employment value proposition; workforce transformation; and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Prior to joining The Josh Bersin Company, Nehal was a global advisor for clients at Deloitte and published several studies on pertinent topics such as DEI, performance management, and bias. Nehal lives and works in India and has a master's degree in psychology.

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For more details, contact us at info@bersinpartners.com.

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