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Care Works: Come Home for Care

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COME HOME FOR CARE

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PROJECT ABSTRACT

Essential to executing the mission and vision of an academic medical center (AMC) is attracting and retaining the highest quality employees. As demonstrated by VCU's commitment to the Great Place Initiative, the University has recognized that employees in today's highly competitive environment demand competitive salary and benefit packages. Research has shown that access to high quality, on-site healthcare services provides significant benefits to both employees and employers, such as increased productivity and reduced wellness costs¹. Yet, a query of de-identified patient records indicated that only a small percentage of VCU employees (~18%) utilized the health services provided by VCU Health System in 2016.

VCU's peer-institutions, other distinguished AMCs, and industry employers have implemented a variety of programs such as concierge services, expedited appointments, on-campus clinics, and lower copays to remain competitive and responsive to their employees. In light of the depth of these programs, Team CareWorks completed a comparative review of health and wellness related employee-specific benefits to determine how VCU might enhance its benefits through initiatives such as on-site medical clinics, prioritized appointments, telehealth, and on-site pharmacies. Informed by the comparative analysis, Team CareWorks will provide recommendations that VCU can use to: capitalize on the integrated relationship with VCU Health to enrich the health and wellness of its outstanding assets (the employees); and provide enhanced benefits to employees by making VCU Health more easily accessible and more appealing as a Medical Home.

QUEST FOR DISTINCTION

Theme 1: Become a leader among national research universities in providing all students with high-quality learning/living experiences focused on inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global environment.

In order to achieve this distinction, our strategy must include the means to "Recruit and retain progressive and diverse faculty, staff and senior leadership with the skills and talents to advance quality teaching and learning, along with high-impact research, scholarship and creative expression."

Recognizing that healthcare is often cited as the top benefit that their employees care about [95 percent of respondents in the 2016 SHRM Strategic Benefits Survey said healthcare was one of the most important benefits they receive through work, outpacing retirement (71%), leave (50%), professional development (17%), etc.],² many organizations have ramped up their healthcare and

¹Berry, Leonard, Ann M. Mirabito, & William B. Baun. "What's the Hard Return on Employee Wellness Programs?" (2010). Harvard Business Review, December 2010.. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2064874>

² Miller, Stephen. "Employers Alter Benefits to Attract, Retain Employees, SHRM Finds." *Society for Human Resource Management*

wellness offerings. Virginia Commonwealth University should adopt a similar strategy, and make use of its connection to VCU Health System (VCUHS) in order to provide employees with incentives that appeal to patients' demands for convenience³⁴. Team CareWorks, suggests four specific employee-centric opportunities -- to be relaunched as a new and expanded VCU Gold 2.0 -- VCUSH should make available to faculty, staff and their dependents:

- (1) On-campus clinic
- (2) On-campus pharmacy
- (3) Telehealth
- (4) Expedited appointments

PROJECT GOALS

1. Identify the percentage of VCU employees who use VCUHS and conduct an initial inquiry that explains why more employees do not use VCUHS.
2. Conduct a comparative analysis of peer institutions and investigate whether those institutions offer four employee-centric health benefits that make using their health systems more convenient.
3. Provide a compelling narrative that gets VCU excited about relaunching a significantly expanded version of VCU Gold -- now branded as VCU Gold 2.0 -- in order to incentivize faculty and staff at Monroe Park Campus and the VCU School of Medicine to make VCUHS their Medical Home.

PROJECT STRATEGIES

Team CareWorks met with VCUHS stakeholders; project sponsor, VCUHS Chief Operating Officer, Paul Wesolowski; and VCU President, Michael Rao in order to better understand the challenges and opportunities within the health system as we explored ways to incentivize VCU employees to make the health system their Medical Home. The most serious challenge to the VCUHS is that they currently operate at full capacity in many areas; this explains the perceptions many employees' reported concerning difficulty accessing and navigating VCUHS when compared to other healthcare providers. This challenge to the VCUHS also posed a challenge to this project-- *if the health system already operates at capacity, how can we incentivize them to make things easier for roughly 14,000 potential new patients?* Through discussions with project sponsor and President Rao, this question was answered: though most of the more specialized fields and the emergency department are operating at capacity there remains not only an opportunity, but a real need, for an increased patient population in the health system's primary care facilities. Not only can the health system accommodate more primary care patients, but they often have to look outside the VCUHS to other practitioners in order for the VCU School of Medicine trainees to fulfill that portion of their training and residency rotation. From an employee standpoint, attempts to incentivize their use of the VCUHS by increasing the convenience of obtaining primary care-- and later using other health system resources as part of their broader Medical Home-- would create a "value-added" component of faculty and staff's current health benefits package. Therefore, with this new understanding of the challenges to the health system, and the potential opportunities, Team CareWorks investigated health access and promotion programs implemented at peer institutions in order to recommend the launch of VCU Gold 2.0,

Blog, November 30, 2016. Available at: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/benefits/pages/alter-benefits-attract-retain.aspx>

³ Grote, Kurt. D, John R.S. Newman, & Saumya S. Sutaria. "A Better Hospital Experience." *The McKinsey Quarterly*, November 2007. Available at: <http://www.liberatehealthcare.com/hospitals/A%20better%20hospital%20experience.pdf>

⁴ Gandolf, Stewart. "6 out of 10 People Choose a Doctor Based on Convenient Location." *Healthcare Success Marketing Blog*, July 15, 2014. Available at: <http://www.healthcaresuccess.com/blog/hospital-marketing/6-10-people-choose-doctor-based-convenient-location.html>

and conducted background research on the challenges experienced by the former VCU Gold program in order to identify strategies to better ensure a new program's success.

ACTION STEPS

- Met with a number of VCU stakeholders including:
 - VCUHS COO, Paul Wesolowski
 - VCU President, Michael Rao
 - VCUHS Chief Human Resources Officer/VP for HR and Community Benefits, Maria Curran
 - VCUHS VP of Strategy and Marketing, Marcos Irigaray
- Met informally with a number of other VCUHS professionals for feedback and advice
- Created and deployed a small-n survey (n=44) of VCU and VCUHS faculty and staff using a non-random convenience sample. This survey provided better understanding of the perceptions employees have of the health system and what types of incentives would mobilize employees to make VCUHS their Medical Home
- Used the results of the survey to identify four potential incentives to research:
 - On-campus clinics
 - On-campus pharmacies
 - Telehealth
 - Expedited appointments
- Developed an initial survey to distribute among the Vizient HR listserv (Vizient is the consortium of health systems that VCUHS is a part of) to identify which of the four incentives are offered by peer-institutions in the Vizient consortium
- Based on the Vizient survey, developed a brief survey script for cold calls to additional peer-institutions as identified by SCHEV and to other geographically-relevant institutions
- Conducted a comparative case study (n=15) of the survey results to develop recommendations

OUTCOMES

The research conducted identified four key areas of opportunity for VCU and VCUHS to capitalize on the excellence of care provided by the health system. This project proposes to initiate VCU Gold 2.0 to promote VCUHS as a Medical Home for all employees by enhancing accessibility through implementation of a clinic and pharmacy on the Monroe Park Campus, provision of telehealth options, and offering expedited appointments. Research has shown that many of VCU's peer institutions already offer these benefits to their employees. Implementing some or all of these strategies, would ultimately lead to healthier and more productive employees, and positively influence VCU's ability to recruit and retain a diverse and talented workforce.

Additionally, launching VCU Gold 2.0 would have the following positive outcomes for employees, the University, and the VCU Health System:

- Provides VCU School of Medicine with a much-needed patient population for students in the primary care portion of their rotation and training; this enhances the quality of the next generation of medical professionals
- Increases patient satisfaction which contributes to an overall positive impression of VCUHS; satisfied patients' word of mouth is an invaluable marketing strategy
- A healthier workforce leads to higher workplace productivity, which increases efficiency and output for VCU and creates a less stressful work environment for faculty and staff
- A healthier workforce also leads to lower healthcare costs for the University, which then trickle down to faculty and staff generating additional revenue for the VCUHS in order to support more specialized operations

SUSTAINABILITY

Leadership of the VCUHS and VCU, as well as the VCU Board of Trustees, have the authority to expand VCUHS infrastructure as recommended. Decision-making would need to be made in conjunction with individuals overseeing operations that would be involved in such an expansion, such as department or division heads of those units that would provide staffing for the recommended initiatives.

FINANCING AND RESOURCES

Implementation of VCU Gold 2.0, if fully implemented, would require significant infrastructure enhancements and allocation of personnel. Creation of a clinic and pharmacy on the Monroe Park campus would require space, security, and clinical personnel. A clinic offering primary, urgent care could be staffed primarily by residents, medical students, and nurses serving to not only provide patient care but educational opportunities for clinical trainees. A pharmacy could similarly provide opportunities for learning by pharmacy students, but would require that a licensed pharmacist be on duty during operating hours. Initiation of telehealth appointments would require adequate computer resources and internet bandwidth, and if initially implemented in primary care, would provide opportunities for medical students and residents to gain greater access to patients. Telehealth appointments would require oversight by a licensed physician or registered nurse, depending on the extent of care offered. Offering expedited appointments to employees would require adequate staffing by individuals who are specifically dedicated to overseeing the functions of the program, including an active customer service role, and must include specific training and instructions for workplace transitions. It would be important for VCUHS to assess which care areas have the ability to meet demand for expedited appointments.

In addition to infrastructure and human resources, in order for a new VCU Gold 2.0 program to succeed, a sustained marketing and education campaign is essential for informing faculty and staff about the excellence of care specifically available to employees. Specific opportunities for educating employees about these benefits include new faculty and staff orientation sessions and informational/awareness visits to department meetings and/or retreats.

Investments up front may seem costly; however, the adoption of the four health access initiatives by peer-institutions, as well as within the corporate sector, suggests that implementation of a VCU Gold 2.0 is within reach. The continued investment of those peer-institutions and corporations to expand their offerings implies that they are receiving a significant return on investment (ROI) by way of higher workplace productivity, lower turnover, and reduced healthcare costs⁵⁶.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Team CareWorks recommends that VCU and VCUHS launch VCU Gold 2.0 to increase health system access for employees and encourage them to make VCUHS their Medical Home. VCU Gold 2.0 initiatives include opening an employee centered clinic and pharmacy on the Monroe Park campus and offering telehealth and expedited appointments to employees and dependents. Success of VCU Gold 2.0 is contingent upon adequate allocation of resources to support components of the program as they are initiated and a comprehensive marketing and education campaign to ensure employees are aware of the opportunities and benefits to making VCUHS their Medical Home.

⁵ Towers Watson and the National Business Group on Health. "The Health and Productivity Advantage, 2009/2010 Staying@Work Report". *Wyatt Watson Worldwide*, 2009/2010. Available at: <https://www.10000stepsusa.com/getfile/PDFs%20Public/The%20Health%20and%20Productivity%20Advantage%20-%20Staying@Work%20Study.pdf>

⁶ Towers Watson. "Achieving High-Performance Employee Plans with Onsite Health Centers." *Towers Watson*, June 2015. Available at: <file:///home/chronos/u-37789a2e0591aa306360e8d113108ba5280a725e/Downloads/towers-watson-high-performance-onsite-health-centers.pdf>

FINAL PITCH

Launching VCU Gold 2.0 has the potential to greatly enhance benefits to VCU, VCUHS, and all employees. Employees would have improved health outcomes through greater access to continuous, comprehensive, coordinated care and reduce the amount of leave needed to address health care. Potential long-term return on investment to VCU and VCUHS is significant. Benefits include increased access to primary care patients for VCU's health science trainees, increased revenue to the health system, reduced healthcare costs, enhanced employee morale and productivity, and, ultimately, improved ability to attract and retain an exceptional workforce.