



Oregon and the Innovation Agenda - Health IT Workforce

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Thank you President Robertson, Congressman Wu, and Speaker Pelosi for inviting me to speak about an issue I have been working on and have been passionate about for over a decade.

These are exciting times for health IT. A growing body of scientific evidence and practical experience shows that health IT can increase quality, reduce errors, and help control the cost of health care. Health IT is also demonstrating value in translating basic research into clinically useful tests and treatments.

However, there are still barriers to achieving the benefits of health IT. One such barrier is the inadequate number of skilled professionals and leaders to implement health IT systems. Congressman Wu has been a champion of addressing this barrier in the political arena. While not as acute as the shortages of nurses and physicians that President Robertson addresses so eloquently in other forums, highly trained health IT professionals are a necessary ingredient to achieve widespread adoption and the benefits of health information systems. Effective professionals in this area need expertise with not only technology, but also health care, business and management, and the all-important “people skills.”

OHSU’s Department of Medical Informatics & Clinical Epidemiology is an innovator and leader in education and research in health IT. I am particularly proud of our educational programs, which are addressing the health IT workforce needs championed by Congressman Wu. As I am always quick to point out to the Congressman, he has one of the leading academic programs in biomedical informatics in the world ... in his district!

At OHSU, we are delivering our courses to students on our campus as well as remotely to others from around the world. In addition to a number of global partnerships, we are working locally with several community colleges and four-year institutions to look at long-term pipeline issues for biomedical informatics. We are also working closely with several robust local hospital system partners.

We also have partnered with the American Medical Informatics Association to develop the 10x10 program, which aims to train 10,000 health care professionals in the US in informatics by the year 2010. I was quite gratified when Congressman Wu chose to name his health IT legislation, the *10,000 Trained by 2010 Act*, after the highly successful program that was launched here at OHSU.

Another arena where OHSU is playing a leadership role in health IT is its application to clinical and translational research. OHSU was one of the first dozen recipients nationally in the Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) program of the NIH, which provides funding to accelerate research findings into clinical practice. The CTSA program recognizes a substantial role for informatics, and our program at OHSU contributes leadership to CTSA informatics activities on the local and national level.

In closing, I am delighted that the political leadership of our country and of our university have recognized the importance of health IT and the need to educate and train the workforce needed for its successful implementation. This all fits into our broader vision of Oregon as a hub for health IT, with companies, health care systems, and academic institutions working together to enhance the state’s leadership in this area.