2015

Health Information Technology (HIT)

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The Health Information Technology program at DMACC was to be built upon the college's existing health sciences and information technology program to meet the ever increasing demand for trained health IT specialists in central Iowa. Graduates can pursue work as health information technicians, electronic health record specialists, coding and billing specialists, quality assurance analysts, privacy/compliance officers and IT support staff for hospitals, clinics, long term care settings, insurance companies, and government agencies.

The goal of this program was to provide health information technology training in skilled areas such as EHR implementation, project management, privacy and security, coding, reimbursement, quality improvement and electronic health information exchange.

An Ohio community college website defines a health information technology program as follows: "A career in health information technology combines the knowledge of and skills from the discipline of medicine, information management, business applications and computer technology within the healthcare industry."

The Bureau of Labor and Iowa Workforce Development (Region 11) indicated an increase in projected employment in this field for the nation and central Iowa area. The HITECH Act portion of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 created many opportunities in the health IT field as the nation and the state of Iowa were striving to move from a paper-based to electronic-based health care system. Thus the need for a health information technology program in central Iowa became apparent.

In July 2008 the first focus group was hosted by Dean Sally Schroeder with several central Iowa healthcare employer representatives in attendance, and the design of the Health Information Technology program at DMACC began.

Since then the Health Information Technology Advisory Board members made up of employer representatives from HIM, IT, insurance, IDPH, hospitals/CAHs, clinics, and REC, among others, have provided continued input to the program to prepare graduates for job roles in the central Iowa market.

In the fall of 2010 the Health Information Technology Program was started under the direction of Patty Origer, RHIA. The two-year program included five semesters of courses and 65 credits. Graduates are awarded an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree from the College upon completion of the program.   Coursework combines elements of business computers, health sciences and health IT with practical computer lab, and on-site internship experiences. Students complete two internship experiences during the program at a variety of sites such as Iowa e-health at IDPH, Iowa Medicaid Enterprise, UnityPoint Health, Mercy Health Network, billing services, Primary Health Care, Telligen, Mary Greeley Medical Center, and other local hospitals, clinics, or long term care facilities.

In the first five years, the program added an introductory project management course along with an informatics course. Students can specialize their degree by choosing different tracks in Health Information Technology with an emphasis in informatics or in health based specialist and medical insurance and coding.

The program started small with one graduate in 2012, but by 2014 there were eight graduates. The future continues to be bright for a variety of career opportunities for DMACC HIT graduates. Employers

such as UnityPoint, University of Iowa Hospitals, Mercy Health Network, BCBS, Broadlawns Medical Center and other employers continue to recruit HIT graduates to meet their health IT employment needs.

Created August 2015 in celebration of DMACC's 50th Anniversary.