[male announcer] Welcome to Pima Community College Perspectives, a look at how education enriches our community. And now, here is your host, Nina Trasoff.

(Trasoff) Hello, and welcome to Pima Community College Perspectives. I am Nina Trasoff. I’m delighted that you could join us for what, I think, will be a very interesting program today that will talk about "future" for people who really, some of whom, may not feel they have much of a future. But there are so many opportunities through Pima that will benefit, not just those individuals, but our community as a whole. I am joined, as ever, by Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Rachelle Howell. Welcome, Rachelle.

(Rachelle Howell) Thank you, Nina.

(Trasoff) And we’re talking about, really, a way to lift people out of poverty into jobs that are meaningful and make a difference in the community and have professional futures for these individuals.

(Howell) That’s right, and that’s one of our major goals at—at Pima Community College. [clears throat] And, you know, with the ever-changing budget environment, as state cuts continue to come our way, we’re having to look for all sorts of other opportunities so that we can continue to do that and continue to offer those types of services to our constituencies. And so, one of the things we’ve done in the last few years is really ramp up our efforts in getting grant funding, because it’s so critical, these services for workers, dislocated workers, under- or unemployed workers, or just incumbent workers who need additional training or retraining. And if we don’t have the, the money to do that, then we can’t offer those services. So, we’ve been really successful as we’ve ramped up our efforts in getting additional grant monies. And we’re here to talk about a couple of great new health profession-related grants, uh, that we’ve gotten in—in recent years.

(Trasoff) And our guest with us on this first segment is Brian Stewart, who is the Program Manager at the Center for Training and Development. Welcome, Brian.

(Brian Stewart) Thank you, Nina.

(Trasoff) This grant, um, which is the “Pathways to Healthcare Program,” is so exciting to me as I look at the information about it, because you really are reaching out into the community and actively, proactively, looking for people whose lives could be made better by either a very short, intensive or more extended training period through Pima.

(Stewart) Yes, that—that’s correct. I mean, uh, we’re working with our Pima County One-Stop; they’re our major partner. And our overall goal is to try to increase our enrollment, uh, by, you know, 1700; it would be great to have 2,000 new students over the next five years. Um, that’s new students; that’s not students that are currently at the College. Um, low-income is our goal. They’re individuals who may not
have really thought about going into healthcare or thought about going to college before, um, and so we’re really trying to reach out to them.

(Trasoff) When you’re talking about going into healthcare, ‘cause that could seem like such a high thing to help, to reach for; we’re talking about doctors, we’re talking about nurses. But you’re talking about all levels of getting people into the healthcare profession, and there are a variety of levels within that.

(Stewart) Yes, that’s one of the wonderful things about healthcare, is that, um, it’s a huge field, and there’s so many different aspects to it. And so this program actually has entry points at all sorts of different levels, from the very front-entry workers in direct care, like a Nursing Assistant, um, to a mid-level areas like Medical Assistants and Practical Nurses, you know, to those people who are working as, actually, Health Information Managers or working as Paramedics, um, Pharmacy Technicians. So it’s a really broad range of opportunities that are available.

(Trasoff) And each of those ranges offers advancement within those fields.

(Stewart) Yes. Each of those, specifically, have different types of levels within them. So it’s really, we look at it as a pathway, or maybe a lattice, so that each point on those little rungs of a ladder, you climb higher and higher, and then you can also step over. You know, maybe you’ve been a nurse for a while, but now you want to go into nursing education, so that’s a slide-step on that rung of the ladder. So those are the, really, opportunities that we are trying to provide to the student, as well as educate them, so after they leave the program, and they’re continuing in their careers, they understand what that future really means to them.

(Trasoff) And there is a future. I mean, I think that’s the most beautiful thing, is that you’re giving people, not a dead-end, “Here’s a job that will sustain you, sort of,” but a pathway towards, really, whatever you want depending on your motivation and your willingness to pursue it.

(Stewart) Yes. Oh, yeah, absolutely. I mean, that—that’s the big—big idea that we’re trying to go through, is that individuals often don’t see themselves as advancing. And in healthcare, that is the one thing that you can absolutely do. And so, we’re not just trying to get anybody a job. The goal is to get them a career, so they can really learn, you know, and fall in love with a profession and then evolve within it. Much like I have and much like many of the people in healthcare have.

(Trasoff) That’s wonderful. Uh, that’s very well said. Uh, talk about how you are recruiting. You talked about going with Pima County One Stop, and would you explain what that is?

(Stewart) Yeah, so the Pima County One Stop, an amazing, amazing organization. Um, anybody who hasn’t had an opportunity, even if you’re not interested in getting a job, go down and visit with them. There are two locations: the Rio Nuevo site, as well as one down across from Kino Hospital.

(Trasoff) And the Rio Nuevo site is just on the west side of the Santa Cruz, north of Speedway? Or between Speedway and Broadway.

(Stewart) Yes, that’s correct.
(Trasoff) Between Speedway and Broadway on Congress Park Loop.

(Stewart) Yes. Um, uh, they provide, um, job placement services, as well as just career exploration services, and all sorts of different community support-type services within one location. And within that location, people can go in and do everything from just looking up jobs available in the area; they can get resume writing skills; um, they can connect to all sorts of community services, like, you know, “How do I find childcare?” “How do I get transportation?” How do I do all these things, that sometimes you take for granted, but if you don’t know, it’s one location where it’s all available to them. And so, they’re our intake office. They’re also connected to almost every business in the community. They’re out there all the time talking to them, figuring out what type of changes in the number of, um, employees they need. If, um, there’s layoffs, or if there are downsizing, or anything like that, they’re right there, helping those individuals. And so their—their connections allow us to reach out to a very broad group. And then, of course, their connections and our connections to our community members is the other area that we’re reaching out to. All the various community organizations that exist out there, the public libraries, um, places like the Tucson Indian Center, um, the varied Tribal nations, we are actually out there trying to draw students from all those different areas.

(Trasoff) And who’s eligible for this?

(Stewart) Um, eligibility is really determined by low income. Um, although people will talk about it being from the TANIF population...

(Trasoff) Which stands for? [both laugh]

(Stewart) Uh, Train, uh, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

(Trasoff) Okay.

(Stewart) Um, you do not have to be on assistance to be eligible for the program; you just have to be low income. And part of the process of intake is actually determining what that is, because it really depends on your family size and, you know, how long you’ve been out of work, or those type of things. But almost anybody who thinks they could be low-income could possibly qualify, so they should really check it out.

(Trasoff) And what is the support that you provide them beyond helping with tuition?

(Stewart) Um, yeah, tuition is one thing, but as well as, on the academic side, books, fees, supplies, those types of things that are needed, um, as well as support services like tu—um, tutoring, or, uh, supplemental instruction. And then, in terms of support services for the community, there can be childcare and transportation and those types of areas that may be necessary.

(Trasoff) So you really look at the individual and what the barriers are to being able to pursue this kind of education and this kind of hope for the future.
(Stewart) Yeah, that’s one of the wonderful things is there’s been a lot of research into how to ensure that individuals are successful in their educational career, and reducing barriers is really the number one. I mean, it’s hard to work and go to school. We’ve all done it, and it’s a great challenge. But think about the fact that many of us can balance those things because we can drop our hours a little bit and still be able to do it. We might be able to make that sacrifice and, you know, ride a bus instead of a car. But what if you don’t have any of that? You have no monetary resources. This program is really to try to help those individuals to achieve the same goals that, uh, somebody else who has a little bit more resources would be able to achieve.

(Trasoff) And this, I mean, this is not just an arbitrary dream, the, “Gee, let’s get together and I think this might work.” I mean, this is really based, your whole approach is based on solid research.

(Stewart) Yes, that’s correct. So the various programs that we did, we went out and did research, um, and found different programs that have tried many of the things that we do. Um, plus, the College itself has a longtime history with the County One Stop, working with them, so we have a huge resource about how they work, what they do, what kind of things can be provided. And within the College itself, we’ve had programs that have worked very strongly providing services for low-income. So we have national research, we have local research, and we have personal experiences that have drawn into creating this program.

(Trasoff) Every Friday people can come and get information.

(Stewart) That’s correct.

(Trasoff) Every Friday.

(Stewart) Every Friday, 9:30 a.m., down at the Rio Nuevo office.

(Trasoff) Over on Commerce Park Loop.

(Stewart) Yes, correct.

(Trasoff) So at 9:30, anybody can come in and learn about this program to see whether they qualify, to see whether they’re interested in it, and what the possibilities are.

(Stewart) Absolutely.

(Trasoff) And if they want to make a phone call to find more, there is a phone number.

(Stewart) Yes. We would encourage them to call 798-0500. Um, those fill up extremely fast, so I really encourage...

(Trasoff) Oh, the information sessions?

(Stewart) The sessions, you know, there’s limited capacity, so I would encourage people to call, get an appointment to go in. Um, if they can’t make that session, because maybe they, they have a job at that time, they will work around that and find a way to set up an appointment individually with them, as
well. Um, and they can also go down to any of the Pima Community College centers and they can pick up flyers, or—or they can go down to the Rio office as well, and pick up a flyer that can provide at least a little bit of information for them.

(Trasoff) So when they call the 798-0500 number, they’re supposed to ask for the...

(Stewart) The, they can say “Health Professions Opportunity Grant.” But they can just say “H-POG.”

(Trasoff) H-POG. I just love acronyms. [both chuckling] But call for the H-POG program. But this is something where you’re also going out to employers.

(Stewart) That’s correct.

(Trasoff) And seeking their input of people who might have potential but don’t have the wherewithal to do.

(Stewart) Yes. So we will reach out with employers certainly, one, because it helps us improve our programs, and it helps us find externship sites, or our clinical sites. But in addition to that, sometimes individuals are going in, um, and they’re looking for a job, and they may not have the right skills. So those HR offices may be able to refer them to this program, or just down to the One Stop center for any type of services. Um, but they also may have individuals that are employed with them, who they know are looking for an advancement in their career, and they can provide this type of referral as well. So we do reach out to the businesses to give them that information.

(Trasoff) It’s quite obvious what the benefit is, or could be, for an individual who is, gets into this program and develops a career path. What is the benefit to the community? Why should the community care about this?

(Stewart) We have—we have a limited time, right? [both chuckling] Uh, I’m extremely passionate about this. I have been in healthcare and education for, um, many, many years, and this is the population I work with. And, um, the benefit to our community, that I have experienced, and, and, which we will see, is that when you take individuals and you move them out of that poverty cycle, you give them the sustained job so that they are now contributing back into society. They are paying taxes, they are, um, going out and buying things, they’re contributing to economic development. That entire community grows because you helped those individuals.

And as that community grows, then those resources, the feedback, ‘cause it— let’s say I had a problem, and all of a sudden, I needed to go retrain. Then I would have those resources to then bring myself out of that poverty cycle. So it’s a positive feedback loop instead of a negative one, and that’s the huge benefit to the local area. And then as you do that in a local area, you are able to do that for the entire society at whole.

(Trasoff) And it’s not just the individual you’re helping, but that individual’s, for when they do have families, it is the entire family, because children can then see parents going to school, succeeding, and moving forward in their lives.
(Stewart) Oh, yeah. And sometimes it is the opposite. Parents see their kids going and succeeding and advancing their lives, and then they’re like, “Hey,” you know, “I could do that.” And then the parents go back to school, and then they advance their lives. So it affects the entire family and everyone else connected to them, their neighbors and relatives and, you know, the whole big picture.

(Trasoff) Well, we’re talking about health-related professions.

(Stewart) Yes.

(Trasoff) And you’re not, it—it’s not just a job, it really is a meaningful job, and it’s one where they need additional workers.

(Stewart) Yes. I mean, the—the, all of, all of the areas, we have 15 different areas that we are targeting, and they were all selected because they are growing in our local area. And we have the capacity to actually deliver them, on them, at the College. One of the nice things about the grant is that while we only have 15 areas right now, as our economy shifts and changes, with a 5-year grant, we have the ability to somewhat retool that and say, you know, we’re going to put our focus in this area over the last two years, because that’s really where Tucson is growing, um, while right now, it may be something slightly different.

(Trasoff) And Pima really has its, um, I want to say “tentacles,” but that sounds negative. [laughter] I don’t mean it negatively, but you really are out into the entire community, so that you know, you have a real sense of where the need is.

(Stewart) Yes, we actually have advisory committees for all of our healthcare areas, and for this in particular, um, we have advisory groups that help us keep track of what is evolving and changing. And we actually meet on a, every two weeks and sit down and talk about what’s happening in this program, what’s happening in our community, so that we are always on target with where we need to be.

(Trasoff) So you’re helping the community in that way, but you’re really eliminating, or lowering, the barriers to higher education for a whole population who might not see that in their future.

(Stewart) Yes, that’s really the ultimate goal of what we’re trying to do.

(Rachelle Howell) Brian, Brian, for those who are listening and might be overwhelmed by the prospect of committing, time commitment-wise, to—to go going back to school, not all of these programs that are eligible take a long time to go through, right?

(Stewart) No. I mean, our shortest programs are a month.

(Trasoff) Wow.

(Stewart) And the longest, the longest ones are, you know, the degree programs, which could take you a couple of years, but there are services that entire period of time. But many of them are one month, six months, nine months long, and you get a very good job at the end of that period of time. I mean, if
you’re making $7 an hour now, and you come out and you’re making $12, $14, $16 an hour, that’s a significant jump for, you know, a 9-month commitment.

(Trasoff) Wow. Brian Stewart, thank you so much for joining us. Again, this is H-POG, um, the, uh, and people can come and learn about it every Friday morning at 9:30 at Commerce Park Loop, and they can call 798-0500.

(Stewart) Yes.

(Trasoff) And we are going to take a break now, and we’ll be back to talk about another aspect of the health-related professions that is offered at Pima Community College.

[music]

(male speaker) For more than 40 years, Pima Community College has helped prepare the citizens of Tucson and Pima County for good jobs and better lives, for themselves and their families. We don’t do it alone. We appreciate your ongoing investment in education, especially during these extraordinarily tough times. Your tax dollars, combined with student tuition, make it possible for thousands of Southern Arizonans to get a jump-start before transferring to a university, to get the training they need to stay competitive at work, and to prepare for the jobs of tomorrow. Many of our students are seeking to restart their careers after losing their jobs, and some, their homes, during the recession. All of our students know, as you do, that the more you learn, the more you earn. We know that today’s students are often juggling work and family, as well as school. That’s why Pima offers classes at night and on weekends at six campuses, more than 180 other locations, and over the Internet. Our programs deliver education how you want it, and give you the opportunity to achieve your goals at your pace. Today’s Pima Community College students will be tomorrow’s firefighters, nurses, police, teachers, and small business owners, the backbone of a safe, healthy, prosperous Tucson and Pima County. Thank you for your support as we continue to help you and your family build a better tomorrow. For more information, contact us at 206-4500 or visit us on the Web at pima.edu. Pima Community College, developing our community through learning.

[music]

(Trasoff) Welcome back to Pima Community College Perspectives. I’m Nina Trasoff, and as always, with Rachelle Howell. And our guest for this half of the program is Cathy Lee who’s the Program Manager of HiTech. Cathy, explain to us what HiTech is.

(Cathy Lee) HiTech is a training program for the, um, healthcare workers or IT workers who may have been laid off or are searching for an upgrade. It’s not typically an entry-level program; they should have some background experience in either IT or healthcare. Uh, the students come in, this is all self-paced, um, guided self-study, uh, with the instructor. They can get all of their information from our webpage, um, on pima.edu; they just type “HiTech” into the search line.

They can put in their application that way and meet with our student advisor who will then register them into the program and give them all of the information that they would want to know about which
role they should train in. There are six, uh, workforce roles for people to train into, um, starting from a Trainer, who actually trains folks how to use an electronic health record, up to the Practitioner Consultant, who works with the, um, the medical team on, on what type of a system to buy, how it should be utilized, what are the most important parts in the electronic health record that they need to, um, to automate.

(Trasoff) So you’re talking about healthcare workers and information technology workers, but the whole framework for this is medical offices, hospitals, everybody is converting to electronic medical records. And this is a burgeoning field that needs skilled workers. And the pay is good.

(Lee) The pay ranges, um, according to the Office of National Coordination, um, $44,000 to $127,000, depending on which role you’re in and the demand for that role. Um, workflow process and design is really where people are going to be needed. That’s going to be the most functional role, um, from what we can see. And we didn’t know this until we started, uh, bringing people in and talking to physicians out in the community. Uh, recently we went to Kingman Memorial Hospital, and we talked to our own Dr. Catinella here at UPH, and they both said that the workflow process is the, is probably the most important part of the conversion.

(Trasoff) Yeah, because you can pick the Electronic Medical Record, or EMR program you want, but you have to design it for it to work in that workplace setting.

(Lee) Exactly, exactly.

(Trasoff) So you’re taking people and you’re saying that it is self-paced, that they can maintain their jobs and still do this coursework?

(Lee) Yes, they can. It’s, it’s not that easy. Um, that’s why we have, we ask people, “Are you really, uh, committed to completing this program?” Because it’s not easy. Um, learning the culture of healthcare, if you come from an information technology background, learning a culture of healthcare is probably the hardest, from what we’ve heard from our students, is probably the hardest course, because you’re having to learn a whole new idea about, behind technology. Um, after that, the courses, we do some soft skills, project management, teamwork, uh, QA, quality assurance type of stuff. Those are the easier courses, but the courses aren’t meant to be simple.

(Trasoff) The field isn’t simple. But this is offering an opportunity for advancement, and it’s short-term training, and it is free, because this is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act?

(Lee) Correct, correct.

(Trasoff) How many students can you accommodate?

(Lee) As many as want to enroll. [laughter]

(Trasoff) Really, really?
(Lee) Really. Because it’s web-based. You know, wherever they are, um, in Tucson, or in the surrounding communities, like Sierra Vista, um. And Kingman isn’t typically out of our area, but the college that they would go to isn’t offering all of the roles. We’re offering all six training roles, uh, whereas another college is only offering three of them. So, we can take those in from outside of, outside of our surrounding area.

(Trasoff) Tell me about the curriculum, where was it designed? Or, how is it designed, and what’s involved?

(Lee) The curriculum was designed by six universities, and I, I can’t remember every single one of them, but I know that Johns Hopkins was one of them, Oregon State, um...

(Trasoff) Columbia was one of them, if I remember correctly.

(Lee) Columbia, uh, I want to say Oklahoma. It’s a collection.

(Trasoff) But it’s—it was a very high-end brains coming together to put this together. And it—it, it’s PowerPoint, it’s print materials, it’s web-based, it’s all of those things?

(Lee) It’s all of those things.

(Trasoff) So, when we’re talking about EMR and converting to EMR and electronic medical records, this really has benefits, and these are people who are going to be, possibly, holding out the hope of lowering the cost of medical care, because you’re going to be able to eliminate a lot of duplication of tests and—and speeding up the process for patients.

(Lee) Correct. That’s the whole idea-- and efficiency. Efficiency is, is kind of what you’re saying, is that if they can go to their normal practitioner, and then if they get seen at the ER sometime between that and their next visit, that record will be available. As long as there is some, um, interface between the two systems; and that’s going to be another big jump, is the interface between two systems. That is occurring now in some, between some physicians’ offices and hospitals, uh, because they’re, they’re two separate types of electronic health record. They have the enterprise, larger health records for the hospital systems, and then there’s the smaller group, um, software for the, for the doctors’ groups that maybe only have 5 or 10 folks in them. Um, and so there’s, there’s some different systems. Some of the bigger software companies are recognizing this and saying, “Okay, we’re going to offer, we’re going to offer the smaller groups a different version.”

(Trasoff) So that the two different versions can talk to each other.

(Lee) Exactly, exactly. And that’s going to be vitally important.

(Trasoff) Well, so you’re talking about efficiencies and lowering costs, but it sounds as if the quality of the healthcare will also be better, because a patient's records will be there.

(Lee) Yes. And they’ll already know, the attending physician will already know what medications this person is on, if they’ve already had that x-ray, what else has happened with this patient that I don’t have
to repeat. So they’re going to get really good care. I’m feeling our patients are going to get really good care.

(Trasoff) So, how do people find out more about this? They can go to the web—the Pima website.

(Lee) Correct, they can go to www.pima.edu, and in the search box, type in the word “HiTech”, H-I-T-E-C-H, and it will take them directly to a link that says, uh, “training for a new career.” And when they get to that page, there is some information at the very bottom and some PDF files that they can open up that has the application in them. They can fill all this stuff out online and send it to the HiTech mailbox at hitech.pima., I mean, hitech@pima.edu.

(Howell) Cathy, can all of the coursework be completed completely online, or at a distance, or is there some face-to-face time that’s required, as well?

(Lee) Three of the courses are lab courses, uh, where there's hands-on work involved. We are, right now, putting up a server that will reach out to the community so that they can do these from, some of, at least one of the courses, lab courses, from home. And then, there’s some freebie software that they can download for the, like the VA Vista product, which is what the Veterans’ Hospital uses. Uh, they can download that and use it, uh, install it on their computer at home and get a sense of an electronic health record. It’s not quite as, uh, robust as what you’re going to find in a physician’s office, but it has the conceptual idea of what an electronic health record is, if a person’s never seen one. That gives them, um, the baseline idea.

(Trasoff) Very good. So there’s a lot, I mean, the potential with all of this is really quite tremendous in terms of how people can develop careers that are really going to be needed increasingly as more people go to the electronic medical records.

(Lee) Absolutely.

(Trasoff) So again, it’s going to the website; the phone number is 206-7272.

(Lee) Actually, if they want to speak with our Student Advisor, which I would highly recommend, it is Sharon Macias, at 206-7278.

(Trasoff) 7278. Okay. But there really is a lot of opportunity here, and it’s going to have a real benefit with the quality of healthcare in our community. Cathy Lee, thank you very much for joining us.

(Lee) Thank you for having me.

(Trasoff) Rachelle Howell, always a pleasure. And thank you, for joining us for Pima Community College Perspectives. I’m Nina Trasoff. Bye.

[music]

(station identification)

(male announcer) K-J-L-L, South Tucson.