Did you know that a recent study by the University of San Diego ranked Health Information Technology as the number “1” hot career for college students?¹

I’m sure that doesn’t surprise you if you are aware of all the upcoming changes that are taking place in healthcare including Electronic Health Record (EHR) implementation under the Health Information Technology and Economic Clinical (HITECH) Act, major changes in HIPAA also part of the HITECH Act, and International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) implementation which occurs on October 1, 2013.

I’ve been in healthcare for over 25 years now and I have never witnessed changes to the current system at this magnitude. I was witness to various significant changes over the years including the Tax Equity & Fiscal Responsibility Act (TEFRA) which brought in major changes to the way Medicare settlements were made, the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act, and the Balance Budget Act (BBS) of 97 which also made significant changes to the Medicare payment system for healthcare providers including hospitals, nursing homes, and home health agencies. Every time I survived another major change in healthcare legislation; I saw big opportunities arise, especially for entry level and experienced consultants.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, HIT jobs are expected to grow by 20% over the next decade. ² The Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) recently estimated that there will be a shortage of 50,000 qualified technicians to handle the needs of providers in implementing EHR’s under the HITECH Act, and implemented a new training program to create new technicians at an expedited pace. ³ The UCSD study points out that technology changes are fueling the increase in demand for health information technicians who can support medical record reform.

So as you struggle through your HIT classes and wonder what’s in stall for you after graduation, just remember that you’ll probably have better odds at obtaining employment than most other majors.

Article written by: Monte Handley, SBCC HCSPC President


2011—2012 HCSPC Advisory Committee Members:

**Academic Club Advisor:** Gwyer Schuyler

**Officers:**
- Monte Handley - President
- Chandra Wright - Vice President
- Lisa Lavender - Treasurer
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**Advisory Committee Members:**
- Gagendeep Bal
- Kim Graff
- Marcia Coye
- Neda Sayan
- Sandra Morillo (Cortes)
- Sherry Little
- Theresa Resendez
- William Yuen
Important Date Coming Up: Drop Deadline

All too often, I work with online students who thought they could handle a full load of classes but found that they had taken on too much. They end up receiving lower grades in all of their classes because they tried to spread their time too thin or they end up failing or having to withdraw from one or more classes.

Now is the time to really assess your schedule. Were you so excited that you could get enrolled in courses that you signed up for too many units? Is it realistic to think that you can devote the necessary time to all of the courses that you are enrolled in? We all have family and work responsibilities that need our attention and that factor into the equation.

Remember the formula – for every unit of coursework, you should plan to dedicate at least three hours per week. So if you are in six units of coursework, you should be sure to have about 18 hours available for course requirements. If you are taking a full load of 12 units, then you should budget for 36 hours per week of course time.

An important date is coming up in the semester – the drop deadline. The drop deadline for regular-length courses is September 3. You should assess whether you have the time to dedicate to all of the classes you are enrolled in now. Dropping courses by September 3 allows you to get a refund of enrollment fees (which can be conveniently credited to your account for a future semester) and it keeps you from getting a “W” on your transcript.

To drop courses, log into Pipeline and go back to the same screen where you registered for courses. If you need assistance within Pipeline, you can contact our Admissions Outreach staff at info@sbcc.edu. Time is short, but if you would like to discuss your situation with me, email me asap – schuyler@sbcc.edu.

Article written by: Gwyer Schuyler, HCSPS Club Advisor, Academic Counselor
Get Your Foot in the Door as a Volunteer

I work a lot with coding students and people interested in a career in coding. My advice is always the same: volunteer. I get various responses from the-you've-got-to-be-kidding me stare to the-I've-tried-everything eye roll, and I can probably count on my fingers the number of times someone has taken my advice. All I can tell you is I've seen doors open for people who volunteer and the for those who don't, well, let's just say I'm afraid they're going to develop migraine headaches from all that eye rolling!

It seems to me the, "V" word has developed a certain stigma. What comes to mind when you hear the word? Are you picturing a publicity shot of Brangelina in some distant far off corner of the world? Are you picturing hospital candy stripers or "pink ladies?" Well I'm here to tell you two things: 1) volunteering doesn't have to conform to the vision in your head and 2) people in the HIM industry who make a difference are volunteers.

Where you begin your volunteering depends on your motivation. Are you looking to network, for experience, or both? If you're looking for networking opportunities, look no further than your component state association (CSA) for AHIMA. I have yet to see a CSA turn volunteers away. I belong to the Colorado CSA where we have student board liaisons and give students opportunities to help out at conferences in exchange for free admission. The bonus of getting involved in your CSA is you have a chance to hobnob with your state leaders, who are connected to other professionals who may be hiring. I have recommended students to employers after seeing their work ethic and drive when working on a project with them. I will challenge you with this, though – don't think of volunteering for your CSA as simply a jumping off point, think of it as a continuous growth opportunity. Moving into leadership in your CSA can open career doors several years down the road you never thought possible.

If you're looking for experience I recommend contacting the volunteer department at a hospital. Very few people offer to volunteer in and HIM department. Although, since I first started giving this tip to some people in Colorado, I think the requests have grown! Offer to volunteer not only in HIM, but other departments that interact with HIM, such as patient registration (admissions) or billing. I know an individual who went through an HIM program and started volunteering in patient registration and was just hired on. Once you get that foot in the door, scope out and introduce yourself to HIM department management. Managers hire people they know and they like insiders – believe it or not, as a volunteer, you are more of an insider than you were before you got there.

Finally, I realize what I’m asking. I’m asking you to give up your free time. I’m asking you to work for free. I understand these are hard times for many people, work is scarce and some are already working two or three jobs to make ends meet. However, I’m not asking you to do anything I wouldn’t do myself. I still volunteer, even in my busy established career, and I find that the more I put into volunteer work, the more my career flourishes.
Classes have just started, and I don’t know about you, but I am already exhausted! I have found out that there is a tremendous amount of work needed in getting a new club up and running, and it’s much more than I could have ever imagined! We started with “the HIT / CIM Student Peer Club idea”, we elected officers, drafted all the required paperwork including the club constitution and the other required SBCC official school club documents, came up with up initial ideas, and finally we brought on eight new members from HIT, CIM, and Medical Coding majors to form the Advisory Committee (AC) members to help with the club construction. But that was just the beginning. Now it’s time to offer some club member value.

We’ve been putting in a lot of laborious hours trying to get “everything” up and running. We are a unique club in that our members are all from “online” cyberspace, and all of our communication occurs electronically, either thru email or by phone conference calls. In fact, none of the club officers or AC members, including our academic advisor Gwyer Schuyler, has ever met one another in person. We know each other only by voice, and by the creation of words we send back and forth to each other every day. But still we manage to “get it done”!! We hit 100 members earlier this month and as of this week we are officially at 115 members, with expectations that we will grow to over 250 members by the end of the semester. That’s a lot of club members and we are all very excited about our progressive growth.

So here’s what you can look forward to. We should have our Facebook page, our HCSPC Web Page, a Google or Yahoo group’s page, and Twitter accounts all up and running in the month of September. In October, we are striving to have other student interaction portals running, such as student blogs, etc. In November and forward, we will start providing YouTube interviews of your favorite instructors, and a random selection of Club members.

By year end, we are hoping to offer live session webinars from industry leaders, prospective employers, and four year academic institutions, to name a few.

So I want to end my column by thanking all of our new members for joining our Club, and to stay tuned for some really great new club ideas coming your way.

Article written by: Monte Handley, SBCC HCSPC President