

Mission Forward Overview

Background

- Mission Forward is UW Medicine’s systemwide initiative to identify, design and implement changes that improve our financial stability; increase operational efficiency; promote the well-being of our staff, faculty and trainees; and ensure we can continue providing high-quality, equitable patient care to our community.
- UW Medicine, like many other health systems across the country and in Washington state, is facing significant financial strain as we emerge from the pandemic with resultant capacity and staffing challenges. From July to January 2023, our three hospitals incurred losses of \$143 million, excluding Federal Emergency Management Agency recovery funds.
- While all healthcare systems are challenged, UW Medicine’s financial situation is exacerbated by our unique role within the state and region:
 - Our mission is to provide care for all people, including the most vulnerable and most complex patients. This results in over \$800 million in undercompensated care per year.
 - We train over 65% of the residents in Washington state. However, the reimbursement for resident education has been capped since 1996.
 - We have continued to invest in contract labor to meet the clinical needs of our state while other healthcare systems have reduced their staffing and are not using all their physical beds.
 - We have over 175 patients in our system on any given day that medically are ready to be discharged to the next level of care but remain in our hospitals due to the lack of post-acute care availability; reimbursement covers only about 17% of their hospital care.
- In addition to our Mission Forward work, we are working to capture federal reimbursement for the costs associated with responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and partnering with the state to develop novel payment programs in support of our Medicaid managed care patients.
- In partnership with the University, we also continue to engage state policymakers regarding UW Medicine budget requests.

Timeline & Progress

- The Mission Forward initiative has three phases: assessment, design and implementation. We will complete the initial assessment phase in March, following several months of intense work that included interviewing more than 175 leaders, reviewing hundreds of data files, touring and observing facilities, and considering more than 50 ideas submitted by UW Medicine employees.
- The assessment identified short-, mid-, and longer-term opportunities for us to consider. These findings have been validated, vetted with key stakeholders and shared with leadership groups and governing bodies.
- The next phase of our work involves deciding what opportunities to prioritize and pursue and designing operational plans for the work (e.g., oversight structure for the initiative, detailed initiative-specific plans and launching teams, refining scope and benefit analysis).

- In December we launched a 90-day action plan to accelerate cash flow and reduce costs in high-priority areas. We established nearly a dozen workstreams to focus on key areas such as improving the processes through which we get paid for the services we provide (hospital and physician revenue cycle management), optimization of our operating room and clinic schedules to improve patient access, and efforts to reduce our reliance on temporary staff. Excellent progress has been made, including:
 - Increased patient appointments by **2,652** over baseline in January and the first half of February.
 - Since October, submitted more than **\$46.3 million** in hospital claims that were waiting to be billed, accelerating our time to payment.
 - Reduced a professional coding/billing backlog in General Internal Medicine by **\$2.2 million** in gross charges.
 - Reduced costs associated with our reliance on temporary positions by **\$7.4 million** at Harborview and UWMC in December and January due to reduced pricing and a reduced number of contract labor FTE.
- The 90-day action plan will conclude in late March. However, workstream initiatives will continue as part of the broader Mission Forward initiative as we transition into the design phase.
- Together, we can define a more sustainable future for UW Medicine so that we can continue advancing our mission and caring for our community for years to come.

Feedback

- Mission Forward is a massive undertaking with profound implications for the future of UW Medicine. We will need ongoing engagement and support from the entire UW Medicine community to be successful.
- We are committed to openness and transparency throughout this process and have established a Mission Forward page on The Huddle where our staff, faculty and trainees can find messages from leadership, a project overview, FAQs, and presentations with updates on workstreams already under way. Link: <https://huddle.uwmedicine.org/mission-forward/>.
- We encourage everyone to share feedback on Mission Forward directly with their supervisors or through the email link found on the Mission Forward Huddle page.