

Barriers that limit entry of underrepresented people of color in academic healthcare professions and education

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ABSTRACT

The number of underrepresented people of color (URPCs) in academic healthcare professions and education has seen little increase in numbers in the professoriate student population. What is it about the academic environment of our health professions schools that deter or even discourage URPCs from full participation in academics? How can we provide role models for underrepresented students of color in our health professions education programs? Is it time to examine creative and innovative thinking about the academic health care enterprise? What impact does the political, social and race relations of our time have on underrepresented people of color in academic health care centers? These and other ideas will be explored.

Due to shifts in the composition of the population, the U. S. Census projects that by the year 2042 groups that comprise current racial minorities will become the majority of the US population. As a result, the client base across all health professions, including medicine and veterinary medicine are undergoing change.

As the number of racial and ethnic underrepresented people increases in the United States, the number of underrepresented minority faculty members in health professions education continues to be sorely underrepresented. According to Diversity in Medical Education: Facts and Figures published in by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) in 2012, the total number of African Americans teaching in US medical schools was 3, 945 or 2.9% of the total US faculty in medical education and in 2018-2019 the percentage of full-time US medical school faculty by race/ethnicity. The largest proportions of faculty were White (63.9%) and Asian (19.2%). Only 3.6% of full-time faculty in 2018 were Black or African American, and 5.5% were Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish Origin (alone or in combination with another race/ethnicity). Hispanics or Latinos comprise 4% of the total faculty in medical education. Because the data cited include minority faculty based in predominately minority-serving institutions, the number of underrepresented minority faculty serving in predominately white institutions is considerably smaller.

Similarly, the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges and the American Veterinary Medical Association realize that such compositional changes in the general population require an increased strategic effort to recruit, educate and graduate a diverse

veterinary workforce. According to a report written by Thompson (2013) with data from Bulletin for Labor Statistics, veterinary medicine is the “whitest profession” in the United States. (with the profession composed of 96.5% Caucasian practitioners). According to the 2020 Internal AAVMC Data Report, when the applicants’ pool was analyzed by race and ethnicity, it revealed that a total 2.8% of the pool was African Americans and total enrolled of the class of 2023 is 3.4 % and 3% of the total population of DVM Student Population, (total population (13,548).

If increased resources and recruitment efforts are not a part of strategic plans for increasing URPC in healthcare education programs in universities and colleges, the current data for URPC will remain constant. This has been the case for many decades and those universities and colleges that have solid strategic plans and resources have seen an increased number of URPC enroll in their programs.

Additionally, there are several effective research-based efforts that are documented to increase diversity and inclusion, including:

Outreach

To all educational institutions in the state, inclusive of HBCUs, all public elementary, middle, and high schools, is targeting populations of students that may have previously overlooked or thought to be under-qualified.

Scientifically based Holistic admissions

Holistic review is a university admissions strategy that assesses an applicant's unique experiences alongside traditional measures of academic achievement such as grades and test scores.

Changing the culture and environment to be more inclusive:

Training and improving the knowledge base of all within the institution to acquire an understanding of how inclusion is a key component of diversity and the environment must be assessed to ensure diverse populations are welcome. At the Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine, the admissions committee completes an Implicit Association Test (IAT) and Relevant Diversity and Inclusion College of Veterinary Medicine

training (e.g. for admissions, search committees), which has shown to lead to a more diverse selection of applicants.

Setting realistic goals

For diversity and meeting those goals annually.

Dispelling myths- About the performance levels of underrepresented populations of students' inability to achieve in a rigorous educational setting.

Allocating resources

To ensure success for recruiting, academic achievement, scholarships, diverse faculty, staff, and students

Improving experiences and retention of underrepresented faculty of color:

They encounter difficulties in academic medicine that are similar to those confronted by minority students during their medical education.

Addressing the common barriers

For under-represented minority (URM) students and faculty that includes isolation, stereotyping and/or racism, lack of mentoring, and institutions being inadequately structured for minority faculty advancement.

Environmental and climate issues

The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges-American Veterinary Medical Association (AAVMC-AVMA) reports that underrepresented veterinary students may experience a less welcoming social and academic climate on their campus as a result of overhearing hearing intolerant language, lacking mentors, and experiencing discomfort in less diverse learning environments.

Addressing the realities of climate issues

These may dissuade URM student trainees from pursuing faculty positions. By determining what institutions can do to nurture minority graduates to pursue to consider entering a career in academic medicine. The AAMC contends that academic health centers can enhance the number of underrepresented minority faculty by 1) creating an environment that allows for a more balanced personal life, 2) supporting community-based initiatives, 3) encouraging interdisciplinary work and 4) rewarding quality teaching efforts. These are recommendations that both veterinary and academic medical health centers should seriously consider developing.

References

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