

Diverse Faculty

Survive or Thrive?

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Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions

“The problem of racial and health disparities, and the lack of minorities in the health professions are inescapably linked.”

Louis Sullivan, MD, 2004

Benefits of Racial and Ethnic Diversity Among Health Professionals

- Racial and ethnic minority health care providers are more likely to serve minority and medically underserved communities, thereby increasing access to care;
- Racial and ethnic minority patients report greater levels of satisfaction with care provided by minority health professionals;
- Racial and ethnic minority health care providers can help health systems in efforts to reduce cultural and linguistic barriers and improve cultural competence;
- Diversity in higher education and health professions training settings is associated with better educational outcomes among *all* students.

Diverse Faculty

- Provide role modeling, mentorship and safe environment for students
- Only 4.2% of medical school faculty nationwide; less than 10% of nursing faculty are people of color.
- Less likely to hold senior rank, promoted at lower rates, and report more discrimination
- Faculty of African descent experience “racial fatigue” which has personal and professional consequences.

The Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce

- Commissioned by the Kellogg Foundation in 2003
- Chaired by former Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan
- 15 member multidisciplinary team (health, education, law, business, public policy, etc.)
- Included data gathering, field hearings with health professions reps, health system and community stakeholders; commissioning of papers.

Sullivan Commission

Recommendations for Health System and Health Professions Schools Leaders

- Work to make school/department culture more inclusive.
- Pipeline programs are viable means of developing students.
- Increase leadership development opportunities to prepare minority nurses with graduate degrees for roles as scholars, faculty, and leaders in the profession.
- Work to increase leadership training and opportunities for URM physicians and dentists.
- Assess institutional progress in achieving racial/ethnic diversity among students, faculty, administration, and providers; monitor career patterns of graduates.
- Build and maintain critical mass of minority faculty; ensure effective mechanisms are in place for recruitment, development, and retention.
- Regularly evaluate and, as needed, enhance the quality and impact of minority mentoring programs.

Pitt Health Sciences Response to Sullivan Report

- Study of diversity status across the health sciences; found some positives, but many needs.

Faculty Interview Findings

- Poor record of minority faculty recruitment and retention across the Health Sciences.
- Lack of sense of community
- Lack of social support
- Lack of role models
- Lack of mentoring
- Cool/hostile climate; lack of cultural competence instruction
- Inconsistency in definition of “minority” faculty

Central Themes

- Expectations – equal? attainable?
- Role modeling – present?
- Mentorship – available?
- Discrimination – overt or covert?
- Inconsistency of Diversity Efforts – remediation?

All impact retention and, in turn, culture and future recruitment.

Discussion

- What have your experiences been?
- How do you feel about your future in the academy?

How to Thrive

- Network!
- Manage your volunteer service; learn to say “no,” “not right now” or “I can’t do that, but I what I can do is...”
 - Don’t commit to chair diversity committee when you should be publishing or grant writing.
- Observe departmental politics.
- Be sure to hit the metrics that lead to promotion.
- Schedule time with departmental leadership to be sure you’re on track (don’t wait for them to come to you.)

How to Thrive (cont.)

- Note that mentors and role models come in all shapes and sizes (and shades and ranks).
- Take advantage of resources. Don't wait until small bothers are huge problems.
- Feed your soul by planning time with compatriots.
- Become a part of the community – wherever you are.
- Be a diversity advocate, but don't feel like you have to carry the load for everyone.

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