



# Diversity Toolkit for Higher Education

CULTIVATING A NURSING WORKFORCE THAT REFLECTS WASHINGTON'S POPULATION:  
PROMISING PRACTICES IN LOCAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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**Washington Center for Nursing**

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Research reveals that Americans tend to receive better quality care when health professionals mirror the ethnic, racial, and linguistic backgrounds of their patients. Yet today's nursing profession is overwhelmingly white and female, and only slightly more than a quarter of registered nurses come from other racial and ethnic groups. Currently, the U.S. nursing workforce comprises 5.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 5.4% Black/African American, 3.6% Hispanic/ Latino, and 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan Native nurses, which compares with the general population demographics in the United States by ethnicity of 4.8% Asian/Pacific Islanders, 12.2% Black/African Americans, 15.4% Hispanic/Latinos, and 0.8% Indian/Alaskan Natives (AACN, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2003; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010c). Moreover, individuals who self-identify as African American, Alaska Native, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, or Pacific Islander are expected to constitute a majority of the U.S. population by 2044. Non-Hispanic Whites, currently a majority of Americans, will make up less than half of the population.

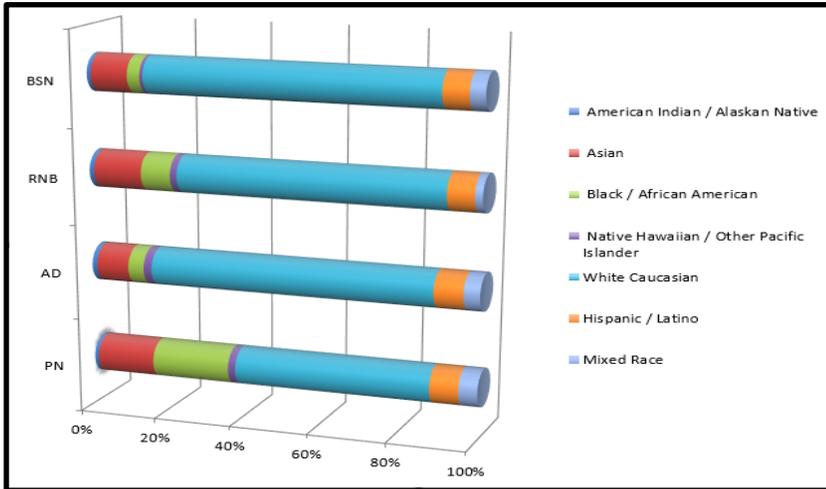
Men also constitute an underrepresented minority in the profession, accounting for only 10 percent of the workforce (Washington is only slightly higher than the national average, at 11.5 percent), although they make up 49 percent of the U.S. population.

A culturally competent nursing workforce is an integral component to eliminating health disparities, improving access to care, and promoting the cultural congruence of nursing care delivery. In fact, [Healthy People 2020](#) acknowledges the importance of "[finding a health care provider with whom the patient can communicate and trust](#)" as a factor in improving access to care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010b, Access to Health, Overview).

Many agencies and organizations, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Institute of Medicine, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to name a few, are calling on higher educational institutions to cultivate a nursing workforce that truly reflects the people who live here.

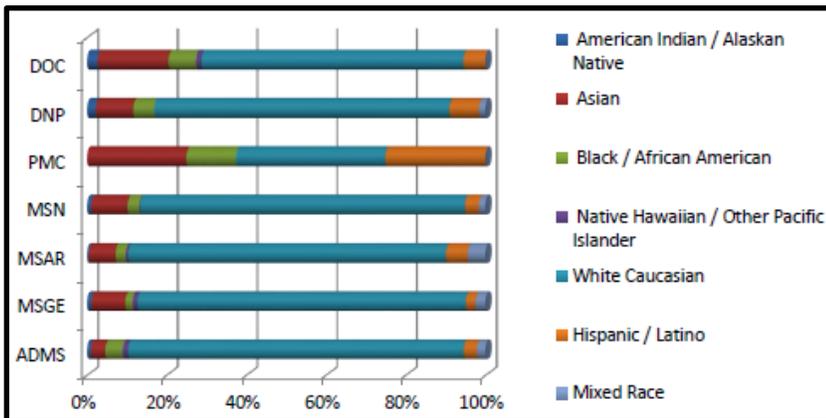
In turn, colleges and universities in Washington State are taking important steps to promote equity for all students.

## How nursing education currently looks: Washington State Undergraduate Nursing Student Race/Ethnicity by Program



Source: Washington State Department of Health Nursing Education Programs 2014 - 2015 Annual School Report

## Washington Graduate Nursing Student Race/Ethnicity by Program



Source: Washington State Department of Health Nursing Education Programs 2014 - 2015 Annual School Report

## Unpacking the words

The word *diversity* has many dimensions. It may include gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, language, sexual orientation, disability, learning style, age, marital status, veteran status, socioeconomic status, and additional factors.

Although *equality* and *equity* are often used interchangeably, equity in education means raising the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the highest- and lowest-performing students; and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories.

## **Building a thoughtful, targeted, and sustainable program to increase the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students starts with organizational buy-in**

“The necessary foundational base to attract and retain diverse students is a tangible organizational commitment,” write Lisa Rosenberg, PhD, RN; and Marilyn E. O’Rourke, DNP, RN, in their article, *The Diversity Pyramid: An Organizational Model to Structure Diversity Recruitment and Retention in Nursing Programs*, which was published in the *Journal of Nursing Education* in November 2011.

They say that creating a culture of inclusion underlies any effort to promote diversity, and explicit demonstrations of these efforts must be apparent.

Jason Smith, dean of Health Sciences and Public Safety at Everett Community College (EvCC), echoes that belief. He says the first step is ensuring that administration and faculty are on board to make the campus, or specifically the nursing program, more inclusive and supportive to students from underrepresented minority groups. The college recently launched a concerted effort to identify strategies to create a more robust pipeline of nurses. The Washington Center for Nursing is one of EvCC’s many collaborators in the ongoing project.

“The most important thing is knowing the whole institution is committed, he says. “Is diversity in your organization’s mission statement?”

EvCC made that commitment clear two years ago, with the hiring of a chief diversity officer to lead the college’s efforts to create and sustain a climate of diversity and equity. [EvCC’s Diversity & Equity Office works to promote](#) “an inclusive, equitable and safe campus climate, with a focus on closing achievement, economic and aspiration gaps for underserved and underrepresented populations.”

Industry trends drive academia. EvCC’s health sciences advisory board, which includes Providence Regional Medical Center in Everett, the community hospital and a large employer of the college’s graduates, validates the value of producing health care providers who are culturally agile and are better equipped to understand the needs of patients and families, talk about differences and access necessary resources for culturally appropriate care.

In turn, Smith says, when hiring new faculty and staff, he looks for professionals who see and share that value. “It’s not going to work if you don’t hire the people who are thinking that way,” he says.

For administrators and educators looking to strengthen their approach to diversity and inclusion work, Smith recommends a focused training such as the [National Conference on Race & Ethnicity in American Higher Education](#) (scheduled to take place next from May 30-June 3, 2017 in Fort Worth, Texas).

Sheila Edwards-Lange, president of Seattle Central College, recommends the “Train the Trainor” approach. Edwards-Lange previously served as vice president for Minority Affairs and vice provost for

Diversity at the University of Washington, where she was responsible for increasing diversity on campus and working with senior leadership to improve the campus climate and retention of diverse students, faculty and staff. She stresses that it is critical to ensure that those looking at student applications, as well as human resources professionals who screen faculty candidates and those who serve on faculty hiring committees know how to screen for diverse talent. She points to the University of Wisconsin's [recruiting resources](#) for attracting underrepresented minority applicants.

She also recommends the consulting service Catalyst as [a resource for making the business case for diversity](#).

### **Early Outreach**

Smith recognizes that to get diverse college applicants, outreach needs to happen a lot earlier. In fact, students begin career exploration in middle school, according to the state's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). That is why Smith is working on partnering with local schools to set up a summer institute at the college for students as young as the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The goal is to introduce children – especially those who come from low-income families, those who would be the first in their family to attend college, and those from underrepresented minority groups – to the idea of preparing for and applying for college, as well as introduce them to health careers.

Others in the state have found this to be an effective strategy, whether diversity is one component of their program or is at the core of it. The annual [Na-ha-shnee Health Sciences Institute](#), hosted by Washington State University and Eastern Washington University, has attracted Native American high school students from across the western United States throughout its 21 years of existence. Students spend two weeks learning about the health sciences programs at WSU and EWU campuses and elsewhere in the community (with hands-on experience in the high-tech simulation labs) and leave the camp with a better understanding of what it takes to pursue those careers.

An interesting example from California that made headlines a few years ago is the [Doctors Academy](#) in Fresno. A challenging school-within-a school program for high schoolers interested in health professional careers, the academy provides extended academic, personal, and career counseling as well as test preparation. The UCSF Fresno Pharmacy Education Program has collaborated with the UCSF Fresno Latino Center for Medical Education and Research (LaCMER) in bringing a pharmacy education program that includes information on careers in Pharmacy and pathway to Pharmacy school. Is there potential for a nursing school to do something similar in Washington?

The University of Washington School of Nursing's [free week-long day camp experinece](#) allows students to shadow nurses at the UW Medical Center in various hospital units, as well as providing them with CPR certification and HIPAA training. Similarly, at the [MultiCare Nurse Camp](#), high school sophomores

and juniors in Pierce, South King, Kitsap, and North Thurston County (MultiCare's service area) get a firsthand, behind-the-scenes look at the multifaceted world of nursing and allied health: not only do they watch nurses and other allied health care providers care for patients but they also participate in hands-on station rotations, mock codes, and visit a local nursing school.

Here they see how math and science is applied in nursing and have motivation to add more rigorous subjects to their schedule, which is the spark that Smith hopes to ignite with EvCC's summer program. "I also want to engage the parents and have them understand why it'll be important for their student to take a subject like biology," he says.

EvCC typically hosts two counselors' breakfasts within the academic year, which are designed to help administrators and faculty form and nurture partnerships with the district career counselors, as well as update them on opportunities for their students. In fact, EvCC has gathered an [array of services for middle and high school students](#), and Smith often hosts groups of students and counselors in the health sciences building. "You have to be open at the department level to the idea of people coming to your school," he says. "You also have to be willing to meet and talk to people and give them your time."

EvCC is also funding College in the High School classes for low-income students, which allows them to earn college credit for free for select classes taught by teachers at their own high schools. Low-income high school graduates may be eligible to participate in EvCC's TRIO program, which provides personal academic, career, financial and other support to qualifying college students. EvCC received two TRIO grants from the Department of Education this summer.

### **Recruiting diverse students**

"Go where the candidates are," says Sheila Edwards-Lange, president of Seattle Central College. Edwards-Lange previously served as vice president for Minority Affairs and vice provost for Diversity at the University of Washington. While with the university, she was responsible for increasing diversity on campus and working with senior leadership to improve the campus climate and retention of diverse students, faculty, and staff. She recommends approaching community organizations to look for potential nursing school students. For instance, look at minority-serving institutions, high school pre-health clubs, or organizations like Girls in STEM or the NW Girls Collaborative.

### **Changing up the admissions process**

Standardized testing has traditionally been used as a sole mechanism in the admissions process, but more institutions are choosing to cast a wider net in the proverbial applicant pool. Schools around the country, including the University of Washington, where Smith previously served as the Evans School of Public Affairs assistant dean of Student Affairs, are implementing a process called a [holistic review, or](#)

[whole-file review](#). It factors in not only the student’s academic information but also the personal story — the experiences and opportunities the student has had, the challenges and obstacles they have faced, the talents and cultures they can share. Essentially, students get a chance to demonstrate competency in other ways, especially if they’re not great test-takers.

In 2014, 93 percent of dental schools and 91 percent of medical schools reported that they used holistic review as a part of the admissions process. In contrast, slightly less than half of nursing schools had adopted holistic review. When Greer Glazer, PhD, CNP, FAAN, dean of the University of Cincinnati (UC) College of Nursing, UC associate vice president for health affairs, and an RWJF Executive Nurse Fellow, learned that many nursing programs weren’t aware of this process, or were concerned that holistic review would lead to a less academically qualified student body that wouldn’t do well on the nursing licensure exam, she decided to investigate. With funding from HRSA and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, she and her team studied [whether holistic review had produced less qualified students](#).

Glazer’s study found that most health professions schools that adopted holistic review reported that three measures—the average GPAs of their incoming classes, their graduation rates, and the average number of attempts per student to pass required licensing exams—all remained unchanged or improved following the introduction of holistic review. Meanwhile, the student bodies at these schools had grown more diverse. [Read the full report here](#).

She says the schools also reported that their learning environments had improved because students were engaging with a more diverse group of peers who introduced new ideas. That rings true for UW: the school has reported the process has encouraged students from all backgrounds to consider, apply to and enroll at the UW. It’s also better proof to students, parents, and counselors that the school looks at achievement within the context of access and opportunity.

### **Retention support**

For nursing students, resources such as a math boot camp to tune up calculus or statistics skills, for instance, or a center for non-native speakers, like EvCC’s BRIDGES center, are especially helpful. The college is also currently looking for a Nursing Student Support and Retention specialist, who, in addition to enhancing retention measures, as the title suggests, would also help guide nursing students to all the available support on campus while appreciating, and valuing, their diversity – all to improve student success within the nursing program. Students who are the first in their family to attend college often need additional support. Here are some barriers first-gen students might face, as well as helpful suggestions for solutions: <http://www.firstgenerationstudent.com/>

### **Integrating Multicultural Education into the curriculum**

Kenya V. Beard, EdD, AGACNP-BC, NP-C, CNE, ANEF, Associate Vice President for Curriculum & Instruction, Director, Center for Multicultural Education & Health Disparities at Jersey College in Teterboro, N.J, has published several articles and lectures on implementing multicultural education to create culturally responsive learning environments. She views multicultural education (ME) as a way to teach that actively affirms diversity based on race, ethnicity, language, gender, ability, social class, religion, etc.; examines & challenges injustices so individuals can read injustices in their own world and become change agents for justice; and connects & builds on the student's strengths, identities and ways of being.

ME gives the instructor an opportunity a way to prepare students to:

- Develop a broader sociopolitical conscious
- Meet the learning needs of all students
- Build culturally inclusive learning environments
- Graduate students who can effectively engage in cross-cultural encounters

**Here are some other targeted recruitment and retention strategies identified by Rosenberg & O'Rourke:**

- High school (HS)-to-college outreach: focus on HS advisors, parents, students
- Second degree student recruitment: focus on local and regional college student populations
- Affiliations with partner schools
- Relationship building with community and professional organizations
- Alumni outreach and involvement to diverse applicants
- Concentrated recruitment at historically Black colleges and universities or schools with diverse populations
- Conference attendance at Black, Hispanic, or male nurses' associations
- Recruitment of men and women from the military
- Public and community outreach as an expression of institutional diversity goals
- Media: diversity on Web site, videos, printed materials, advertisements, social media
- Changing the social message: "Are you smart enough to be a nurse?"
- Increase number of diverse and male faculty
- Scholarship-awarding process: creatively making the most of what you have

- Enhanced orientation programs (e.g., review of study and test-taking skills, self-care strategies, writing workshops)
- Special mentoring programs (e.g., peer, alumni), special services
- Strategies for retention (e.g., academic assistance, tutoring, study groups)

**More resources:**

**WCN Videos**

Videos created to reach out to diverse populations to encourage them to pursue nursing:

<http://www.wcnursing.org/about-us/Multimedia/>

**Employer and Higher Education Partnership: Recruiting from a diverse pool of health care workers into nursing**

[The SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi-Employer Training and Education Fund](#) is a non-profit, labor-management partnership between eight hospital employers and the largest healthcare union in Washington State. Established in 2008, the Training Fund was created to develop a statewide program for addressing the workforce needs of participating employers and to support the career, knowledge, and skill aspirations of SEIU Healthcare 1199NW members. It is a ground-breaking enterprise designed to leverage the healthcare industry’s greatest strengths – its people and its institutions – to collectively keep pace with this rapidly changing, ever expanding and highly complex industry. The Training Fund is positioned to contribute to the development of a reflective workforce as over half of participating members are people of color. The Training Fund is instrumental in helping Washington State meet its goal for a highly diverse and educated workforce by providing training and education resources for nurses working at all levels of the healthcare system.

**Further reading:**

“Creating a Culturally Competent Organization: Use of the Diversity Competency Model”

Doreen K. Frusti, MSN, MS, RN

Kathryn M. Niesen, MSN, RN

Jane K. Champion, MSN

“The Diversity Pyramid: An Organizational Model to Structure Diversity Recruitment and Retention in Nursing Programs”

Lisa Rosenberg, PhD, RN

Marilyn E. O'Rourke, DNP, RN

[“The Changing Face of Nursing: Creating a Workforce for an Increasingly Diverse Nation”](#)

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**Is your organization/program ready to take on this work? Here are a few points to consider:**

- Does your governing organization's mission/vision include diversity?
- Does your institution offer training on diversity for deans/directors and faculty?
- Have you reviewed your admission criteria?
- Have you collaborated with K-12 schools in your area to establish a pipeline?
- What input have you gotten from your industry partners about the need for a diverse workforce?
- Who are potential partners in your community that could help move this work?