

Diversity Initiative Mentoring Program Survey - Full Report

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Washington Center for Nursing

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INTRODUCTION:

Despite efforts to reduce health inequalities in the nation, health disparities among racial and ethnic minority populations still persist in the U.S.^[1,2] In order for the health care system to serve a growing minority population, it is important that the health care workforce reflects the diversity of the communities served. The nursing workforce in Washington State, however, has yet to reflect our population in terms of race and ethnicity. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Blacks/African Americans is 13.1% of the national population and 3.8% of Washington State's population^[3]; yet, Black/African American persons comprise less than 1% of RNs in Washington State.^[4] Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin are 16.9% of the U.S. population and 11.7% of Washington's^[3], but comprise only 2% of RNs in Washington State.^[4] The population of Black/African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders (API) and Hispanics are expected to increase in proportion to Washington State's total population through 2030.^[5]

To enhance the diversity in our nursing workforce in the state of Washington, the Washington Center for Nursing (WCN) is piloting a mentoring program for nursing students and recent nursing graduates of color/from underrepresented ethnic communities in the state. As identified in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Advisory Committee on Minority Health (ACMH) Workforce Report in 2011, mentorship is a key strategy in recruitment and retention of minorities in the health professions.^[6] This strategy is also echoed in the Institute of Medicine (IOM) 2004 report regarding diversity in the health care workforce, as mentoring can provide support for successful transition-to-practice and for developing the nursing workforce in the U.S.^[7] As such, mentorship for nursing students and new nursing graduates of color was included in the 2008 WCN Master Plan for Nursing Education, as a strategy to promote a more diverse nursing profession in Washington State.^[8]

This report describes the results of an online needs assessment survey conducted by WCN, for the purpose of developing an online nursing mentoring program for students and new nurses of color and/or from underrepresented ethnic groups under the Diversity Initiative. This study is funded by Grant #N14191 from the Department of Health, State of Washington.

This survey was targeted to the nursing workforce and nursing students of color and/or from underrepresented ethnic communities in Washington State, particularly those of color. Survey participants were recruited via email and listserves through nursing programs, nursing associations and organizations, as well as nursing communication networks. The voluntary survey was made available online between March and April of 2013, using software provided by SurveyMonkey®; a total of 165 survey responses were collected and analyzed.

Questions regarding demographic information were collected from the survey participants; separate questions were asked to the three different categories of survey audience – **nursing students**, **recent nursing graduates**, and **experienced registered nurses (RNs)**.

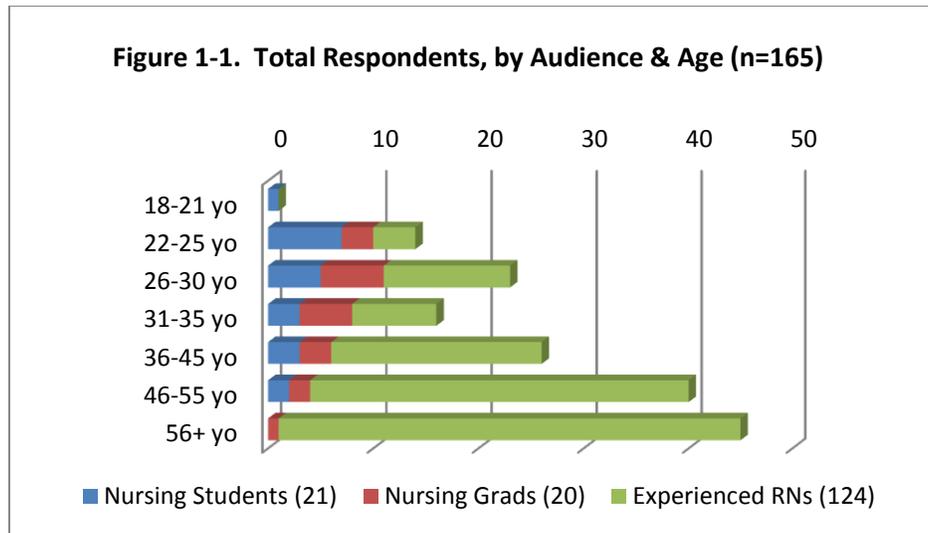
Note: Respondents were not required to answer every question on the survey; the number of responses is indicated for each statistic or analysis.

KEY FINDINGS:

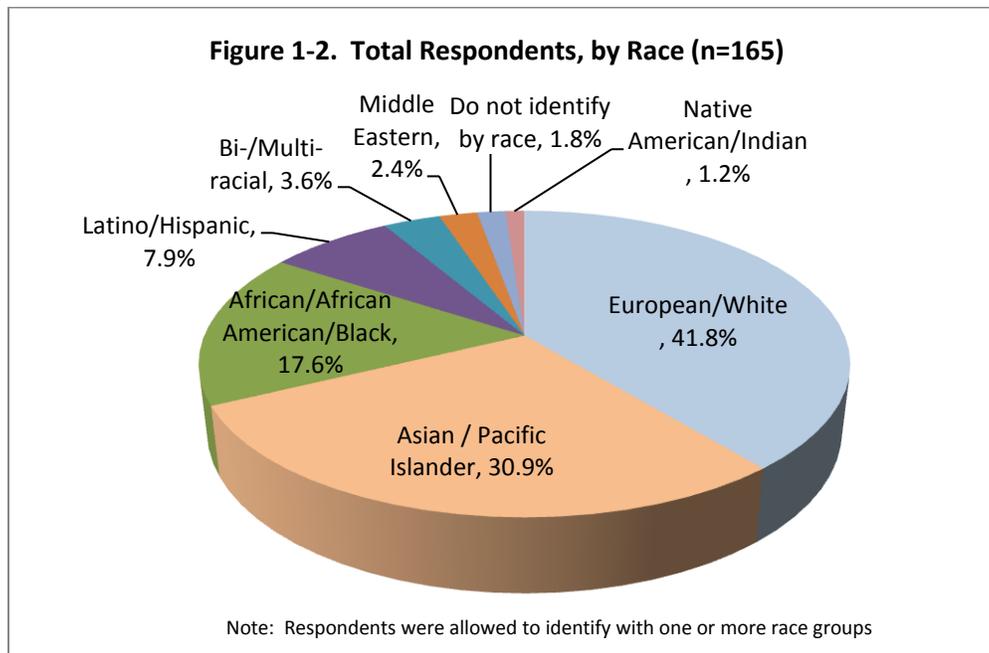
In general:

Among the 165 respondents, 75% were identified as experienced RNs (124); the remaining 25% included half nursing students (21) and half recent nursing graduates (20). Of the 21 nursing student respondents, 12 were first-year students while 9 were second-year students.

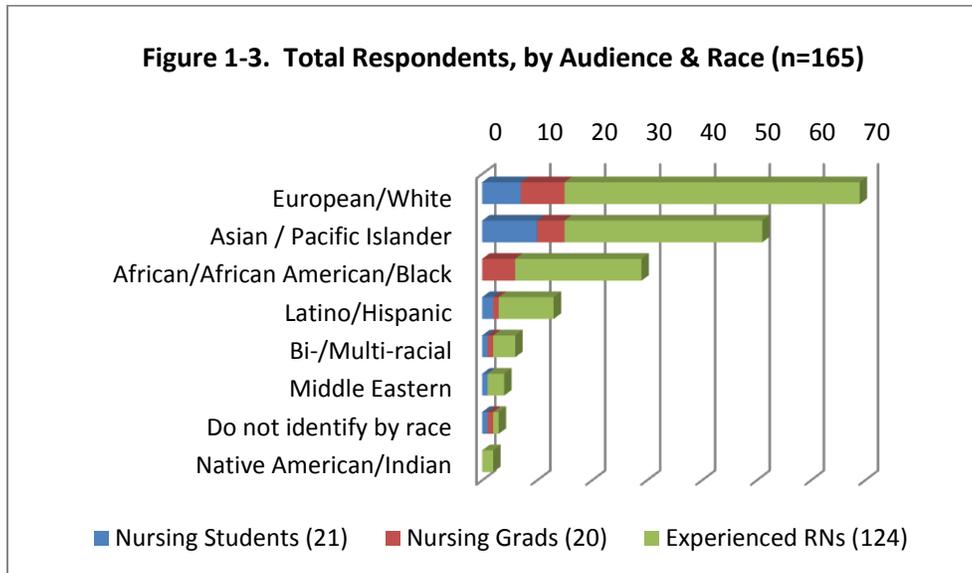
Half of survey respondents were 46 years or older (Figure 1-1). As expected, the experienced RN respondents were older, on average, than the nursing student respondents and recent nursing graduate respondents.



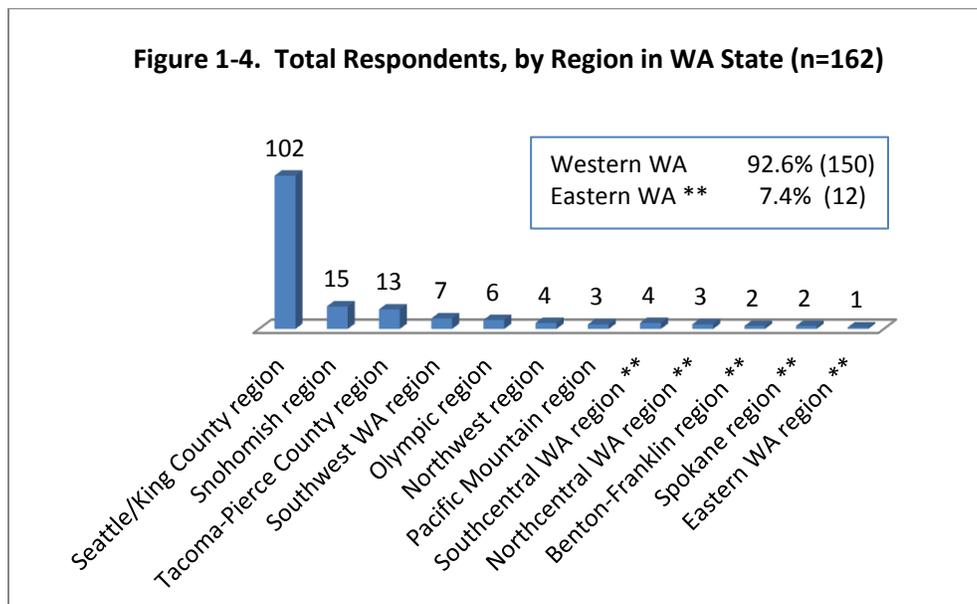
Respondents were asked if they identified themselves with any particular racial group(s) (Figure 1-2): the largest group identified was European/Whites at 41.8%, followed by Asian/Pacific Islanders at 30.9%. More than half of them identified themselves with some sort of non-Caucasian minority group. Three respondents (1.8%) did not identify with any particular race.



Majority of the respondents identified as being Caucasians and/or Asian/Pacific Islanders (Figure 1-3); this was also the case across each audience group.



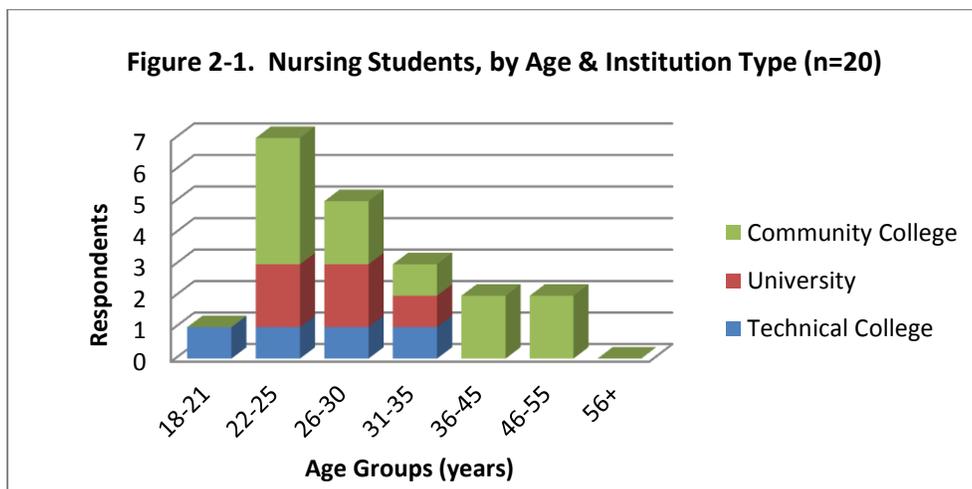
Large majority of the survey respondents (92.6%) live, work or study in Western Washington (Figure 1-4); most are situated in the Seattle/King County region (63.6%). Three (3) respondents did not identify a particular region within WA State.



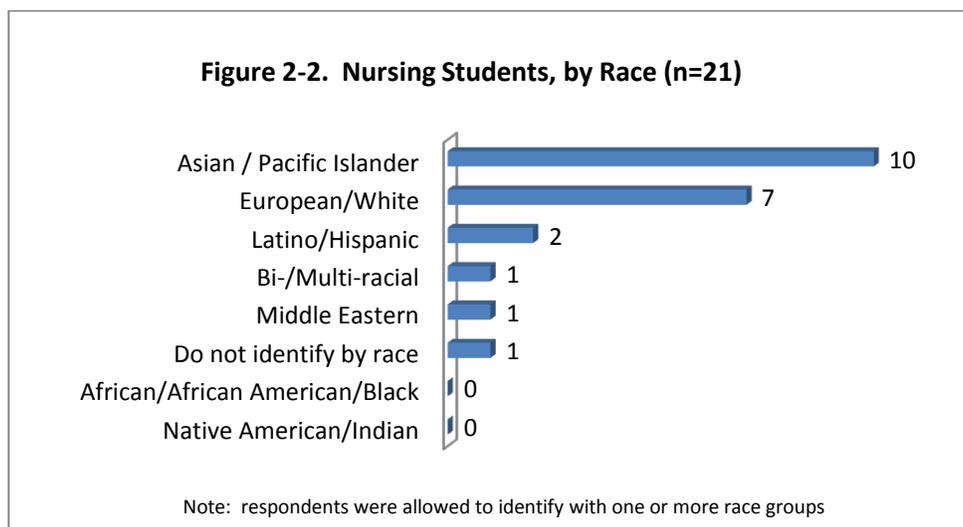
Among the nursing student respondents (n=21):

Of the 21 nursing student respondents, 12 were from a community college (55%); 4 from a technical college (20%) and 5 from an university (25%). Majority of them were full-time students (16 of 18). Of the 9 who identified as having had a nursing-focused mentor, they were generally satisfied with their mentors.

The median age group among these respondents was 26-30 years old. The age breakdown of the nursing students attending the three types of educational institutions is given in Figure 2-1:



Majority of the nursing student respondents identified themselves as Asians/Pacific Islanders (45%), followed by Caucasians (35%) (Figure 2-2).

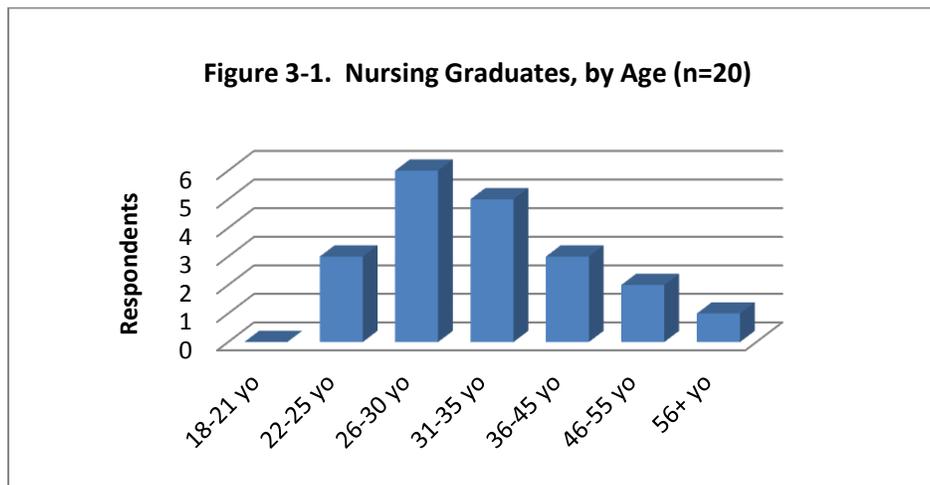


Among these nursing students, family support and spouse support were found to be the most helpful resources for applying and getting into nursing school; this was also the case for progressing through nursing school. On the other hand, early school outreach and a *practicing RN as a role model or mentor* were identified as the most important resources that were **missing** for applying and getting into nursing school. Respondents felt that a *practicing RN as a role model or mentor* was also **missing** as a helpful resource for progressing through nursing school.

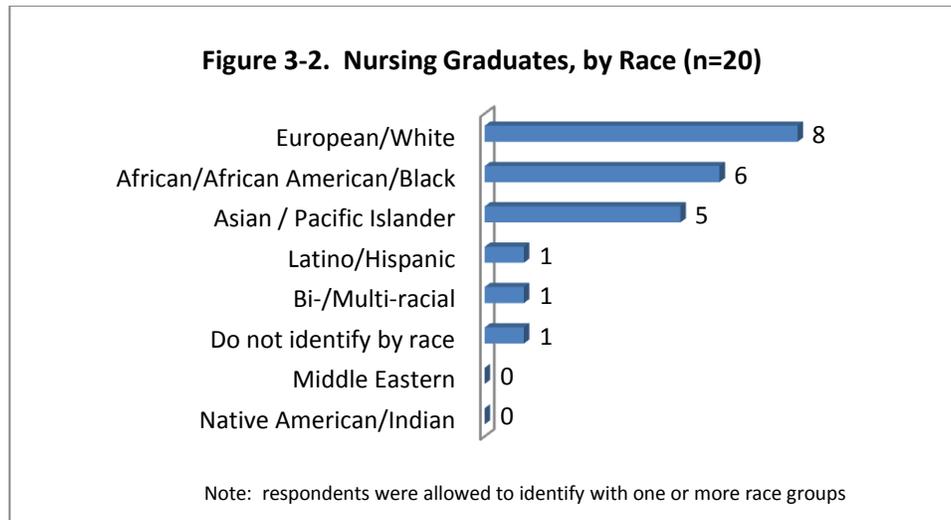
These respondents prefer email as their primary mode of communication with a potential mentor; in-person meeting was their second preference. Topics of interest in a mentoring program ranked highest among these respondents include balancing school, work, and home life; developing a sense of professional identity as a nurse; effective communication skills as a nursing student; and transition from education to career in nursing.

Among the recent nursing graduate respondents (n=20):

The median age group among the nursing graduate respondents was 31-35 years old. The age distribution of these respondents is given in Figure 3-1:



Majority of this audience group identified themselves as Caucasians, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and/or Black/African Americans (Figure 3-2).



When asked about resources that helped in transitioning from the student role to the graduate or practice role, these recent nursing graduate respondents identified spouse/family/peer support as well as previous work experience as the most helpful resources.

These respondents, however, indicated *mentorship program* as the most important resource that was **missing** in terms of transitioning from nursing student to graduate or practice role (9 of 18 respondents); *preceptorship program* was ranked 8th in terms of **missing** resources that would have been helpful for transition to a career. Preceptorship programs are defined as programs in which nursing students are assigned to one or two practicing RNs who monitor their progress.

When it comes to their first professional placement as an RN, family/spouse/peer support and *residency programs* were found to be the most helpful resources for these recent nursing graduate respondents. Residency programs are defined as hospital-based programs that support newly graduated RNs in nursing practice.

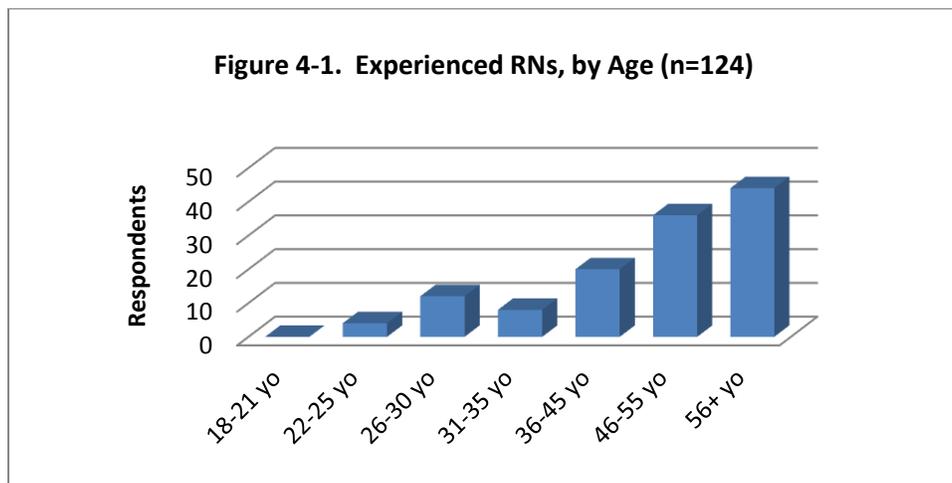
Interestingly, *residency programs for new grads*, *mentorship program*, and *preceptorship programs* were also ranked highest among helpful resources that were **missing** in their first professional placement as an RN.

These recent nursing graduate respondents preferred in-person meeting as their primary mode of communication with a potential mentor; email was their second preference. If they had access to a mentoring program, they indicated that leadership and communication as a nurse as the most important topics of interest. Among communication challenges in the nursing profession today, staying informed on the

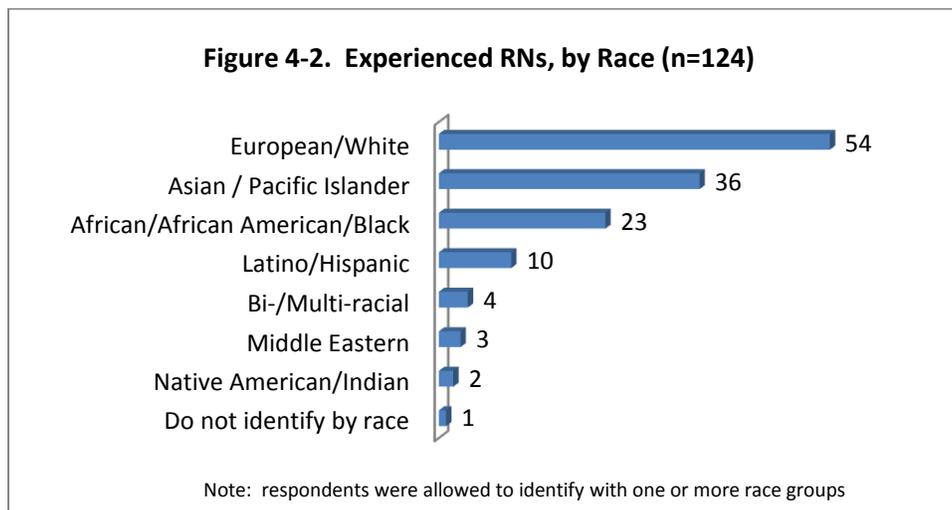
health care reform and communication regarding rules and regulations in nursing were identified as the biggest challenges.

Among the experienced RN respondents (n=124):

The median age group among the experienced nurse respondents was 46-55 years old. The age distribution in this audience group is given in Figure 4-1:



Among the audience of experienced nurses that took the survey, 44% identified themselves as Caucasian, 29% as Asian/Pacific Islander and 19% as African/African American/Black. The race profile of these respondents is given in Figure 4-2:



More than half of these experienced RN respondents have had a nursing mentor previously (58%) and have served as a mentor as well (56%). A large majority of these respondents (82%) indicated that they had interacted with nursing students and new nurses that could have benefitted from mentorship.

According to 70% of these respondents, the strongest motivating factor to serve as a mentor was to support a nursing student or new nursing graduate from underrepresented backgrounds, with the goal to increase the diversity of WA State's nursing workforce. Other factors for becoming a mentor include wanting to influence the next generation of nurses toward success and leadership, as well as establishing a network of experienced, like-minded RNs who are also committed to support the next generation of RNs.

In terms of concerns about serving as a mentor, *time commitment* was listed as their top concern. Respondents identified *training curriculum* to be the most helpful type of support in becoming potential mentors.

When asked about the amount of time a mentor and mentee should ideally meet or communicate, respondents indicated a wide range of preferences: once a month, twice a month, and on a weekly basis. Notably, the most common comment made by these experienced RN respondents was that the amount of communication between the mentor and mentee *depends on the needs of the nursing student or new graduate*.

These respondents indicated that, on average, they are able to use online technology with ease; over 95% of respondents indicated that they have access to cellphone, internet, email, and laptop or computer with internet capability at home.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Development of a mentoring program should be piloted in the Western Washington regions, since majority of the respondents for nursing students and graduates as well as the supply of interested experienced RNs as potential mentors are all situated in Western WA.
- All three categories of survey audience felt that having a mentor of similar ethnic or cultural background is of little importance, while it was indicated by nursing students and recent nursing graduates that a mentoring program is missing in their curriculum. This suggests that nursing students are strongly interested and see the value in having a mentoring program, regardless if the mentor has a similar ethnic or cultural background.
- Majority of the experienced RN respondents felt strongly about increasing the diversity of the nursing workforce in WA State, further supporting the demand for a mentoring program that is dedicated to new nurses of color and/or from underrepresented minority groups.
- Since in-person meetings and email are the preferred mode of communication for nursing students and graduates with their mentors, the mentoring program can be conducted electronically or in-person, catering to the preferences of the mentee and mentor.
- Development of the mentoring program should include a detailed training curriculum to best prepare new mentors; the program needs to be flexible, in order to work around the time constraints of participating mentors.
- Since family, spouse and peer support were identified as the most important resources that helped the nursing students and recent graduates progress through their nursing program, as well as for transitioning to professional roles, it may be worthwhile for WCN to coordinate and to align resources that reinforce or strengthen these types of support.

The results and recommendations from this needs assessment survey were presented to the WCN Diversity Initiative Advisory Committee between April and August; the committee used these recommendations in developing their pilot mentoring program, which will be implemented in September and October of 2013.

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