

Executive Overview

During times of healthcare transformation nurses have remained constant and provided quality patient care while striving for an equitable healthcare system. In 2010 a study by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, found that healthcare transformation isn't only synonymous with fancy technologies, newly imagined systems or *how* we provide care, but transformation also includes diversifying *who* provides care.

The IOM's research shows that in order to provide better patient care, our nursing population should match our nation's increasingly ethnically and racially diverse patient population. In Washington State, Hispanic and non-White persons remain under-represented among the nursing profession as a whole. Data from the *Bureau of Health Professions* shows that the total minority population in WA is at 25 %, while the total minority population of RNs in WA is only at 9.2 %. This demographic discrepancy is concerning.

The Washington Center for Nursing (WCN) received the Academic Progression in Nursing (APIN) grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 2012 to help meet the IOM recommendations on nursing and increase the diversity within it. In an effort to do so, WCN has developed a diversity mentoring network—a resource for under-represented minority (URM) nursing students and new nurses.

As a foundation for the diversity mentoring network, and through partnering with a UW Master in Education Policy graduate student, we conducted 31 qualitative interviews of nursing faculty, staff serving URM students in Washington State's post-secondary system, K-12 guidance counselors and family engagement staff, executive directors of non-profit organizations serving URM populations, current URM nursing students, and licensed URM nurses. These interviews inform our work of various real-life barriers URM students face in pursuing or completing a nursing degree.

The content is organized around the interlocking pillars of Academic Issues, Cultural and Family Issues, Financial Issues, and Institutional and System Issues. By knowing the barriers some students face, we can work to help eliminate hindrances and increase the racial and ethnic diversity of our nursing workforce. It's important to note that the report features personal experiences and witnessed events that took courage to bring forward. The final section of the report details recommendations which we believe can help to address the barriers identified by interviewees. Our recommendations do not imply that innovative strategies do not exist; there are many examples of outstanding practices addressing these issues. We encourage collaborative efforts across departments, institutions, and entities to continue to make progress.

Thank you for your support and interest in this important work. Please reach out to lindat@wcnursing.org or www.WCNursing.org with comments and for more information.

Bureau of Health Professions, 2010; Seago et al., 2004; Skillman et al 2008; U.S. Census, 2009; Washington Office of Financial Management, 2010; WCN Faculty Diversity Survey, 2010.