



Best Practices in Increasing Nursing Student Diversity

This report reflects data gathered in spring 2015 on efforts to increase the diversity of nursing students in nursing programs in Washington State. The issue of increasing the ethnic, cultural, gender and other diversity of the nursing workforce in Washington State has been a consistent one for WCN for over ten years. Most recently, an extensive report was published by WCN identifying barriers and enablers for underrepresented students in the K-12 and higher education levels of education in our state. Widely distributed and discussed, this report contains a number of recommendations for educators to consider in supporting students' exploration and pursuit of a nursing career. (Fertakis, Mary "Increasing Diversity in Washington's Nursing Population: Barriers and Enablers in the K-12 and Higher Education Systems").

WCN also produced and distributed widely a video on nursing careers targeting minority/underrepresented students in the middle school level, using young actors from minority groups. This video "Exploring Your Future in Nursing" is on the WCN website, YouTube, and is available free to anyone who requests it. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction partnered with WCN on this video and facilitated its distribution to public school counselors.

WCN supports and participates in school career fairs across Washington State, in another effort to reach counselors and students. It also provides, free, brochures in several languages about nursing careers.

Summary Findings: There were recurrent themes in the responses, most notably the challenge to be successful for students without English as a first language, the lack of support for underrepresented minority students once admitted (due to lack of funding at the nursing program), and the admission processes themselves. There are not data that correlate interventions at a school with changes in nursing student diversity. Many respondents identified collaboration with minority groups and high schools as enablers in attracting students. One successful practice previously reported was the awarding of extra points towards admission for students who demonstrate proficiency in a second language, via independent assessment.

The Detail:

This survey was distributed electronically via Survey Monkey to all 46 approved nursing education programs in Washington State.

Q 1. Please identify the most appropriate category for your student population:

25 (54%) responded. 60% were ADN only or LPN-RN or RN with LPN opt-out. 20's% were BSN only, RN-BSN, or RN, Masters, DNP/PhD. The remaining 20% were "other", such as ADN-MSN, LPN-MSN.

Q 2. Approaches that help recruit students from underrepresented populations:

(Respondents could "mark all that apply, so numbers are >100%)

- 81% Working with local high schools
- 50% Collaborating closely with our on-campus counselors to help underrepresented students understand the nursing programs
- 41% Working with minority groups in our community
- 41% Including more nursing faculty from underrepresented groups
- 27% Working with on-campus minority groups
- 23% Bringing families into the process, through "family nights etc."

Other comments (all are single unless otherwise indicated):

- Working with associate degree programs
- Working with nursing assistants from local healthcare facilities
- Lower entry criteria than other programs
- Collaboration with grant partners to support cohorts of students from underrepresented minorities and incumbent workers
- We have a lot of initiatives beginning but the ones above are the ones we have used so far

Q3. What has challenged you the most in recruiting students from underrepresented populations into nursing programs?

Of the 24 free-text comments, 33% referred to problems with English language proficiency and 20% referenced inadequate academic preparation. Lack of resources to support students once accepted was cited by several, and the admission process/criteria by several others.

(All are single unless otherwise indicated):

- Being able to provide them with enough funding
- Competitive nature of nursing admissions (some lack the confidence in their academic abilities, other are hesitant to try because they feel they will not be admitted)
- Recruiting is not a problem; success in the program is a major problem
- In the past we experienced issues with language barriers with some of our diverse students however this does not seem to be as much of a problem currently
- Lack of ability for students to compete academically due to language barriers
- Helping them meet the min. requirements for consideration of admissions, and ESL issues when admitted r/t language
- They can't pass the pre-requisite courses or the entrance tests...if English is not their first language
- Recruitment of students is good, it is ensuring that they are prepared when they come in, and proving (sic) the resources for success
- As an RN-to-BSN program the applicant pool is limited by the graduates of the area programs which have varied student populations
- Identify and admitting students from underrepresented populations without changing the admission criteria
- At least half of our students are from underrepresented populations, mostly immigrants who are English language learners
- Meet minimum entry criteria but can't manage volume of reading/communication if ESL, other non-trad students struggle with finances, healthcare, schedules, childcare
- Many applicants not able to meet the admission standards, limited English, lack of time and designated person to do better recruiting
- Our use of the TEAS test has prevented underrepresented populations from getting in to our program. We are going to change the test to the PAX and stop using it as our only criterion for acceptance
- Rural location. Depressed socioeconomic climate
- Academic preparation
- The location of our school
- The attitude from some high school counselors that young people from underrepresented minority groups are not capable enough to take college prep science and math courses. Hence, by the time they graduate from high school, they have not had a foundation for success. I have

had some high school counselors tell me that it is up to the student to find out what is needed in high school to be admitted to nursing programs. If the student's parents did not go to college, the students does not receive counseling from parents about what to take in high school. Often underrepresented minority students are counseled to take a nurse tech program in high school, and therefore, do not take the rigorous math and science necessary for admission to a pre-nursing option. Or they graduate and get stuck in a technical role. The original socialization into care of patients as a technician makes it difficult to imagine how they can achieve a professional nursing role

- The ESL component that adds to the complexity of the student to be successful in such a fast-paced program
- Very few minorities in this area
- Native American community is hard to "tap." We had had 1 student a year for two years with tribal support but otherwise hard to recruit
- Underrepresented students often are not academically competitive. When we have to have objective criteria for admission so that it is defensible if challenged, then subjective characteristics are problematic
- Recruiting is challenging but retaining is even more difficult; we do not currently have the resources to help them succeed (tutoring, etc.).

Q 4. Anything else you want to say about this issue? (All are single unless otherwise indicated)

- It is very difficult to recruit diverse faculty given the general lack of diversity, high cost of living, not enough people "like them" on faculty in school and on campus
- Considering our location I have been pleased with the number of applicants/admitted students from underrepresented populations
- We used to see more diversity in our LPN to RN cohort however over time our two-year cohorts are also becoming more diverse
- I-200 is a problem!
- Our problem is working with them once they get into the program or getting them up to the level of English proficiency where they could start the program. Even though they can pass English 101 there seems to be a disconnect between that grade and the ability to read, write, and speak English at the college level and at a level for safe nursing care. Programs to assist with how to best assess English ability and how to help those who do not have that ability yet would be VERY helpful.
- Overall our program has very deserved (sic)population of nursing students working with Workforce Development and IBEST programs to recruit and retain diverse students
- We are making a big effort on our campus to recruit nursing faculty and make our admissions more equitable. In the future, we will also be trying to recruit more, but it doesn't help to recruit students who then do not get accepted to the program due to the entrance exam
- I believe preparing students from underrepresented minority groups should be the greatest priority in nursing education in this decade. I think it is key to overcoming problems that result from health inequities. But first, we who teach students from underrepresented minorities will have to experience a change in what we think about, and how we teach minority students. This will require our hearts and minds to open wide
- We are fortunate to be in a very diverse part of the city and specialize in ESL populations so we "automatically" have immense diversity with our nursing students. Word of mouth among the communities has brought us our diversity!

- Help us to be able to quantify underrepresented populations and help us be prepared to answer legal challenges

Next steps:

- More studies may not be the answer. We know a great deal about the current situations, barriers and enablers. Schools have to have the energy, commitment and courage to implement what is effective to continue to welcome and support a different student population. One respondent identified the need for faculty to examine their own thoughts, feelings, and approaches to the underrepresented/minority populations as a first step. WCN is sponsoring two workshops in September 2015 for nursing faculty to work with a nationally recognized nurse educator who has expertise in the area of setting the stage to be more inclusive and welcoming to students from underrepresented/minority populations.
- Monitor interventions by program with changes in student diversity, if this correlation can be documented. How else can we validate what is effective vs. what is not?
- Ensure that all state-funded nursing programs have the resources to assist these students once admitted; establish a minimum support/staff funding for this work.
- Eliminate the random variation in the application processes and criteria, at least at the Community and Technical College Nursing programs. There are not data to support continuing as is.
- Disburse successful practices in recruiting and retaining these students. Incent/reward the programs that serve a richly diverse community and are successful in increasing their nursing student diverse population that successfully complete the program.
- Monitor data, by program, on not only recruitment but retention; if so, share this information to learn what successful practices help students to thrive and graduate.
- Learn from other states, particularly those with Academic Progression in Nursing (APIN) grants about their successes recruiting and retaining underrepresented minority nursing students.

***Note:**

This report was due 6/30/15 but was delayed due to the injury and subsequent surgery for the out-going ED and the transition to the new ED.