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NONPF Calls for Greater Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Nurse Practitioner Education August 2018

Central to the mission and vision of the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF) is the organizational goal to champion a culture of diversity and inclusivity across all nurse practitioner (NP) education programs. To be responsive to the needs of an ever-evolving society, it is important for NP faculty to consider the following trends:

- Increase in racially and ethnically diverse patient populations in the United States
- Persistence of racial and ethnic disparities in the delivery of health care
- Limited racial and ethnic diversity within the professional workforce
- Limited number of racial and ethnically diverse NP faculty

Diversity is expressed in multiple forms, including but not limited to, race/ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, national origin, religious beliefs, age, (dis)ability status, and political views. The focus of this statement is on racial/ethnic diversity and the need for greater representation of faculty of color in NP programs.

Despite overwhelming consensus that diversity leads to excellence (2004 Sullivan's Commission Report; 2010 Institute of Medicine's (IOM) Future of Nursing Report) and efforts from many national nursing organizations to promote diversity through grants, faculty loan repayment programs, and student scholarships, only 15.8 percent of full time faculties in nursing education are from minority backgrounds (AACN, 2017). Clearly, the return on efforts to create a body of nurses who reflect the plurality of the nation has been insufficient. Understanding factors that undermine achievement of meaningful diversity and adopting innovative ways to create inclusive environments could strengthen the presence of NP faculty of color. The purpose of this statement is three-fold.

1. Identify factors that impact recruitment, hiring, advancement, and retention of NP faculty of color;
2. Provide evidence-based strategies to strengthen the presence of NP faculty of color; and
3. Provide recommendations to increase racial/ethnic diversity among NP faculty.

Recruitment, hiring, advancement, and retention

Robust and supportive diversity initiatives have increased the representation of minority nurses who possess degrees beyond the baccalaureate level. However, NP faculty of color face many challenges when entering and working in academia, resulting in academia being less appealing. Several key themes within the nursing profession impact the experiences of faculty of color:

1) cultural norms; 2) coping with improper assets; 3) life as a “Lone Ranger;” and 4) surviving the predominantly white schools of nursing. (Whitfield-Harris, Lockhart, Zoucha, & Alexander, 2017).

- **Cultural norms of the workplace.** Cultural norms that exist in predominantly white schools of nursing often allow or reinforce the perpetuation of negative behaviors experienced by faculty of color when interacting with students, colleagues, and/or administrators. Faculty of color often experience disrespect, discomfort, bullying, incivility, discrimination and lack of support (Whitfield-Harris et al. 2017).
- **Coping with improper assets.** In a recent study, Whitfield-Harris et al. (2017) found that faculty of color face many barriers in the process of acquiring tenure, had limited access to role models and mentors and often navigate environments in which there was insufficient or no communication. They face many challenges, such as lack of clarification of policies and procedures, room scheduling, unanswered inquiries, complicated tenure processes, uncommunicated changes in tenure eligibility requirements, and unclear expectations.
- **Life as a “Lone Ranger”.** Faculty of color feel “invisible,” “lonely,” and “isolated,” often remaining in their offices during lunch and avoiding social events. In order to assimilate to an institutional culture dominated by white colleagues, faculty of color may transform their identities to overcome these feelings (Whitfield-Harris et al. 2017).
- **Surviving the predominantly white schools of nursing.** Retention of faculty of color rests in the ability to strategically network outside of their department/institution and maintain work-life balance. Networking outside of the department/institution allows the opportunity for engagement with new colleagues and mentors. Through these interactions, faculty of color gain insight and support related to overcoming the lack of recognition within their department, remaining visible and engaged, and sustainability of mental and physical health (Whitfield-Harris et al. 2017).

Addressing these factors that impact the experiences of faculty of color during recruitment, hiring, and advancement fosters an inclusive environment and encourages retention.

Evidence-based strategies to strengthen presence of NP faculty of color

Increasing racial and ethnic diversity among faculty in NP programs will enrich and strengthen education, practice, service, scholarship, and research. The following evidence-based strategies may serve as a catalyst to increase the presence of faculty of color in NP programs.

1. Increase access, advancement, and retention in academia.

Faculty recruitment strategies that yield a more diverse applicant and interview pool should be a priority for NP programs (Beard & Volcy, 2013). Formalized search committee processes should be designed to assure that objective job criteria are used to evaluate applicants and mitigate implicit biases during screening and selection processes. This acknowledges the role that a diverse student body and faculty workforce plays in caring for

an increasingly diverse population, reducing health disparities, and influencing the NP faculty pipeline.

Ideally, the primary goal should be to hire NP faculty of color for full-time appointments. However, joint clinical practice/faculty appointments could increase the presence of NP faculty of color, by addressing salary concerns related to differential pay within academia versus clinical practice. Additionally, formal and informal mentoring programs can assist faculty of color to navigate academic expectations, develop leadership skills, and transition into administrative roles (Kelly, Gayles, & Williams, 2017; Thompson, 2008). Mentoring models that are integrated with performance and quality outcomes, annual evaluations, and the promotion and tenure processes have the greatest impact on advancing diversity.

2. Implement culturally responsive education and development programs.

Effective and efficient culturally responsive initiatives that includes faculty, staff, administrators, and students are essential to the success of any diversity initiative. NP programs should be welcoming and supportive of NP faculty of color and create culturally responsive, collegial environments that attract different views and values throughout the NP program and the larger academic institution (Hassouneh et al., 2012). Evaluation and modification of diversity efforts should be an ongoing process and based on clearly articulated diversity objectives.

3. Collaborate with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving institutions, and Minority-Serving institutions.

The absence or limited presence of faculty and students of color may deter prospective students who seek environments that foster diversity and inclusivity. Racially homogenous institutions risk being perceived as settings where diversity is not valued. NP faculty of color could serve as role models and mentors to enrich, support, and encourage learning.

Lack of diversity in NP programs could also suggest a “pipeline” problem. An insufficient number of students of color enrolling in pre-licensure nursing programs is likely to limit the number of viable candidates for graduate NP programs, faculty positions, and leadership/administrative positions.

Initiating and sustaining collaborations with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving institutions (HSIs), and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) that have nursing programs could help to increase the pipeline into NP programs (Blake, 2018). Students of color who graduate from HBCUs, HSIs, and MSIs could be recruited by predominantly white institutions to strengthen diversity among faculty. Additionally, predominantly white institutions can collaborate with faculty at HBCUs, HSIs, and MSIs to assist with strengthening the cultural responsiveness of faculty and students in their respective programs. NP faculty of color from these institutions could also serve as external role models or mentors for students of color at predominately white institutions. Collaborations with NP faculty of color from other universities may foster an intentional presence of racial and ethnic diversity.

4. Collaborate with professional nursing organizations of color and other related organizations.

Several professional nursing organizations of color have mission and vision statements that seek to reduce health disparities and strengthen diversity (Figure 1). The initiatives and innovative work of these organizations parallel those strategies promoted by NONPF. These organizations promote the recruitment, mentoring, ongoing development, and retention of nurse leaders of color. The overall goal is to strengthen their presence as leaders in policy, academia, and healthcare (Blake, 2018). NP programs should collaborate with these organizations to expand diversity initiatives. Members of these professional organizations could provide insight regarding structural barriers and interpersonal threats that may go unnoticed by some faculty and leaders. Furthermore, collaborations with professional organizations of color expose nursing programs and students at predominately white institutions to nursing leaders of color from across the nation who are actively engaged in academia, policy development, advocacy, and healthcare.

Figure 1. Professional Nursing Organizations of Color and Other Related Organizations

Hispanic Association of College and Universities
National Black Nurses Association
National Association of Hispanic Nurses
Association of Black Nursing Faculty
National Coalition of Ethnic Minority Nurse Associations
National Alaska Native American Indian Nurses Association
Asian American/Pacific Islander Nurses Association
Philippine Nurses Association of America

Recommendations to increase racial and ethnic diversity among NP faculty

Diverse and inclusive learning environments are essential to ensure that future NPs are adequately prepared to treat the populations they serve. The following strategies should be implemented to increase racial and ethnic diversity and inclusivity in NP programs:

- Evaluate processes used to recruit, hire, advance, and retain NP faculty to assure that practices and policies are effective in increasing access, advancement and retention for NP faculty of color.
- Adopt formal education and development programs that promote culturally responsive NP programs and develop and promote inclusive leadership within NP programs.
- Insure ongoing evaluation and modification of diversity efforts to promote inclusivity and achieve institutional diversity objectives.
- Establish collaborative relationships with professional nursing organizations of color and other related organizations to address structural barriers and interpersonal threats that may go unnoticed by some faculty and leaders.
- Develop diversity initiatives to promote working environments that are welcoming, culturally responsive, and inclusive.
- Increase the pipeline for NP faculty of color by evaluating admissions processes to attract and admit students of color and yield a more diverse pool of applicants.

NONPF believes that intentional, deliberate efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity among NP faculty will benefit students, staff, and faculty. NONPF champions a culture of diversity and inclusivity across all NP education programs.

Diversity Initiative Resources

Advancing Faculty Success Toolkit – Michigan State University - <https://www.adapp-advance.msu.edu/Faculty-Mentoring-Toolkit>

National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity - www.facultydiversity.org

Sullivan Commission Report - Missing persons: Minorities in the health profession. Retrieved from https://www.aacp.org/sites/default/files/sullivan_report_missing_persons_full_report.pdf

National League for Nursing Diversity Toolkit. Retrieved from http://www.nln.org/docs/default-source/professional-development-programs/diversity_toolkit.pdf?sfvrsn=6

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Association of American Medical Colleges (Bias in Recruitment). [E-Learning Seminar on Implicit Bias](#)

Harvard Implicit Association Test. <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

Diversity & Inclusion – American Association of Colleges of Nursing. <http://www.aacnnursing.org/Diversity>

Faculty Diversity Initiative – Johns Hopkins University. <http://facultyaffairs.jhu.edu/provosts-office-faculty-initiatives/faculty-diversity-initiative/>

The PhD Project. <https://www.phdproject.org/>

Division of Equity & Inclusion Diversity Kit – UC Berkeley. <https://diversity.berkeley.edu/programs-services/diversity-planning/toolkits-and-resources>

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