Teaching Ethnically Diverse Nursing Students
May 2017

PROJECT SCOPE AND INTENT

A project to improve retention and increase success of underrepresented minority nursing students through development and implementation of a cultural competence program for nursing faculty was proposed. Grant funding from The California Wellness Foundation was approved for a limited initial phase of work conducting a statewide needs assessment to inform and guide further program design and additional resource allocation. The assessment of academic nursing program challenges, faculty learning needs and existing practices emphasized Latino/Hispanic and African American/Black ethnicities as priorities to improve and align the nursing workforce with communities served in California.

OUTCOMES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The statewide needs assessment defined and conducted within the scope of this project encompassed three specific deliverables: 1) conduct a review of the literature; 2) complete a statewide sample survey; and 3) facilitate a focus group session of nursing program deans, directors, and faculty.

<u>Literature Review</u>

The literature review conducted between September and November 2016 identified academic practice issues and barriers involved in teaching culturally diverse nursing students, providing evidence based strategies to support student success. In particular, a set of five (5) evidence-based strategies reported to be successful in supporting nursing students from disadvantaged backgrounds (including ethnic and racial minorities underrepresented among registered nurses) from enrollment through graduation was recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Bureau of Health Workforce, Division of Nursing and Public Health.(HRSA-17-063, November, 2016). Each of these five strategies was incorporated as part of the statewide sample survey needs assessment: academic and peer support, mentoring, internal (i.e., institutional) and external (i.e., community) partnerships, student financial support, and utilization of a holistic review admission process. Information synthesized from the literature contributed to inform planning and establish a framework and focus to guide the project.

<u>Needs Assessment Survey</u>

A survey instrument developed between December 2016 and January 2017 was designed to assess nursing program strengths and limitations, identify faculty learning needs, and determine overall statewide priorities for improvement, emphasizing Latino/Hispanic and African American/Black ethnicities as those most underrepresented in California's nursing workforce. The sample survey was disseminated electronically to 214 deans and directors of nursing programs in California, representing both public and private academic institutions and systems, including California State Universities, the University of California system, community

colleges, and private universities and colleges. Thirty-nine surveys were completed, for a return rate of 18%.

Findings provided information on current practices, faculty learning needs and opportunities for program change and development. Highlights from the survey displayed in Table 1 through Table 5 indicate the extent to which evidence-based practices and strategies are in place and areas where development or improvement may be needed.

Table 1 Mission, Vision, Goals, and Strategic Plan

	Academic Institution	Nursing Program
Mission, vision, and /or goals specifically address student diversity and inclusion	87.2%	94.9%
Strategic plan, key initiatives, and/or performance measures include increasing the recruitment, and/or success of ethnically diverse students through systems, processes, or services provided	71.8%	59.0%
Strategic plan, key initiatives, and/or performance measures specifically address student groups considered underrepresented compared with the community(Hispanic/Latino, African American/Black)	89.7%	82.1%

Table 2 Holistic Review Admission Process

Programs that currently utilize a holistic admission process	56.4%
Programs that indicate holistic admission process effective, well developed	27.0%
Programs interested in evaluating, updating, or improving holistic admission process	16.2%
Programs currently implementing or interested in developing a holistic admission process	40.5%

Table 3 Areas of Program Strength or Need

	Strength	Needed
Identifying and addressing social determinants, including economic and support barriers that impede student learning and success	59.0%	33.3%
Determining social, environmental, or structural barriers that can impede academic institution's effective support of students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds	48.7%	43.6%
Providing students access to and guidance from diverse mentors and role models	39.5%	57.9%
Providing academic support for students with educationally disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are linguistically challenged	53.9%	41.0%
Establishing an institutional culture of inclusion by providing an academic environment, teaching methods, and activities that foster cultural sensitivity and success	59.0%	35.9%
Establishing internal partnerships between the nursing program and university/college to overcome academic system barriers and/or augment resources to strengthen student success	53.9%	41.0%
Establishing external partnerships between the nursing program and	25.6%	69.2%

organizations/individuals in the community to overcome limitations or strengthen student success		

Totals may not add up to 100% due to a response choice of "unknown or uncertain."

Table 4 Areas of Faculty Strength or Need

	Strength	Needed
Identifying and addressing social determinants including economic and support barriers that impede student learning and success	66.7%	30.8%
Determining social, environmental, or structural barriers that can impede academic institution's effective support of students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds	41.0%	53.9%
Providing students access to and guidance from diverse mentors and role models	48.7%	48.7%
Providing academic support for students with educationally disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are linguistically challenged	53.9%	46.2%
Establishing an institutional culture of inclusion by providing an academic environment, teaching methods, and activities that foster cultural sensitivity and success.	52.3%	44.7%
Establishing internal partnerships between the nursing program and university/college to overcome academic system barriers and/or augment resources to strengthen student success	38.5%	48.7%
Establishing external partnerships between the nursing program and organizations/individuals in the community to overcome limitations or strengthen student success	21.1%	71.1%

Totals may not add up to 100% due to a response choice of "unknown or uncertain."

Table 5 Teaching Strategies Addressing Culturally Diverse Students

	High Interest Priority Need
Integration of diverse experiences, events, concepts, issues, and themes from multiple perspectives into curricula to strengthen multicultural content	48.72%
Designing curricula that connect new learning relevant to diverse cultural backgrounds of students	53.9%
Establishing a multicultural academic environment that fosters positive interracial interaction supported through specific pedagogy	53.8%
Developing multicultural faculty competencies to include diverse ways of perceiving, believing, and acting	59.0%
Developing awareness of the many traditional academic patterns that can accommodate some students but disengage others; learning about and adopting changes to mitigate these	56.4%
Understanding how students' prior educational backgrounds are relevant to designing new instruction, and how changing the approach and teaching methodology can strengthen learning outcomes	46.2%
Demonstrating the value academic institution and faculty place on diversity through fair and equitable instructional design, learning activities, interaction patterns, behaviors and expectations	71.3%
Development and adoption of varied instructional methods, teaching strategies and techniques that support different learning styles, and equitable	59.0%

access for all students to achieve socially, academically, and professionally	
Varied approaches to assessment ad evaluation of learning outcomes in a multiculturally sensitive classroom through a variety of techniques, including written and oral formats, portfolio collections, performance projects, observations, etc.	55.3%

The survey findings indicated a majority of academic institutions as well as the nursing programs within them had specific mission, vision, goals and strategic plans that addressed student diversity and inclusion. Data indicated key areas and patterns of response where academic programs and faculty may benefit from further information, development and support to adopt evidence based strategies that would strengthen student experiences and success in multicultural environments. In particular, there was significant interest in learning more about specific teaching strategies that could be utilized to foster learning outcomes as well as opportunities to develop and implement or evaluate and improve holistic admission processes.

Focus Group Session

A two-hour focus group session conducted in May invited deans, directors, and faculty from 12 ethnically diverse nursing schools across Southern California to discuss challenges, reflect on perceptions and experiences, and consider teaching methods and strategies important to support and strengthen student success. The session was designed and facilitated by Adriana Perez, PhD, ANP-BC, FAAN, a nationally recognized leader with expertise as a nurse practitioner providing care in diverse communities, a researcher, and an academic nursing faculty. Dr. Perez's commitment to addressing health disparities through development of a diverse workforce is evident in her work with the IOM Future of Nursing Campaign for Action, consulting with various state action coalitions in developing sustainable diversity action plans.

The Focus Group session was informed by key questions arising from the literature review and statewide sample survey, and guided through the expertise of Dr. Perez to address priorities and best practices. A qualitative content analysis approach was used to describe key challenges and issues that limit enrollment or success of diverse nursing students underrepresented in California's workforce, including processes and practices that would support diversity and inclusivity for academic success. Focus group participants (invited N = 12, participated N=11) included diverse academic leaders and nursing faculty in the southern California region, representing Hispanic Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Results are organized in themes with recommendations for students, faculty and institutions.

Strengths to Build Upon

Participants proudly shared institutional achievements that reflect diversity and inclusion for both faculty and students. Related to **students**, several described success or readiness to pilot a holistic admission process to build upon the increasing number of underrepresented students. One participant recalled that the Nursing Department *"was an early adopter of the Chancellor's Multicriteria admission process,"* where currently the number of Hispanic students has increased from 18% to 38%. Several key programs were described, including a *Legacy Program* for African-American students, a *Higher Education Excellence Diversity (HEED) Award*, rated #1 in the nation for upward mobility of students. The majority described a growing

multicultural student body with specific student population data; e.g., a *local campus with predominantly Asian, Filipino, 18% Hispanic, 7% African American students.* One shared being a *Hispanic serving institution; with 67% Hispanic and 8-12% African American students.* Another recalled a difference in program population; for example, in *the RN to BSN and Fast Track programs there are 60% minority students, while in the traditional program there are fewer, at 40%.*

Regarding **faculty,** while the majority acknowledged an ongoing need for recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty that "*reflect the student body*," participants shared key practices and initiatives, such as celebrating the hire of *3 African American tenured faculty,* hosting guest speakers for diversity issues, a Masters Entry Program in Nursing (MEPN), "*with graduates coming back to teach as faculty,*" and most importantly, recruitment of African American faculty, who "*work with predominantly first generation students in need of remediation,*" and address barriers.

From an **organizational/community perspective**, strengths included working with new leadership, such as the *"University President, who has different initiatives"* with a diversity focus. One example is the "Go East LA" initiative, which targets Hispanic communities and can provide students with real-life experiences. One participant described the education system as a barrier that faculty may not recognize for students. A major strength is that new faculty can bring questions and new ideas. Overall participants shared a genuine concern to learn: *"How can faculty be the role models for students working with minorities, regardless of whether they are the minority or not?"*

Internal and External Challenges & Unique Opportunities

Interesting topics were raised that reflect the impact of *"ongoing budget reductions that limit faculty searches and recruitment from reaching out."* Despite gains in increasing faculty of color that may *"look diverse,"* participants noted that *"internal challenges remain."* For example, one campus employs a high number of Filipino faculty; however, this might not reflect the local community. Participants demonstrated a keen understanding of both internal and external challenges. **Internally**, they explained that faculty hiring practices are faulty but can be addressed. Some institutions were described as having recruitment and hiring practices that are historically embedded, *"often recruiting those already known to us, which continues the same patterns."* Creatively, faculty shared supporting and connecting with *"many more Masters prepared nurses in hospitals, opportunity for targeted recruitment as adjuncts."* Often, this entry level into teaching can encourage adjuncts to consider doctoral education or long-term academic appointments. **Externally**, participants discussed the need to teach diverse families and public about nursing. Many identified this as a major challenge and one recent experience gained through a HRSA grant focused on diversity outreach to elementary and high schools. As a result, faculty learned that in some cultures/communities, there is limited knowledge about nurses' roles and a lack of role models. Some see nursing's role as doing *"scutwork."* Those they know *"in nursing"* are CNAs, LVNs, and nursing assistants, thus community members "*do not see and understand RN roles, higher education roles, research potential*." In addition to providing students with stipends, grant resources supported student professional memberships with nurses that *"looked like them."* By joining the National Association of Hispanic Nurses, students were socialized into professional nursing and attended national conferences. Some

gained key experiences. *"Most had never traveled, been on a plane, provided a broader world view."*

Preserving and Embedding Cultural Diversity

Examples were described for current and new initiatives to embed cultural principles from recruitment through retention of students. The role of family was emphasized. Parent/family groups can be involved and some provide flexible lab hours as options to support learning and family roles. Hispanic students express "*challenges with schedules to balance family and work needs.*" Students indicate *"putting family on hold to get education."* One innovative strategy is boot camp for incoming students, with one day for including families to hear about expectations and support. Another, *placing students in "diverse" communities and having communities experience students has been helpful.* One Hispanic, Spanish speaking student is involved in a nurse-run clinic doing health education in a low-income community; she exhibits strong leadership in an environment she relates to. One participant noted academic leaders should be facilitators of a culture of acceptance and freedom to be oneself. One specific activity to promote includes assigning students to develop their own story/storyboard that can be *"shared with the group early in the program to engage and celebrate their uniqueness."* Another explained that students write their stories, and stories are selected to be read at completion ceremony to inspire other students, faculty, and demonstrate/acknowledge their success. There is "value in setting aside time to focus on diversity issues." To "preserve our own cultural identity," several schools structure occasions for students to voice and exhibit their culture. They allow students to self-select a project they are interested in and passionate about, and then work with peers on common interests. Some provide a mental health, public health fair that exhibits student strengths, recognizes culture and rewards success.

Future Recommendations

While progress has been made in several areas, participants discussed the need to address diversity more broadly, bringing in cultural aspects in every class, course -- even in research. Specifically include experiences with LGBT, blended families, mental illness, homeless etc. to strengthen their foundation in diversity awareness and competence. Participants are testing new and innovative strategies to promote diversity and inclusivity in nursing. While some of these are based on existing literature in this area – faculty and academic administrators are continuously evaluating their progress. Recommendations are organized based on what "students, faculty/academic leaders, and institutions" can do to achieve bold results.

Students
- Students often overcommitted with school, work, family needs. Financial challenges. Role in family as a barrier is important to understand; many students do not share these until late in program or after performance issues arise. *Encourage students to speak up.*
- Service learning opportunities provide community connections with different cultures and ethnic groups.
- Self- assessment tools early to determine challenges and to individualize and guide support and success strategies.

Faculty/Academic Leaders

- Faculty work needed, education, help students in ways that may not be the norm, use avenues beyond traditional ways.
- Integrate diversity into program, rather than a separate course. Unfolding case studies to exhibit ethnicity. Promote a "Culture of Caring."
- Framework of incivility can help distinguish where cultural sensitivity education is involved.
- Focus on acute care limits exposure of students to actual community life, culture, and challenges. Ambulatory care, nursing homes and palliative care help develop cultural awareness and practice skills.
- CD series available to coach communication, various languages. (American Speech Sounds for the Health Provider) Helps teach medical terminology.

Academic Institution/Program
- Provide low income students with a laptop loan program.
- Mentorship emerged several times.
  - If limited faculty role models in nursing, encourage professional role models across other health professions.
  - Mentors in the community may be out of school so long they are not relatable to students. Use community support role models to augment.
  - Utilize strong faculty as effective ethnic diversity role models – regardless of their own ethnicity. Expose faculty and students to multicultural experiences.

- Address structural barriers: completion should consider English skills.
- Faculty development center to enhance teaching practice, evidence based learning.
- Partnerships with potential employers. Encourage consideration beyond ADN vs BSN for hiring. Promote employer awareness of new graduate RN unique strengths. Hospital partnerships, promote exposure to ethnic, doctoral leaders, role models.
- Demonstrate investment in diversity. University VP Diversity role. Choose a diversity book annually to highlight multicultural issues, experiences, and strategies for success.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

The project and results provide a foundation of evidence depicting challenges and effective practices and strategies needed to expand and improve cultural competency and student success supporting a more diverse nursing workforce. There is value and intent to broaden dissemination of the findings from this project going forward. Resources to support additional phases of work will be sourced to engage targeted audiences including nursing schools, healthcare organizations, and community based organizations to establish shared awareness, engage further interest and dedicated direction for continued development.

Additional funding will continue to be sourced targeting priority areas for local, regional, and statewide program development, faculty education, and to support sharing outcomes and best practices to strengthen academic environments, nursing programs and pedagogy involved strengthening the success of culturally diverse students. Concurrent with this initial needs assessment phase, a proposal for funding was submitted to HRSA for a Nursing Workforce

Diversity Grant aimed to develop, implement, and evaluate the set of five evidence-based strategies over three years in partnership with three nursing programs. If funding is awarded, the comprehensive focus, application, and evaluation of outcomes in adopting the set of five success strategies will aim to share best practices statewide and nationally in collaboration with programs in other states.

There is opportunity for academic institutions to increase the recruitment and success of culturally diverse nursing students through establishing environments that promote diversity and inclusivity, and implement evidence-based strategies that guide program development. Providing opportunities for faculty education and coaching to integrate culturally responsive pedagogy and mentoring of students in classroom and clinical education settings will support student success and strengthen the needed supply of minority nurses in the workforce.

In particular, there is interest in learning about and/or evaluating and improving holistic admission processes to incorporate a balance of applicant attributes and experiences in addition to academic performance. This approach provides options to enroll a more diverse student population of students that may be more closely aligned with the community. Despite the fact that the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office has invested in the development of "Multi-Criteria" as an approved option for Community Colleges to adopt, many colleges would benefit from further guidance or support to move forward in its adoption.