

Diversity Corner

Building a Diverse Clinical Science: Strategies for Recruiting Underrepresented Students

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Racially and/or ethnically diverse students are underrepresented at all levels of psychology education (American Psychological Association, 2002; Matton, Kohout, Wicherski, Leary, & Vinokurov, 2006). While representation of racially/ethnically diverse students in doctoral programs is increasing, the proportions do not match the U.S. Census data. For example, in 2013, 6.4% of all U.S. doctorate degrees, and 9% of psychology doctorate degrees, were awarded to individuals who identify as Black or African-American (American Psychological Association Center for Workforce Studies, 2010; National Science Foundation, 2015). While this represents a 70% increase over the past 20 years, 13.2% of the U.S. population identifies as Black or African-American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Although APA does not systematically track enrollment of other diverse student populations (e.g., sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, religion, veteran status, and so on), it seems plausible that other groups are also underrepresented (of course, this remains an empirical question).

The goal of this Diversity Corner is to give SSCP members some strategies to improve recruitment of diverse students (broadly defined) into their graduate training programs. We assume that ultimately we all want to recruit the best future clinical scientists we can, but strategies for graduate recruitment and retention must recognize the academic value of scholars' contributions to diversity and seek to limit the barriers that have previously prevented the full participation of underrepresented students within our field. Although we sought to provide suggestions that were as empirically-driven as possible, we have also incorporated personal stories and anecdotes. Additionally, it is not possible to examine specific strategies for all groups in one brief newsletter article. We encourage SSCP members to access the articles cited below and look for more specific recommendations as needed. For example, Thomason [1999] focuses on recruitment and retention of Native American students. We also recommend reading the "Special section on ethnic minority recruitment,

and training" in the April 2010 issue of the APA Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs' Communique.

We want to emphasize that, before substantial progress can be truly made toward a more diverse clinical science, empirical data is needed to identify the true cause of underrepresentation: Are underrepresented students not applying to clinical psychology programs? Are they applying but not getting invited for interviews? Are they being invited and attending the interview, but then not being extended offers? Or are they invited but unable to attend (due to financial burden, work obligations, family obligations, etc.)? The best solutions for increasing minority representation should be driven by accurate information regarding where in the pipeline we are losing potential applicants. In the absence of that data, we are making the best recommendations we can based on the existing literature and anecdotal experience. In future Diversity Corner columns, we will continue to explore this topic, as we learn from faculty members and clinical psychology programs with proven track records of mentoring diverse students.

One of the most important steps in recruiting diverse students is ensuring the program materials explicitly document the program's commitment to training individuals of diverse backgrounds and to supporting research topics in areas of diversity. There are many ways to do this, but could include explicit descriptions of an antidiscrimination policy, the presence of minority-based financial aid, a statement of commitment to diversity training, a statement specific to recruiting for diversity, inclusion of a diversity minor as part of graduate training, the presence of a graduate-level diversity courses or other training, and multicultural faculty research (Bidell, Ragen, Broach, & Carrillo, 2007). Several studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between the inclusion of multicultural content in paper application materials and the enrollment of ethnic minority and LGB students (e.g., Bernal, Barron, & Leary, 1983; Bidell, Turner, & Casas, 2002; Yoshida, Cancelli, Sowinski, & Bernhardt, 1989). Of course, many programs have done away with printed program materials, relying solely on internet-

based recruitment efforts and applicant information, yet it seems that our online descriptions of a commitment to diversity have not caught up with the need. Bidell and colleagues (2007) analyzed the websites of a randomly selected sample of professional psychology doctoral programs, and found that fewer psychology doctoral programs had specific diversity-focused content (again, ethnicity and LGB orientation) on their web materials, relative to their 2002 study examining paper materials. For example, less than 15% of the programs identified in Bidell et al. (2007) included an anti-discrimination policy statement on their websites. The authors concluded that training programs are not prioritizing their online materials as essential recruitment tools. Nonetheless, psychology programs which are successful in recruiting diverse students emphasize their websites as vital recruiting tools (Rogers & Molina, 2006).

Anecdotally, many potential applicants peruse program materials specifically looking for content such as a mission statement, coursework that highlights a focus on diversity training, or photos of diverse faculty and students. In the competitive world of graduate student recruitment, potential applicants for whom diversity is a key part of their identity may not even apply to programs who do not attend to diversity, even if other aspects of the programs are stellar. In an effort to encourage recruitment efforts that are more diversity-sensitive, Bidell et al. (2002) proposes a Diversity Index which can be calculated to evaluate how well your program's print/online materials attend to diversity in recruitment. We also would suggest looking at some stellar examples of clinical psychology program websites, such as the program at UNC-Chapel Hill which includes three separate subheadings under "Diversity": a detailed statement about their commitment to diversity and inclusion, an explicit description about diversity recruitment, and a through description of their diversity training committee, including multiple training experiences in diversity that are part of their curriculum.

Programs dedicated to training and mentoring undergraduate psychology students from underrepresented groups are an effective method of increasing accessibility of our graduate programs. For example, Hall and Allard (2009) describe a 6-week summer research training program for well-qualified ethnic minority undergraduate students. Students were randomly

assigned to a multicultural training track which emphasized the cultural context of psychology within all components of the curriculum (which included a clinical research methods course, research presentations by faculty, individual faculty mentoring, instruction on applying to graduate school, dinner in the home of the lead researcher, and two field trips), a monocultural training track featuring the same curriculum but without the emphasis on cultural context, and a control group who did not receive either version of the extra training. They note that students participating in either program applied to graduate psychology programs at a significantly higher rate than the control group. Other ideas include shorter training opportunities and workshops targeted to diverse undergraduate students looking to apply to graduate school, which can occur at the program- (e.g., the "Diversifying Clinical Psychology Weekend" hosted by the UNC-Chapel Hill's clinical psychology program), department- (e.g., the "Diversity Weekend" sponsored by the University of Minnesota Department of Psychology), or university-level (e.g., Vanderbilt University's "PhD Pre-VU Recruitment Event"). Anecdotally, it seems that a key component to the success of these experience is ensuring that they are "all expenses paid."

Another key predictor of successful minority student recruitment is targeted financial aid (Bernal et al., 1983; Rogers & Molina, 2006). If such opportunities are available at your university, they should be plainly stated on your recruitment materials. In the absence of such funding, Bidell et al. (2007) suggests partnering with organizations that offer grant and scholarships to diverse graduate students (such as APA Divisions 44 and 45 and the APA Minority Fellowship Program).

Other components of successful recruitment of diverse students include involving current diverse faculty and students in recruitment efforts, faculty making personal contacts with potential diverse applicants prior to the application deadline, having a university and department support for their recruitment and retention efforts, and developing a relationship with a historical institution of color (Rogers & Molina, 2006). For example, the Clinical Psychology program at UNC-Chapel Hill includes a Minority Brunch during their interview weekend where minority applicants can meet current minority students. Other programs have a presentation from their Diversity Committee

at the beginning of their interview days. Such events emphasize the department's commitment to ensuring that students of underrepresented groups feel welcomed and supported.

If we want all students to feel welcomed in the ivory tower, we have to be vocal and transparent about our attention to diversity, and we have to help eliminate barriers to graduate school. We hope we have outlined some helpful steps in achieving this goal. Creating a more inclusive clinical psychology can only serve to enhance the breadth and quality of the scientists we produce.

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Financial Report

Stewart Shankman, Ph.D.
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BALANCE as of September 8, 2015: \$30,706.39

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Expenses: -\$500 to Fordham for NIMH coding project
- Income pending: +\$1800 from Paypal (membership dues)

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