

UW-Madison: Master of Physician Assistant Studies: Executive Summary Diversity Plan

The PA program has undertaken active measures to increase the racial/ethnic diversity of students and to serve underserved communities. Some of these recruiting efforts have been sponsored through training grants. The community-based (distance education) option was developed in 2001 as a result of federal grant funding to address the needs of medically underserved communities. Over the past five years, the PA program has enrolled up to 20% of its students from Medically Underserved Communities (MUCs). Previously, minority applicants had comprised only a small percent of the applicant pool and only one-to-three new minority students enrolled (representing a low of 3% and a high of 9%). In contrast, for the most recent year, 15% of new students were from minority racial/ethnic groups, which is more consistent with the state demographics than enrollments in previous years.

The PA program received federal funding for the period 2008-2011 to support programmatic initiatives to recruit more targeted minority enrollees over the next three years. The grant supports two part-time staff positions dedicated to recruitment, outreach, and developing community partnerships in rural and medically underserved communities. In addition, the PA program has made curricular enhancements in cultural competency to better prepare graduates for serving minority populations. Through direct instruction, workshops, clinical vignettes, use of standardized patients/interpreters, and on-line curriculum, the program continues to enhance the cultural competence of preceptors, faculty, and students.

In the 2007-2008 academic year, all instructional faculty completed a diversity workshop. PA students actively team up with other healthcare professional students and faculty to serve in Madison's MEDiC outreach clinics for the uninsured and under-insured population. Additionally, PA program students have annually engaged in international healthcare experiences in Belize and Guatemala to serve medically underserved villages in these countries. These service-learning activities contain cultural training and diversity curricular components through direct interaction with persons of differing cultures.

The UW-Madison Physician Assistant program has paid special attention to gender and race/ethnic diversity among its faculty, as well as its students. Of 5.7 FTE instructional faculty, 2.2 FTE are men and 2.5 FTE are women, showing an even gender split. Because there has been low attrition of PA faculty, the opportunity for recruitment and hiring has been limited over the years. Last year, the program lost a diverse faculty member, who enrolled in a doctoral program, and a diverse support staff member, who did not successfully complete the probationary period. Recently, two faculty positions have been filled and despite significant targeted recruitment efforts, the Program was not able to fill these positions with diversity candidates. The PA program is housed in the Department of Family Medicine (DFM) in the School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). The Program consults with DFM and SMPH Human Resources regarding the Program's valuing of diversity prior to each search. HR offices have utilized advertising approaches to announce and distribute faculty opportunities across demographic lines, including specific journals and publications to diverse audiences. All recruiting efforts identify UW-Madison as an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, while promoting excellence through diversity and encouraging all qualified individuals to apply. Personal contacts

were utilized in the recent faculty position recruitments in an effort to assure a diverse pool of candidates. Overall, there is a shortage of PA educators and the shortage is even more pronounced for diverse PA educators, which compounds the challenges of recruiting. Despite intensive recruitment efforts, there were very limited qualified applicants overall for the recent PA faculty positions. The PA program remains committed to recruitment and hiring across demographic lines, while ensuring equitable review and hiring processes.