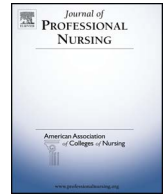




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Nursing at historically black colleges and universities

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ABSTRACT

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been committed to educating diverse and underserved populations since their inception. Their commitments for over 100 years have resulted in increased diversity in many careers, but specifically in the field of nursing. HBCU nursing schools have been producing diverse nurses since shortly after the Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves in 1863, and today HBCUs continue to educate, motivate, and develop nurses at every level, including associate, baccalaureate, master, and doctorate. With universal consensus on the need for a diverse and highly functional nursing workforce, both the historic and potential future impact and contributions of HBCUs should not be ignored. HBCU schools of nursing continue to be committed to producing baccalaureate nurses prepared to advance and lead health care in a variety of settings, from a variety of backgrounds. Their commitments to first-generation college students and those from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, continue to be a hallmark characteristic of HBCUs, therefore, clearly pointing to their paramount role in producing the future of healthcare.

Introduction

Before the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, formal educational opportunities for African Americans and American Indians were essentially nonexistent (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Therefore, the opportunity for both freed and enslaved African Americans were out of reach for many needed trades and professions, nursing is one of them. After the emancipation, alliances between freedmen, religious philanthropists and communities resulted in the establishment of schools to educate the newly freed African Americans. These institutions, both religious and unaffiliated, resulted in the framework for today's HBCUs. Since their inception, these HBCUs have been committed to providing educational opportunities to first-generation college students, disadvantaged students, and students with little other opportunities to receive a formal education (Lovett, 2011).

An HBCU is defined as “any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal goal was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation” (White House Initiative on HBCUs, 2017, par. 1).

Historically, HBCUs have been instrumental in educating African Americans and racial and ethnic minorities for more than 100 years (Noonan, Lindong, & Jaitley, 2013). However, despite HBCUs' commitment to educating underrepresented groups, the enrollment at

HBCUs has decreased (Noonan et al., 2013). This decline in enrollment is related to a number of factors, in particular, a drastic decrease in federal funding. A large percentage of students enrolled in HBCUs receive federal funding. Thus, after funding declined, so did enrollment. In 2011, enrollment at HBCUs declined by 14%, as compared to that of the past 10 years when enrollment was steadily increasing (New America, 2015). As a result of a decline in enrollment, HBCUs' role has been in question and oftentimes viewed in a negative context.

Although enrollment has declined at HBCUs overall in comparison to historic levels, their nursing programs have continued to enjoy growth and produce diverse candidates for licensure. According to New America (2015), HBCUs produce 16% of all bachelor's degrees earned by African-Americans, 25% of all bachelor's degrees in education earned by African-Americans, and 22% of all bachelor's degrees in STEM fields earned by African American students. Despite these statistics, historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) continue to be overlooked as a resource to address the growing need to increase the number of baccalaureate-prepared nurses and enhance diversity in the workplace. Future partnerships and collaborations with HBCUs are another pathway to increase the number of underrepresented groups and baccalaureate-prepared nurses. HBCUs have traditionally played a key role in educating African Americans and are still positioned to play a critical role in the education of minorities and underrepresented groups in the nursing profession. Furthermore, studies have shown that the performance of graduates with health professional degrees from HBCUs is equivalent to that of graduates of majority institutions

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(Noonan et al., 2013). Ultimately, partnerships with HBCUs are effective approaches to improve access to quality healthcare, increase health equity and reduce health disparities, which have been identified by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing as national goals (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2015).

The legacy of HBCU nursing schools

HBCU nursing schools have a rich legacy, one grounded in opportunity, scholarship and resilience. The first school of nursing dedicated to educating African Americans was founded at the Spelman Seminary, Atlanta, GA (now Spelman College), in 1886 (Spelman College, 2016). This groundbreaking educational venture created a pathway for other educational institutions to model. HBCU nursing schools have been dedicated to baccalaureate education for many years, and the legacy of providing baccalaureate degrees is exemplified by both Tuskegee University and Hampton University. Both were the first institutions in their states of Alabama and Virginia, respectively, to award bachelor's degrees in nursing, setting a precedent for both HBCU and non-HBCU institutions (Hampton University, 2016; Tuskegee University, 2017)

Because many Historically Black Colleges and Universities were started before integration, and with the majority of them being southern schools, the harsh realities of racism and inequality were immediate barriers. Determined to educate minority nurses, HBCUs in southern states were sometimes required to send their students to the north to complete clinical experiences and gain the necessary practical experiences to complete their studies. This historic level of commitment to minority education was hallmark in establishing vision, teaching philosophies, and strategic planning to advance the institutions (Roland, 2015).

While established to educate African Americans, the current and longstanding status of HBCUs has been based on inclusion for all. HBCUs have been committed to serving a diverse population since inception, with schools such as Hampton University being founded on the dedication to educating multi-racial and American Indian populations, both of which were historically not welcomed at other institutions (Hampton University, 2016). In 2014, HBCUs were made up of over 20% non-black students (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). In addition, some HBCUs, previously predominantly African American, are now majority non-black, such as Bluefield State College of West Virginia, and Lincoln University in Missouri (Bluefield State College, 2016; Lincoln University, 2016). These resilient institutions continue to be relevant at all levels, and even though a decrease has been seen in their overall enrollment, the schools of nursing are growing and expanding to serve the needs of those interested in pursuing nursing as well as meeting the growing needs and demands of the health workforce (Fig. 1).

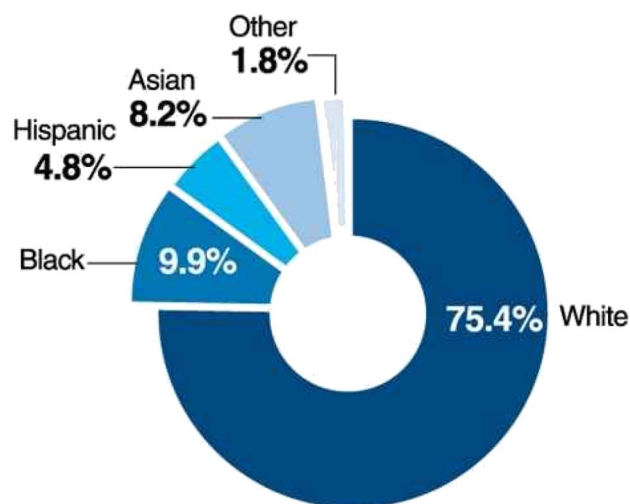
Contributing to nursing's goals to increase education

Today HBCU nursing schools award degrees at all levels, including bachelor's, master's, and both research and practice doctorates (see Table 1). Across the nation, HBCUs are the hosts of pre-licensure baccalaureate programs, baccalaureate completion programs and graduate degrees including both nursing based doctorates.

The landmark Institute of Medicine (IOM) report indicates the need to increase baccalaureate-prepared nurses to 80% by 2020 (Institute of Medicine, 2010). Research suggests that nurses prepared for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) level possess advanced skills needed to deliver optimal care to clients with complex health needs. Outcomes of these populations also are associated positively with BSN-prepared nurses. (Institute of Medicine, 2010).

Currently, two-thirds of the nursing workforce are prepared at the baccalaureate level (Aiken, 2014). The (Health Resources and Services Administration, 2013) indicates that only 55% of the Registered Nurses currently practicing are baccalaureate prepared. Furthermore, 43% of

America's nurse workforce



Does not add up to 100% because of rounding

Other: American Indian/Alaskan Native 0.4; Hawaii/Pacific Islander 0.1; Multiple/other 1.3)

Source: Health Resources and Services Administration, 2013 report

Fig. 1. Make-up of America's nurse workforce.

first-time NCLEX test-takers were graduates of baccalaureate nursing programs (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2015).

In addition, the IOM report identifies a need to enhance diversity in the nursing workforce (Institute of Medicine, 2010). The emerging need to diversify the workforce is associated with the changing U.S. population demographics, which predict a major increase in minority populations. Currently, minorities make up 37% of the nation's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), by 2043 the current minority population will be the majority. In order to diversify the workforce, there is a critical need to increase minorities in baccalaureate programs to represent the nation's societal changes and increasing, diverse population. According to Sullivan's Report (2004), it is critical to increasing enrollment of ethnic and racial minorities and underrepresented groups to increase diversity in the nursing and healthcare workforce. Currently, such minorities make up approximately 30% of enrollees in baccalaureate and graduate programs (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2017). Although the enrollment of baccalaureate-prepared minorities increased to 44%, minorities continue to lag behind in enrollment as compared to their white counterparts (Sullivan's Report, 2004).

The growing need to enhance diversity in the nursing workforce is based on the premise of culturally competent care (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2015). Culturally competent care has played a critical role in reducing health disparities and improving health outcomes among minorities. Diversity in nursing offers opportunities to deliver quality care which promotes patient satisfaction and emotional well-being (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2015). Overall, the recommendation to enhance diversity in the nursing workforce is needed to reflect the societal needs and address the nation's health equity strategy (Noonan et al., 2013).

HBCUs: a key partner in expanding diversity

One key strategy to consider in accelerating the diversity of the nursing workforce includes forming and strengthening partnerships with HBCUs. Partnerships to educate baccalaureate-prepared nurses

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