CALIFORNIA PHARMACY SCHOOLS: MINORITY ENROLLMENT TRENDS AND BARRIERS

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Introduction

- The American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) defines underrepresented minorities (URM) as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaska Native students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.1
- The state of California has undergone significant shifts in its racial and ethnic makeup since 1990.2,4
- As a result, the need for culturally-competent pharmacists has become increasingly vital.5-9

This study aims to explore the enrollment trends of underrepresented minorities in California pharmacy schools in the past ten years and identify barriers that URM pharmacy students faced during the application process.

Methodology

- This study evaluated AACP data on California pharmacy school enrollment over the past ten years.
- Additionally, a web-based survey, using Qualtrics®, was administered to Touro University California College of Pharmacy (TUC COP) classes of 2017 and 2018 to assess student demographics and common barriers faced by current pharmacy school students.

AACP Minority Enrollment Trends

- Figure 1. Enrollment of URM students in California pharmacy schools was lower than nationwide. The national average enrollment for URM students in 2014 was approximately 12.4% while the average URM enrollment in California was approximately 8.5%.
- Figure 2. Enrollment of URM students in each California pharmacy school has not surpassed 25% from 2005 to 2014. Unpredictable trends in URM enrollment can be observed. Data excludes California Pacific University - TUC COP of California.

TUC COP Survey Demographics

- Table 1. Ethnicity of Survey Participants
- Table 2. Background of Survey Participants

Top Barriers in Applying to TUC COP

Discussion

- Analysis of AACP data from 2005 to 2014 shows that enrollment of URM students in California pharmacy schools has consistently been lower than the national average.
- Current California pharmacy school demographics reveal a high percentage of Asian students.
- Based on survey results, the major barrier faced by TUC COP classes of 2017 and 2018 was increased cost of tuition. This result is not surprising due to the national average pharmacy school tuition rising 54% in the previous 8 years.10
- The top barriers for Black students were inadequate K-12 and college education preparation. For Hispanic students, top barriers included tuition cost, decreased financial aid, and lack of mentoring support.
- TUC COP aims to address these barriers by doing the following: (1) Instituting more diversity pharmacy scholarships for incoming and enrolled students, (2) Connecting with junior colleges and undergraduate institutions with high URM representation to provide guidance through the admission process

Conclusion

- Despite California’s increasing cultural diversity, URM enrollment into California pharmacy schools remains below the national average.
- The TUC COP survey suggests that there are still barriers that need to be addressed to recruit URM into pharmacy schools.
- We hope our research findings will encourage California pharmacy schools’ admissions programs to address the root cause of underrepresentation of minorities.
- Increasing URM enrollment will help diversify pharmacy schools, overcome health disparities, and improve the overall quality of healthcare.

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References