

Influence of Climate and Culture on Minority Faculty Retention

Although racial and ethnic minorities make up roughly 39% of the national population, they represent only 19% of full-time professorships (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2020; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Put another way, White people make up 60% of the population but hold 81% of full-time professorships. Meanwhile, African American and Hispanic people, who account for approximately 31% of the national population, comprise only 4% and 3%, respectively, of the full-time professors (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). Of all the full-time faculty in U.S. degree-granting postsecondary institutions in fall 2018, 40% were White men; 35% were White women; 7% were Asian/Pacific Islander men; 5% were Asian/Pacific Islander women; and 3% each were Black men, Black women, Hispanic men, and Hispanic women; American Indian/Alaska Native and those who were of two or more races each comprised 1% or less of full-time faculty (NCES, 2020).

In academic nursing, minority faculty represent 17.3% of all faculty positions (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2020). The mere 17.3% does not mirror the national population, and of that measly 17.3%, more than half are ranked at the lower rungs of the academic ladder: professor, 7.1%; associate professor, 14.2%; assistant professor, 40.3%; and instructor, 18.8%. However, trends of minority students who enrolled in doctoral education along with the recent graduates hold the promise of a potential pipeline that could increase the numbers of underrepresented minority (URM) faculty. From 2010 to 2019, URM student enrollment

in research-focused doctoral (PhD) programs, as a percentage of full enrollment, has increased from 935 (23.3%) to 1,306 (33.6%), and the number of URM graduates increased from 93 (20.4%) to 223 (32%) (AACN, 2020). Likewise, during the same time frame, the URM enrollment in the Doctor of Nursing practice (DNP) programs increased from 1,391 (21.1%) to 12,250 (36%) and graduates grew exponentially, from 206 (17.3%) to 2,466 (32.8%) (AACN, 2020). There is an opportunity to recruit these doctoral graduates into the academy, but first it seems prudent to become aware of the challenges URMs may face so that once recruited, strategies for retention could be put in place.

What are some of the underlying reasons behind the lack of URMs in academic nursing? The limited amount of literature on this subject matter was revealing and highlighted the need for increased attention to—and research on the subject—specifically of late, with the recent national focus on racism and equity, followed by the national calls to examine issues of systemic racism at the individual and structural levels.

A review of the literature revealed that URM faculty often describe feeling invisible, marginalized, underappreciated, and a widespread disregard as reasons for leaving the faculty role (Beard & Julion, 2016). Kolade (2016) examined the lived experiences of minority faculty and reported that a lack of support and isolation was a common experience. Others expressed feelings of tokenism, microaggressions, an unwelcoming climate, and the inability to integrate into existing faculty structures as barriers that hin-

dered their career trajectory and retention (Hamilton & Haozous, 2017; Salvucci & Lawless, 2016). Additionally, reports of racism, exclusion, alienation, and isolation contributed to feelings of not belonging (Iheduru-Anderson, 2020; Whitfield-Harris & Lockhart, 2016). A wealth of information and research demonstrates that experiences of marginalized identities are more negative than those of the mainstream. Additionally, the lack of minority faculty can harm the recruitment and retention of minority students. Students should see people who look like them when they enter an institution. Without seeing someone like themselves, students struggle with envisioning how they can be successful. Once students are admitted, there should be an array of academic support services, mentoring programs, and an inclusive climate where all students feel like they belong and are free to learn and thrive.

Now is the time to have the necessary but difficult conversations about race, racism, inclusion, and belonging in academic nursing. Silence and inaction preserve the status quo. Beverly Tatum, in her bestseller *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (2017), offers guidance in breaking the silence and initiating courageous conversations about how to be an agent of effective change. To overcome the race-related barriers for faculty of color, it becomes necessary to dismantle racism in the academy—which must begin with those in academic leadership positions who have the power and privilege to effect change. How does one capture the true feelings of those most impacted by matters related to race and racism? One

way is using climate surveys or assessments.

Climate surveys can capture the feelings and experiences of URMs in academic nursing programs. The surveys can be used to collect and compare data about how people are experiencing their institutions and provide an in-depth profile of the academic community's strengths, as well as areas for improvement. What is more, the surveys can also provide a segmented analysis of the data to better understand any issues or challenges that faculty and/or staff encountered in the past or at present. Climate assessments provide an evaluation of student, faculty, and staff perceptions, which are necessary data to make informed decisions for lasting improvement. Faculty retention can be improved through focused efforts on improving institutional culture. Creating and maintaining a more inclusive work environment requires leadership, planning, evaluation, and persistence. Academic nurse leaders should support a climate where diversity is embraced and celebrated (Beard & Julion, 2016).

The Culture and Climate Survey, *Learning Across Multidimensional Perspectives*[®] (LAMP) was developed with a unique design on nursing education (DeWitty et al., 2018). The multidimensional survey seeks feedback from faculty, students, and administrators and staff. The survey consists of 23 to 29 questions,

depending on what campus constituent group a respondent selects: faculty, student, or administrators and staff. Climate and culture assessments such as LAMP can provide nursing schools with knowledge regarding how their environments are influencing faculty and students' experiences and outcomes. By developing a better understanding of how campus environments are affecting faculty, administrators can be equipped with valuable information to initiate change, target areas of growth, and most importantly, improve faculty retention.

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