



Comparison Report: STATE OF DIVERSITY AMONG PA FACULTY AND MATRICULANTS

INTRODUCTION

The Matriculating Student Survey (MSS) and the PA Program Faculty and Directors Survey are two of PAEA's regular data collection efforts. The MSS, administered annually to first-year PA students in the month they enter their program, collects data on demographic, education, and work experiences; health and well-being factors; indebtedness; and future career preferences. The PA Program Faculty and Directors Survey is administered bi-annually and collects demographic, educational, professional, and compensation information from PA faculty, program directors, and medical directors. For the purpose of this report, medical directors were excluded from analysis due to the high variability in their roles within PA programs.

The focus of this report is to assess the diversity among PA first-year students and faculty by comparing their demographic characteristics, as well as, comparing them to the population of the United States. The goal of this report is to gain a greater understanding of diversity in PA education and identify opportunities to address shortcomings in the recruitment of PA students and faculty.

RESULTS

PA Faculty and Matriculants: A Comparison

Table 1 displays the gender distribution of PA faculty and matriculants. Both faculty and students have greater proportions of females than males (61.3% and 72.9%, respectively). When compared to the overall U.S. population, female PA matriculants and faculty members are overrepresented.¹

The proportion of female first-year students has increased from nearly 60% in 1985 to just over 70% in 2013, though this trend appears to have stabilized.² The proportion of the number of certified female PAs is also increasing. In 1974, 16% of all certified PAs were female, compared to 67% in 2014.³ In 2013, 73% of recently certified PAs were female (i.e.,

certified for the first time).⁴ Considering the gender distribution trend among practicing PAs and students and its recent stabilization, it will be interesting to examine whether this trend will be reflected among PA faculty.

TABLE 1. PA Faculty and Matriculants by Gender

	Faculty		Matriculants		U.S. Population	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Female	522	61.3	3,680	72.9	158,289,182	50.8
Male	310	36.4	1,347	26.7	153,247,412	49.2
Do not wish to report	19	2.2	24	0.5	--	--
Total	851	100.0	5,051	100.0	311,536,594	100.0

More matriculants (6.2%) reported being Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish in origin than faculty (3.8%). This difference may be accounted for by the higher proportion of faculty who did not wish to report their ethnicity (see **Table 2**). Sixteen percent of the U.S. population is Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish in origin, highlighting the underrepresentation of this group among both PA faculty members and matriculants.¹

TABLE 2. PA Faculty and Matriculants by Ethnicity

	Faculty		Matriculants		U.S. Population	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish in origin	32	3.8	313	6.2	51,786,591	16.6
Non-Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish in origin	776	91.6	4,625	91.8	259,750,003	83.4
Do not wish to report	39	4.6	100	2.0	--	--
Total	847	100.0	5,043	100.0	311,536,594	100.0

Table 3 displays the ethnicity of faculty and matriculants by gender. A greater number of female matriculants reported being Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish than male matriculants. More female faculty members reported being Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish than male faculty members. Higher proportions of matriculants reported being Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish than did faculty members. Again, the number of faculty members who did not wish to report their ethnicity may have affected this difference.

TABLE 3. PA Faculty and Matriculants by Gender and Ethnicity

	Faculty				Matriculants			
	Females		Males		Females		Males	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish in origin	22	4.2	10	3.2	232	6.3	79	5.9
Non-Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish in origin	482	92.9	284	91.6	3,387	92.3	1,227	91.5
Do not wish to report	15	2.9	16	5.2	51	1.4	35	2.6
Total	519	100.0	310	100.0	3,680	100.0	1,341	100.0

Greater than 80% of both PA faculty and matriculants are white (85.2% and 82.4%, respectively; see **Table 4**). A greater proportion of PA matriculants (8.1%, n = 405) reported they are Asian than did faculty (1.8%, n = 15), but fewer were Black or African American (3.1%) than faculty (5.3%). When comparing the racial profiles of PA faculty and matriculants to the U.S. population, White faculty and students are overrepresented while Black or African American and multi-racial individuals are underrepresented. Although Asian matriculants are overrepresented in comparison to the national population, Asians are underrepresented among faculty members. In sum, the U.S. population is more diverse racially than both PA faculty and matriculant populations.

TABLE 4. PA Faculty and Matriculants by Race

	Faculty		Matriculants		U.S. Population	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
White	723	85.2	4,146	82.4	230,592,579	74.0
Black or African American	45	5.3	157	3.1	39,167,010	12.6
Asian	15	1.8	405	8.1	15,231,962	4.9
Multi-Racial	18	2.1	58	1.2	8,732,333	2.8
American Indian or Alaskan Native	5	0.6	37	0.7	2,540,309	0.8
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	NR	NR	29	0.6	526,347	0.2
Do not wish to report	38	4.5	130	2.9	--	--
Other	5	0.6	71	1.4	14,746,054	4.7
Total	849	100.0	5,033	100.0	311,536,594	100.0

Note: "Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander" racial category for faculty and directors was combined with the "other" racial category because n < 5.

There was little difference among faculty and matriculants' race when examined by gender. **Table 5** displays the results.

TABLE 5. PA Faculty and Matriculants by Gender and Race

	Faculty				Matriculants			
	Females		Males		Females		Males	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
White	450	86.5	263	84.8	3,061	83.6	1,078	80.2
Black or African American	30	5.7	15	4.8	101	2.8	54	4.0
Asian	10	1.9	5	1.6	302	8.2	102	7.6
Multi-racial	12	2.3	6	1.9	43	1.2	14	1.0
American Indian or Alaskan Native	NR	NR	NR	NR	28	0.8	9	0.7
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	NR	NR	NR	NR	21	0.6	8	0.6
Do not wish to report	18	3.5	21	6.8	61	1.7	54	4.0
Other	NR	NR	NR	NR	46	1.3	25	1.9
Total	549	100.0	349	100.0	3,663	100.0	1,344	100.0

Note: "Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander," "American Indian or Alaskan Native," and "Other" racial categories for faculty and directors were combined with the "Do not wish to report" racial category because $n < 5$.

Table 6 reports PA faculty and matriculants' age. The average PA faculty member is 20 years older than the average first-year student.

TABLE 6. PA Faculty and Matriculants by Age

	n	M	SD	P10	P25	P50 (Mdn)	P75	P90
Faculty	816	47.3	10.92	33.0	38.0	47.0	56.0	62.0
Matriculants	5,081	26.3	5.62	22.0	23.0	24.0	28.0	33.0

Both male matriculants and faculty were older than their female counterparts (see **Table 7**). There was a six-year difference between the average age of male faculty members ($M = 50.7$, $SD = 11.07$, $n = 302$) and female faculty members ($M = 45.3$, $SD = 10.32$, $n = 504$). Male matriculants reported an average age of 28.5 years ($SD = 6.27$, $n = 1,310$), which was three years older than female matriculants ($M = 25.5$, $SD = 5.09$, $n = 3,570$).

TABLE 7. PA Faculty and Matriculants by Gender and Age

	n	M	SD	Mdn
Faculty				
Females	504	45.3	10.32	44.0
Males	302	50.7	11.07	51.0
Matriculants				
Females	3,570	25.5	5.09	24.0
Males	1,310	28.5	6.27	27.0

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Achieving diversity among PA faculty members and students is one of the key components of PAEA's [Strategic Plan](#). Most PA faculty and matriculants are female. When compared to the national population, both faculty and matriculants are less diverse, as both populations are overwhelmingly white and non-Hispanic. These findings may suggest a need for PA programs to assess their recruitment, admissions, and hiring practices and the impact of these practices on the profession's diversity.

One limitation of the comparisons in this report is the difference between the MSS and PA Program and Faculty and Directors Survey instruments. Only characteristics that were collected in the same way on the survey instruments were used to make comparisons between faculty and matriculants. Future survey instruments may be edited in order to create alignment between the survey tools to allow for more comparisons between the two groups, such as environment in which each spent a majority of their lives, civil status, and number of dependents. Another limitation is the response rates of the surveys. The 2014 MSS and the 2014 PA Program Faculty and Directors garnered response rates of 62% and 59%, respectively. Although these are satisfactory response rates, some characteristics of faculty and matriculants may have been under- or overrepresented due to non-respondents.

Author: Rachel A. Hamann, MPPA

Contributors: Lindsey M. Huang, MA, and Anthony A. Miller, MEd, PA-C

REFERENCES

¹ United States Census Bureau. 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_5YR_DP05&src=pt.

² Physician Assistant Education Association (2014). *Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of Physician Assistant Educational Programs in the United States, 2012-2013*. <http://bit.ly/1Nbpbp4>.

³ National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, Inc. (2015, March). *2014 Statistical Profile of Certified Physician Assistants: An Annual Report of the National Commission on the Certification of Physician Assistants*. <http://www.nccpa.net/uploads/docs/2014StatisticalProfileofCertifiedPhysicianAssistants-AnAnnualReportoftheNCCPA.pdf>.

⁴ National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, Inc. (2014, October). *2013 Statistical Profile of Recently Certified Physician Assistants: An Annual Report of the National Commission on the Certification of Physician Assistants*. <http://www.nccpa.net/uploads/docs/RecentlyCertifiedReport2013.pdf>.