

Diversity in Physician Assistant (PA) Education

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Fast Facts

73.5% of first-year PA students are **Caucasian** compared to **61.3%** of the U.S. general population.¹

3.9% of first-year PA students are **African American** compared to **13.3%** of the U.S. general population.¹

6.5% of first-year PA students are **Hispanic** compared to **17.8%** of the U.S. general population.¹

What's the Issue?

As the general population of the United States has grown increasingly diverse, issues of health equity and the provision of culturally competent care have received greater attention among stakeholders throughout the health care sector. This is particularly true among health care educators who recognize the role that diversity plays in the delivery of high-quality patient care. While the value of diversity among health care professionals is clear, much work is needed to create a health care workforce fully equipped to provide culturally competent care. Hispanics and African Americans remain significantly underrepresented among first-year PA students, posing a threat to the goal of health equity among traditionally marginalized patient populations.

What's the Solution?

To ensure the development of a truly diverse health care workforce, PAEA believes Congress should act to provide incentives for PA program enhancement/development at institutions with large student populations from economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Passage of H.R. 1603, the Physician Assistant Higher Education Modernization Act of 2017, introduced by Representative Karen Bass (D-CA), would represent a significant step towards achieving diversity in PA education by prioritizing grant applications for institutions providing post-baccalaureate opportunities to Hispanic Americans and increasing funding available for PA programs at historically and predominantly black institutions of higher education, among other provisions. Through these investments in the development of a diverse PA workforce, Congress can reaffirm its commitment to the provision of culturally competent care to patients and a more equitable health care system for all.

For additional information, please contact advocacy@PAEAonline.org.

REFERENCE

¹ Physician Assistant Education Association, *By the Numbers: Program Report 32*. Washington, DC: PAEA, 2017. doi: 10.17538/PR32.2017. <http://paeonline.org/research/program-report/>. Accessed May 29, 2018.

