

# Diversity in PA Education

## Fast Facts

**69.4%** of first-year PA students are **Caucasian** compared to **60.4%** of the U.S. general population.<sup>1</sup>

**3.9%** of first-year PA students are **Black or African American** compared to **13.4%** of the U.S. general population.<sup>1</sup>

**7.6%** of first-year PA students are **Hispanic or Latino** compared to **18.3%** of the U.S. general population.<sup>1</sup>

## What's the Issue?

As the general population of the United States has grown increasingly diverse, the urgency of combating health disparities based upon race and ethnicity has become clear among health care stakeholders. 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, more work is needed to create a health care workforce fully equipped to provide culturally competent care. Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino individuals 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, Congress should act to increase funding for key health workforce programs under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act. The Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS) program provides financial resources to ensure that students from underrepresented backgrounds have the necessary resources to successfully complete their programs. The Health Careers Opportunity Program complements SDS by supporting pipeline development at the K-16 level, increasing awareness of careers in the health professions among underrepresented students, and facilitating enrichment initiatives proven to increase matriculation rates. Through increased investments in the development of a diverse PA workforce through these programs, 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 [tsmith@PAEAonline.org](mailto:tsmith@PAEAonline.org).

## REFERENCE

<sup>1</sup> Physician Assistant Education Association, *By the Numbers: Program Report 35: Data from the 2019 Program Survey*. Washington, DC: PAEA, 2020. doi: 10.17538/PR35.2020

