

Impetus for Development of the Diversity Committee

The nation's health plan, Healthy People 2010, recognizes the consistently disproportionate health outcomes of the American public, mainly among underrepresented and underserved communities of color. Because public health professionals create, design and implement the health programs and policies that directly affect these groups, it is imperative that these public health professionals represent the diverse populations they serve. *Leave No One Behind: Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health and Life Expectancy* is one of APHA's 2004 legislative priority issues. The PHSC Diversity committee is key to this aim.

Increasing the numbers of minorities and males in the public health workforce is not only of great concern to this committee but also to the public health workforce.

The chief purpose of the Diversity Committee is to ensure that the PHSC puts forth a concerted effort toward increasing the diversity among professionals in our field. The strategies necessary to accomplish this goal include, but not limited to the following:

1. Recruiting and facilitation of the ongoing, active involvement of a diverse PHSC student membership; and
2. Development and implementation of programs, initiatives and activities that address the multicultural competencies needed by aspiring public health professionals.

For a detailed outline of the objectives and strategies to attain these goals, visit <http://www.phsc.org/> and click on *Diversity Committee*. While the Diversity Committee Co-Chairs and PHSC Board members, as representatives of the APHA student population, could determine how to address diversity in our organization, member involvement is vital. A one page survey was sent to the PHSC membership via the listserv to 1) introduce the addition of the Diversity Committee to the PHSC, 2) obtain feedback from the membership on ways to increase and maintain diversity and 3) outline a strategic plan to get the Diversity committee off the ground and running. A total of 198 surveys were collected over the course of two weeks.

Survey Demographics

Forty-five percent (n=89) of survey respondents identified themselves as White, 17% (n=34) as Other, 13% (n=25) as Asian/Pacific Islander, 11% (n=22) as Black, 10% (n=19) as Hispanic and 5% (n=1) as American Indian/Alaskan Native. Seventy-five percent (n=150) of respondents were female, and 16% (n=32) were male. It is unknown if these racial/ethnic and gender disparities are truly indicative of the PHSC membership – of PHSC's more than 4,000 members, approximately 5% of the membership responded to the survey; however, we do know that this percentage reflects nationwide racial/ethnic and gender trends in the public health field. Increasing the numbers of minorities and males in the PHSC membership is not only of great concern to this committee but also reflects a change needed in the public health workforce.

Other student demographics and trends reflected in the survey include: 78% (n=155) of the respondents are full-time students, 9% (n=19) are part-time and 3% (n=6) have graduated; 83% percent (n=165) now attend or previously attended accredited schools of public health and/or public health programs, and 3% (n=6) stated that their school's accreditation was pending at the time of the survey. There were a total of 51 departments represented from 82 different schools/programs across the nation. Of the 14-degree programs represented, 50% (n=99) of

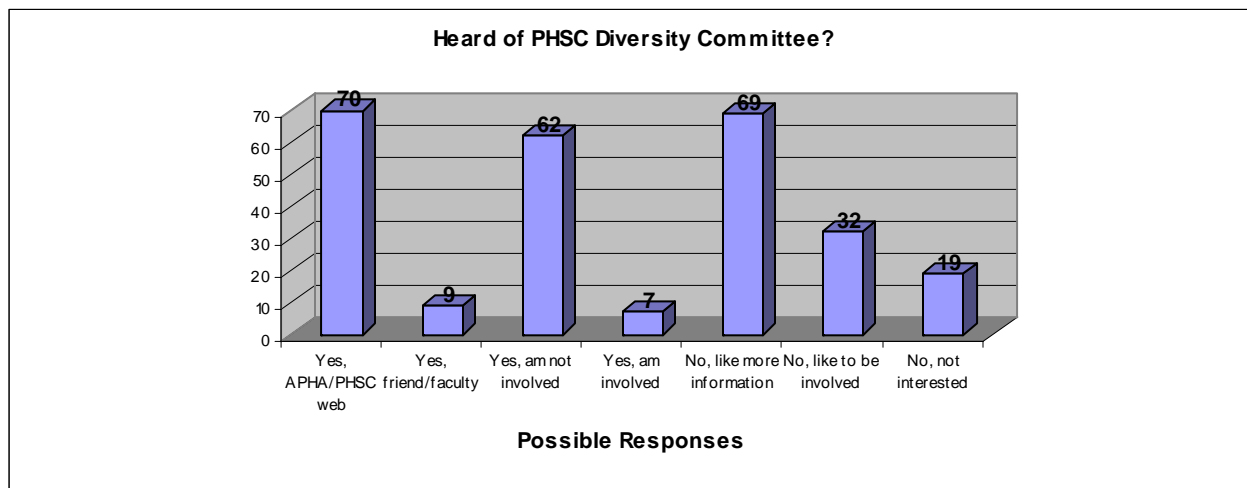
respondents are enrolled in a MPH program, 22% (n=44) in a PhD program, 5% (n=9) in a dual degree program, 4% (n=8) in a DrPh program and 3% (n=7) in a BA/BS undergraduate program. This number of undergraduate respondents indicates that the PHSC should work to include more undergraduate students in our efforts. Targeting undergraduates is actually a very important step toward increasing the number of students who are aware of the public health sciences, and may subsequently enroll in graduate programs in public health.

Diversity Campaign

Prior to the development of this survey, the Diversity Committee began to envision a blueprint of the first campaign. The campaign would include contacting student public health organizations urging them to encourage their members to 1) become a student member of APHA and 2) become involved in the PHSC. Each of these organizations would be:

- Provided with the PHSC’s mission, vision and current programs, including a list of PHSC committees and chairperson(s) contact information
- Invited to forward the campaign message to any public health listservs to which they subscribe (student- and/or organization-affiliated),
- Invited to contact PHSC leadership and work together to write an article or provide other PHSC/PHA information for the organization’s newsletter.
- Asked to add the PHSC link (www.phsc.org) to their current website(s).

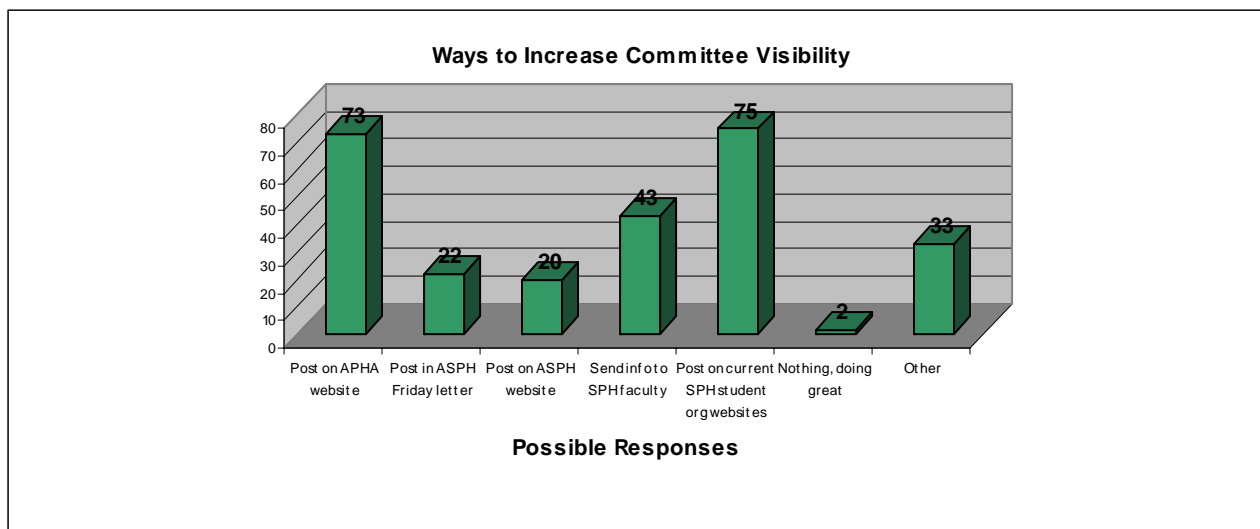
The survey results also indicate that another mechanism for increasing student diversity in PHSC is to engage faculty. Forty-three respondents suggest that the committee send information to faculty members to increase visibility of the PHSC Diversity Committee.



While 70 respondents state that they heard of the PHSC Diversity Committee on either the PHSC or APHA website, 73 respondents suggested the PHSC Diversity Committee post additional information on the APHA website. The Diversity Committee is in agreement with the PHSC Board in maintaining a strong student information component on the APHA website but also plans to increase awareness of the committee via public health listservs and promotion of PHSC activities via the PHSC Campus Liaison Program. The PHSC Campus Liaison Program identifies student leaders at schools and programs of public health and health-related disciplines

across the nation to be representatives of PHSC on their campuses. Facilitating communication between campus liaisons and local student organizations could increase the number of organizations that begin collaborating with PHSC. Once students are aware of the PHSC, we believe they will join and become actively involved.

The Diversity Committee is particularly interested in enhancing the visibility of the PHSC website, particularly because 69 respondents stated that they had never heard of the PHSC Diversity Committee and would like more information. This response confirms the need for an active outreach campaign to students and student organizations. When asked the best way to increase visibility of the PHSC Diversity Committee, 75 survey respondents suggested that PHSC should post a web link on student organization websites in Schools of Public Health.



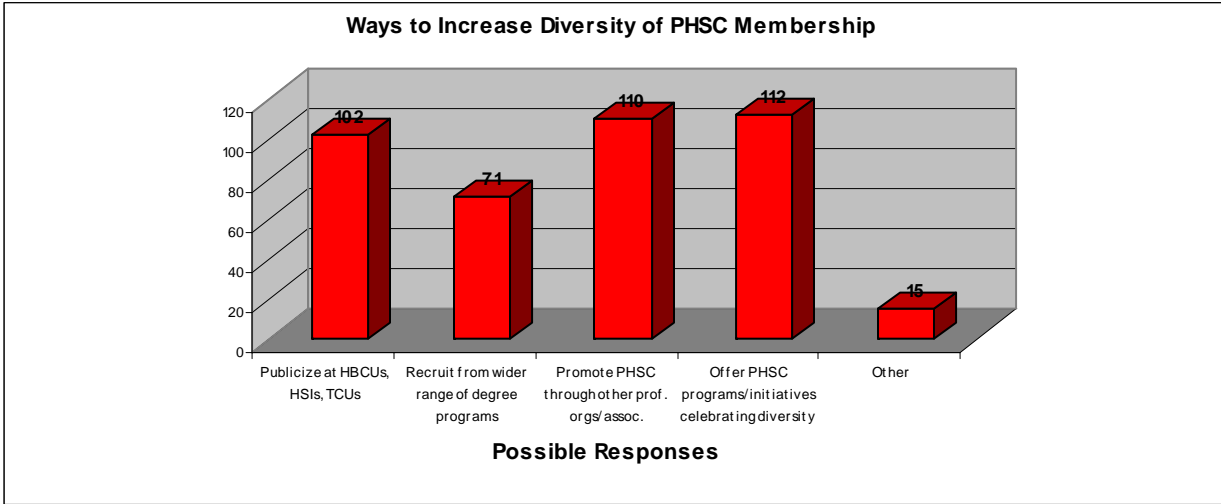
Diversity Committee Work

110 survey respondents stated that the best way to increase the diversity of the PHSC membership would be to promote PHSC through other professional organizations and associations. Not only does this finding give more credence to the previously mentioned campaign, but also to current efforts underway. The Diversity Committee leadership recently drafted a letter to all APHA Affiliates requesting their assistance in promoting PHSC and APHA to their student members.

A key finding of the survey, advocated by the majority of survey respondents (n=112), is that PHSC could best increase diversity by offering programs/initiatives that truly celebrate diversity. Before the Diversity Committee can be responsive to this suggestion from our membership, the aspects of diversity most important to the membership must be identified. The two most frequently stated areas of diversity that respondents would like to see addressed by PHSC include culture (n=137) and ethnicity (n=135); 102 respondents suggest that the PHSC increase its visibility at Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Tribal Colleges/Universities (TCUs) The Diversity Committee has initiated contact with the APHA Black Young Public Health Network (the Network) to access their detailed list of HBCU public health student organizations. Collaboration between our two organizations

continues. The Diversity Committee will also be contact HSIIs and TCUs in the coming months. The PHSC Diversity Campaign has also been sent to all 16 APHA Caucuses and the Society of Public Health Education (SOPHE) student listserv.

44 members stated their interest in serving on the Diversity Committee!



As the newest addition to the PHSC, the Diversity Committee provides leadership, coordination, and member involvement to a new generation of public health students, who will take their place in the diverse public health field of tomorrow. Because this committee not only strives to increase and maintain a diverse membership but also a diverse board of leaders, the PHSC Diversity Committee cannot work in isolation from the other PHSC committees. Much of the work of this Committee overlaps with that of the PHSC Membership Committee and PHSC Campus Liaison Program. Five survey respondents suggested that other PHSC Committees incorporate diversity in their efforts, and 28 state that current PHSC materials/website should be more culturally relevant and appropriate. The Diversity Committee is committed to realizing a more visible connection between all PHSC Committees in areas of diversity and to enhancing the cultural relevance of all PHSC materials and web information. The Diversity Committee is also assembling an ad-hoc committee of PHSC Board members to facilitate internal collaboration.

Perhaps the most exciting result of our survey was a response from 44 members stating their interest in serving on the Diversity Committee. All those who expressed an interest have been personally contacted by Committee leadership and invited to work together to turn the challenges identified in this survey into opportunities for growth.

THANKS to all of our members who took the time to complete and return the survey. Your active involvement demonstrates your interest and commitment to addressing, increasing and sustaining the diversity of this national student organization. The Committee welcomes your

feedback and suggestions; for more information about the PHSC Diversity Committee and how to join, contact diversity@phsc.org today!