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Lack of Men of Color Graduating From the Health Professions Declared a Crisis by Association CEOs

Washington, D.C., May 15th, 2023—The Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP) has declared the low number of historically underrepresented men of color (HUMOC) graduating and entering the health care professions a national crisis. Representing CEOs of national academic health professions associations, FASHP has released a [consensus statement](#) addressing this critical issue. FASHP is calling on local and national educational, health care, governmental and community leaders to raise awareness regarding this critical issue and to identify barriers and provide resources to dramatically increase the number of men of color graduating from the academic health professions.

“We must urgently join forces with P-16 education, government, health care, corporations and other leaders to remove pathway barriers and adopt robust strategies that facilitate a significant increase in the number of historically underrepresented men of color entering and graduating from dental, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, social work and other health professions schools,” said Dr. Karen P. West, Secretary of FASHP and President and CEO of the American Dental Education Association (ADEA).

“The development of a diverse healthcare workforce is a critical goal for all FASHP member associations,” added FASHP President Dawn Mancuso, MAM, CAE, FASAE, Executive Vice President and CEO of the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry. “Our patients deserve the best care we can provide, and that requires a concerted, broader effort to motivate attention and activate solutions.”

The long-running sentiment expressed by FASHP CEOs is consistent with two landmark reports, [In the Nation's Compelling Interest: Ensuring Diversity in the Health-Care Workforce](#) (2004) and [Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions](#) (2004), which state that more racially and ethnically diverse health care professionals are essential for meeting future health care needs; tied to improved patient satisfaction, increased access to quality health care and reduced health disparities; and critical for elevating the nation's responsiveness to the health care needs of a society with rapidly changing demographics.

[American Dental Association](#) data reveal that 3,223 (48.4%) of the 6,665 2021 U.S. dental school graduates were men. Of these, only 431 (6.46%) were HUMOC (263 Hispanic/Latino men, 147 Black/African American men, 18 American Indian/Alaska Native men, and 3 Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander men). Additionally, the two Historically Black Colleges and

Universities' dental schools, Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry and Howard University College of Dentistry, accounted for 36 (24.5%) of the Black/African American men graduates, and the University of Puerto Rico School of Dental Medicine accounted for 18 (6.8%) of the Hispanic/Latino men.

Similar disparities exist across the academic health professions. For example, the [Association of American Medical Colleges](#) (AAMC) 2021-2022 data show that of the 21,051 U.S. medical school graduates, 10,268 (48.8%) were men. Of these, only 1,251 were HUMOC (664 Hispanic/Latino men, 565 Black/African American men, 13 American Indian/Alaska Native men, and 9 Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander men). To tackle disparities, the AAMC launched the [Action Collaborative for Black Men in Medicine](#) in 2020, which includes partnerships that focus on systemic solutions to increase the representation and success of Black men interested in and entering medicine.

Additionally, the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine held a 2022 virtual [roundtable on Black men and women](#) in science, engineering and medicine to identify policies and build better pathways for Black undergraduates to pursue science, engineering and medicine. With a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), ADEA hosted a [two-day summit](#) in August 2022 with 83 representatives from across the health professions to start developing solutions to the paucity of HUMOC in the health professions. Dr. David Satcher, 16th Surgeon General of the United States and former President of Morehouse College and Meharry Medical College, was a featured guest and galvanized the group to act. He noted that although the Summit focused on men of color in the health professions, “any coalition must involve women as well. Holistically, we need to be working together.” Dr. Satcher further explained that encouragement for boys of color must start as early as elementary and high school, noting, “Right now, we need to invest in their excitement about learning, so students invest more in themselves. We must ask, ‘How can I make sure our students care about learning?’”

According to Dr. Andrew T. Maccabe, CEO of the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges, the lack of men of color entering health professions schools is systemic. Dr. Maccabe stated, “A lack of awareness, marginalization, educational disparities, systemic racism and unconscious bias has led to these continuing inequalities and a lack of HUMOC matriculating and graduating in the academic health professions, which has now reached crisis proportions.” Expanding on the issue, he shared that the 2021 graduating class of veterinary medical students included only 0.6% Black/African American men, 1.4% Hispanic/Latino men, and 0.2% American Indian/Alaska Native men.

The low numbers of HUMOC health care providers affect not only communities of color, but the entire nation's well-being. As noted in the [FASHP consensus statement](#), this lack of diversity has significant consequences for public health, education, economic stability and the availability and quality of health care treatment for all U.S. communities. There is also a need to significantly increase the number of HUMOC graduating with Ph.D.s and doctorate degrees in public health. The [Association of Schools & Programs of Public Health](#) (ASPPH) 2021-2022 data show that 230 of the 824 U.S. public health doctoral graduates were men. Of the total graduates, only 2.5% were Black/African American men, 2.1% Hispanic/Latino men, and 0.1% American Indian/Alaska Native men. Dr. Laura Magaña, ASPPH President and CEO, notes that “these statistics are unacceptable and solidify our resolve to implement impactful solutions around engaging our members towards a more inclusive and equitable public health workforce.”

Dr. Dennis Mitchell, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for University Life at Columbia University, is a dentist and was instrumental in establishing what is currently known as the

[Summer Health Professions Education Program \(SHPEP\)](#), jointly administered by ADEA and AAMC. Supported by a generous grant from the RWJF, SHPEP, formerly known as the Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (SMDEP), is a six-week summer enrichment program for marginalized and socioeconomically and educationally disadvantaged college students interested in the health professions. Columbia University is one of 12 program sites. A 2015 [Mathematica study](#) commissioned by RWJF showed that the likelihood of students in SMDEP with a dental component were 10.5 percentage points more likely to enroll in dental school, and students in the program with a medical track were 9 percentage points more likely to enroll in medical school students than students not participating in SMDEP pathway program. Echoing Dr. Satcher's sentiments, Dr. Mitchell, who also serves on the National Association of Chief Diversity Officers in Higher Education Board of Directors, added, "Pathway programs such as SHPEP make a difference, but to truly make a difference, we need more of these programs and more of these interventions throughout the P-16 student lifecycle for boys and men of color."

The FASHP CEOs agree that more academic enrichment interventions are needed to increase the representation of all historically underrepresented and marginalized groups in the health professions. However, FASHP believes there is an urgent need to call attention to the significant deficiency of HUMOC entering and graduating from health professions schools in comparison to other marginalized student populations.

In pursuit of greater collective action, FASHP is establishing a coalition with associations across the academic health professions, health care institutions, and health professional organizations to tackle the longstanding problem of the low numbers of HUMOC at health professions schools. FASHP plans to expand its work to galvanize P-16 governmental, health care, corporate, foundation, health care research, community and other leaders to develop short and long-term strategies with focused action plans. FASHP leaders realize this is a complex problem and are energized to address the challenge.

They are further inspired to action by Dr. Satcher's parting words at the Summit, "We need people who care enough to know enough and have the courage to do enough to persevere until the job is done!"

FASHP Member Organizations

American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Dental Education Association
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Chiropractic Colleges
Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of University Programs in Health Administration
Council on Social Work Education
PA Education Association

Liaison Members:

Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges
American Council of Academic Physical Therapy
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association

American Psychological Association