

Diversity Enhancement in Kinesiology

Mary E. Rudisill
Guest Associate Editor

The articles published in this issue of *Kinesiology Review* are based on presentations made at the American Kinesiology Association (AKA) Leadership Workshop held on January 26–28, 2013 in Orlando, Florida. The theme for the conference—*Diversity Enhancement in Kinesiology*—was selected with two main goals in mind: 1) to raise awareness about the importance of diversity in kinesiology, and 2) to motivate discussion and action toward creating more diversity within kinesiology to help advance the field and the education of our students.

The desire for diversity at university and college campuses has continued to increase over the past decade. This quest for diversity is founded on the belief that those trained through a wide exposure of ideas and perspectives are better educated. In the document, *The Compelling Need for Diversity in Higher Education*, the University of Michigan reports that students who experienced the most racial and ethnic diversity in classroom settings and in informal interactions with peers showed the greatest engagement in active thinking processes, growth in intellectual engagement and motivation, and growth in intellectual and academic skills. Results from the study also revealed that patterns of racial segregation and separation could be broken by diversity experiences in higher education (<http://www.vpcomm.umich.edu/admissions/legal/expert/>).

While the vast majority of Kinesiology programs across the nation have adopted the concept that a racially and ethnically diverse student body and faculty are critical to providing a quality education, the unfortunate scenario is that there are very few racially and ethnically diverse Kinesiology programs. Historically underrepresented groups are missing on university campuses in the U.S. These groups are also missing from Kinesiology programs as well. The AKA workshop presentations, and the discussions that evolved during our meeting, lead us to believe that if we all worked together we can influence positive change in our field.

We have a unique situation in higher education that allows us to “change our world.” Diversity in higher education and particularly in Kinesiology is an accomplishable goal, if we prioritize it and implement effective

strategies. Some programs are experiencing success in becoming more diverse. Universities do have the academic freedom to determine the student body makeup necessary to fulfill their own missions. Recruiting, retaining, and adequately preparing students from underrepresented groups into Kinesiology for graduate study and higher education will ultimately result in more diversity among faculty in our programs. From that growth and change, more administrators and leaders from such groups should emerge—if we create the opportunities. The articles in this issue address the issue of diversity in our field and ways to enhance it. The articles are thought provoking and inspiring, and were written to generate a renewed, strategic effort across the field to enhance our diversity, particularly for those who are underrepresented.

It is appropriate that the first article in this issue addresses “Why We Should Care About Diversity in Kinesiology.” Authors Brooks, Harrison Jr., Norris, and Norwood provide insightful information about the importance of diversity. They include the American Council on Higher Education’s statement “On the Importance of Diversity in Higher Education,” stating why most colleges and universities believe that diversity in their faculty and student bodies is important for providing a quality education. The authors address how diversity enriches learning, in addition to the challenges associated with diversity and stereotyped preconceptions, and the fostering of mutual respect that results from racially and ethnically diverse college campuses.

The second article in this issue pertains to theoretical and contemporary considerations associated with diversity enhancement in Kinesiology. Authors Hodge and Corbett offer a compelling argument that we need to change our course of action in Kinesiology and engage in an effective strategic effort to enhance our diversity, particularly with those groups who are underrepresented. The authors present a framework of organizational socialization as it relates to Black and Hispanic professionals in Kinesiology. Data that highlights the status of underrepresented faculty in academe is presented, as well as an examination of the socialization experiences of such faculty in Kinesiology programs and departments. Challenges associated with recruiting, hiring, retaining, securing tenured status, and advancing Black and Hispanic faculty at leading doctorate-granting institutions in the United States are also discussed. This article sets the stage

Rudisill is with the School of Kinesiology, Auburn University, Auburn, AL.

for the remaining articles in this issue that offer useful information and best practices for enhancing diversity in Kinesiology programs.

Authors Lowrie and Robinson present useful information related to “Creating an Inclusive Culture and Climate that Supports Excellence in Kinesiology.” Whether you are recruiting and retaining students, faculty, or administrators from underrepresented groups, ensuring success requires planning and action. This article focuses on advancing diversity and inclusion through an institutional change framework. The authors remind us that disparities still exist in higher education and yet our students on college campuses need to and should be exposed to diversity during their educational experience. An essential component to this training means that departments in Kinesiology must recruit and retain faculty from diverse backgrounds to meet the needs of their students.

The next article, “Undergraduate Preparedness and Partnerships to Enhance Diversity in Kinesiology,” highlights actual pipeline programs designed to prepare students for study in Kinesiology and the allied health fields. Authors Gregory-Bass, Williams, Blount, and Peters promote embedding diversity and inclusion into Kinesiology by developing partnerships with educational pipeline programs designed to enhance opportunities for racial/ethnic minority and disadvantaged students to enter careers in the health professions and health sciences. These programs provide great opportunities for graduate student recruitment in Kinesiology. The authors report the historical impact of STEM pipeline programs and the diversity impact on partnering institutions. They present “best-fit” models and showcase the roles of all who benefit from a community thriving with diversity: the students, faculty, and the governing institution. The article discusses the sustainability of pipeline programs and how they encourage student preparation and performance. The authors introduce specific strategies related to undergraduate student preparedness and developing partnerships to enhance diversity in Kinesiology.

Organizational diversity is a goal of the AKA and other organizations and agencies associated with Kinesiology. Currently the leadership in Kinesiology across the

nation is not diverse with respect to ethnicity and race. Authors Keith and Russell discuss ways to create organizational diversity and highlight models of best practice in the fifth article in this issue. The authors identify specific programs and their practices that are successfully serving students and faculty of underrepresented groups in Kinesiology. Moreover, the need for providing quality leadership development opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds is stressed.

In the final article in this issue, “Summary and Conclusions: How Can We Help Enhance Diversity in Kinesiology,” authors Hodge, Brooks, and Harrison Jr. summarize and draw conclusions related to the current situation in the field of Kinesiology as it relates to diversity. They offer recommendations to increase diversity for those underrepresented in Kinesiology and across many college campuses.

The articles presented in this thematic edition of *Kinesiology Review* do not address all issues related to enhancing diversity in Kinesiology. In fact, we have intentionally focused on groups that have been historically underrepresented. The authors have provided clear evidence of the importance and relevance of our efforts in enhancing diversity in the field, in addition to examples and strategies to consider as we move toward a profession rich in diversity.

In closing, I want to thank all of the authors for their important contributions to this edition of *Kinesiology Review*. As a past board member for AKA with Native American ancestry and the current chair of the AKA Diversity Taskforce, I want to thank the AKA Executive Directors and Board for realizing the importance of this topic and hosting the 2013 Diversity Workshop. I would also like to thank the workshop organizing committee for their role in helping to organize the AKA Department Head workshop and to the workshop participants for their involvement and dedication to advancing the field of Kinesiology. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Samuel Hodge for his expertise and leadership with this thematic edition, and to Drs. Samuel Hodge, Dana Brooks, and Louis Harrison Jr. for serving as manuscript reviewers for this AKA special edition.