Recruitment, Retention and Mentoring of Minorities into the Fields of Communication Sciences and Disorders

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The American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) in 2014 represented 181,893 speech, language and hearing specialists and aspiring professionals. Of that number, the proportion of male constituents was 4.9%. The number of ethnic minority constituents was 7.8% The number of ethnic minorities in the US population was 27.6% according to the 2010 Census.

Recruitment and Retention

Diversity in higher education brings benefits to the classroom (Carnevale & Fry, 2000, Diversity Digest, 2000; Rudenstine, 2001) and increases the quality of learning (Rudenstine, 2001; Smith, 1991). Diversity in the college classroom promotes intellectual development (Knefelkamp & David-Lang, 2000), reduces students' level of racial prejudice (Chang, 2000; Diversity Digest, 2000), increases their tolerance towards racial and gender differences (Diversity Digest, 2000), and facilitates students' explorations of diverse perspectives (Carnevale & Fry, 2000; Diversity Digest, 2000).

One of the realities confronting the United States is that a major proportion of racial and ethnic minority students in the U. S. have unequal access to higher education (Ntiri, 2001). Many minority students experience a variety of personal, environmental, and institutional barriers that result in limited or no access to college and university education (Opp, 2001; Thomason & Thurber, 1999). Some of these students have difficulties that include financial difficulty, inadequate support systems and low scores on college prep entrance exams.

Financial need and academic under-preparedness

Limitations of financial assistance can be a major reason that minority students choose to attend college (Stewart, Russell, & Wright, 1997). As financial assistance increases so too does minority enrollment in postsecondary education (Lee, 1991). If an institution is committed to recruiting and retaining its minority enrollment; then it must find ways to provide financial assistance to students when making admission decisions (Thomason & Thurber, 1999).

Some minority students are academically under-prepared for college (Simon, 1993; Thomason & Thurber, 1999). Some of these students have attended high-poverty schools that lacked adequate resources (Haycock, 2001). The situation is exacerbated by a tendency in some public schools for minority students to be placed in general education coursework where they are less likely to be challenged academically. In schools where students are not challenged academically, the students appear to exhibit lower educational aspirations (Ntiri, 2001).

Traditional recruitment plans are not always sufficient when seeking to recruit and to retain minority students (Lee, 1991; Thomason & Thurber, 1999). It is important that any institution or profession seeking to attract minorities research and investigate evidence-based strategies for attracting minority students (Chambliss, 2000; Dumas-Hines, 2001; Diversity Pipeline Alliance, 2002).

One strategy that has proven efficacious is that of targeting males. Academic programs need to be aware of gender in communication and of the value of having both genders represented. In the October 2013 edition *of The ASHA Leader,* one of the articles addressed the topic of the disproportionately low number of males in the fields of communication sciences and disorders.

The lack of males, particularly African American and Latino males in the urban setting is as concerning, as is the growing shortage of SLPs. Not all male college students are cut-out to be engineers or business owners. Perhaps more importantly, communications is consistently one of the most popular majors in the United States (with a starting pay of $30k according to CNN, 2014).

One particularly bold strategy involves, targeting and recruiting in Engineering and Neuroscience Departments. The recruiting should emphasize that speech-language pathology and audiology are essentially "applied neuroscience" fields. Additionally, recruitment can target Departments of Linguistics, English, and Education. When recruiting males, some areas that might be of interest to discuss include: pay; fields within the professions include service delivery and or research to all age groups, not just pediatrics; growth projections; and potential for career growth. It is also an important idea to target incoming freshmen who are usually shopping for a major.

Recruiting and retaining the best and the brightest

The fields within the professions of communication sciences and disorders are evolving by leaps and bounds. Evidence-based learning strategies and interventions, technologies, telepractice, classroom-based interventions, consultative interventions and family-based interventions are now standard. There are no one-size-fits-all articulation models. If one is not knowledgeable about structural anatomy and physiology of the upper and lower respiratory systems and phonological system, phonological disorders, etiological factors related to the sound(s) in-error, developmental sound acquisition models, and their local norm-based references, he/she should not be providing interventions for persons who with speech sound impairments. Thus, the need for the best and the brightest are needed to become researcher, practitioners, professors, rehabilitation specialists and administrators within the professions.

There is a severe shortage of PhD professors who want to and/or are willing to teach in academic programs that offer CSD degrees. Approximately 65% of PhD graduates in CSD take faculty positions. There are approximately165 new PhD students enrolled in CSD programs annually. There are approximately 112 earned research doctorates granted annually in CSD. (ASHA trends, 2014).

The use of fiber optic endoscopy for the assessment of swallowing function(FEES) was first reported by Langmore et al. (1988) and has been addressed in ASHA practice policy documents since 1992 (ASHA, 1992a, 2002, 2004a, 2004b).The implementation of the FEES procedure by SLPs requires advanced knowledge and specific skills for the assessment of the swallow and for the response to therapeutic maneuvers and interventions to improve the swallow (ASHA, 2004b).

Persons who are making decisions related to assessment of swallowing function can be making life and death decisions.

Older adults (65+ years) comprise the fastest growing segment of the world's population, with the oldest old (85+) increasing most rapidly. This tremendous growth in the number of older adults translates to an increased incidence and prevalence of individuals with dementia.

As recently as 30 years ago, dementia was unfamiliar to most Americans, including SLPs (Bayles & Tomoeda, 2014). By year 2030, 20% of population in US will be over 65 years old.

SLPs who will be treating, researching, teaching and interacting with this population need to be knowledgeable about the disease and it various stages, manifestations, the medications, and other rehabilitative alliances.

Every year, at least 1.7 million TBIs occur in the United States (across all age groups), and they are a contributing factor in about a third (30.5%) of all injury-related deaths (Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, 2010). Athletes who sustain concussions may require services from SLPs because of residual cognitive-communication impairments.

Research has shown that one of the most effective strategies to increase the success of underrepresented groups in graduate schools and entering professions is a mentoring program.

Since minority students are more attracted to campuses where there is a visible minority cohort, it is a sound strategy to encourage other minority students to assist with outreach at any recruitment event (Lowenstein, 1997; Stewart, Russell, & Wright, 1997; Talbert, Larke, & Jones, 1999).

Mentorship

A mentor is an individual with expertise who can help develop the career of a mentee. Serving as a mentor can provide benefits for both the mentee and the mentor. The mentor invests his/her time and efforts in the development of human potential (the mentee). Some of the benefits associated with the mentoring relationship can include satisfaction from helping to develop the mentee, acquisition of knowledge related to issues or perspectives. Research has consistently shown that mentored individuals are generally more satisfied and committed to their professions than non-mentored individuals (Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003).

ASHA's general rules for mentors and mentees

First and foremost is the need for confidentiality. If a mentor wishes to develop a trusting relationship with a mentee, it is critical that confidentiality becomes the standard. If the mentee gives the mentor permission to share information, then the information is not deemed confidential. The mentor must remember that any information that is shared with an expectation of confidence should not be shared.

Secondly, there must be a no-fault-end–of-relationship. It is rare that people want to end a mentoring relationship. Both parties should try to resolve concerns and conflicts early on, so problems that can derail progress don't have a chance to become larger. If the relationship comes to end, both parties need to be professional and discuss the termination.

Lastly on the ASHA list of general rules for mentors and mentees is the need for both to participate in a monitoring and evaluation process. Mentors and mentees should create simple benchmarks for evaluating the success of the mentoring relationship. Check-in with each other; do not make assumptions about the other persons' perceptions of the relationship.

Clinical Fellowship supervisors

In accordance with ASHA's guidelines, Clinical Fellowship (CF) supervisors or mentors of speech-language pathologists should be familiar with the obligations as described in the ASHA Code of Ethics and certification standards, as well as with all supervisory obligations in the state licensure laws. Ethical violations on the part of the CF supervisor can include such practices as: arbitrary termination of the CF mentor-supervisory relationship; failure to establish outcomes and performance levels or failure to do so in a timely fashion: failure to complete and sign the CF report or failure to do so in a timely fashion: withholding paperwork for the benefit of the employer and to the detriment of the clinical fellow and failure to provide the required amount of supervision.

It is the responsibility of CF supervisors or mentors of speech-language pathologists to be vigilant as it relates to ethical dilemmas. The mentoring speech-language pathologist serves as a role model for the beginning professional. The management style that is provided to the mentee can have a lasting effect.

Conclusion

There are shortages of males and ethnic minorities constitutes of ASHA. Males constitute approximately 4.9% of the constituents and aspiring professionals and ethnic minorities constitute about 7.8% of the constituents. In the U. S. population the proportion of ethnic minority members was 27.6%. (U. S. Census Bureau 2010).

Diversity in higher education brings benefits to the classroom. It increases the quality of learning and promotes intellectual development and facilitates students' explorations of diverse perspectives. Despite the known benefits to a diverse learning environment, there exist two major limitations when recruiting minority students: lack of financial assistance and inadequate academic preparation of some students.

It is important that any institution or profession seeking to attract minorities research and investigate evidence-based strategies for attracting minority students. When recruiting males, it is advisable to recruit in Departments of Engineering, Neuroscience, English, Linguistics and Education.

Once the recruitment process has been successful, the mentoring process needs to immediately kick-in. A mentor is an individual with expertise who can help develop the career of a mentee. Research has consistently shown that mentored individuals are generally more satisfied and committed to their professions than non-mentored individuals.

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