Navigating Diversity and Inclusion in Veterinary Medicine

Greenhill, Lisa M., Davis, Kauline Cipriani, Lowrie, Patricia M., Amass, Sandra F.

Published by Purdue University Press

Greenhill, Lisa M., et al.
Navigating Diversity and Inclusion in Veterinary Medicine.
Purdue University Press, 2013.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/24858.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/24858

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=924341
Chapter 2
The Aerial Mosaic: A Historical Picture of Diversity in Veterinary Medicine

Billy E. Hooper, DVM, MS, PhD, DACVP

Aerial mosaics are individual snapshots that are brought together to form a continuous representation of a broad area (Maps for America).

Our changing views and actions with regard to diversity can hardly be understood except within the broad context of changes and actions within our society as a whole. We find the basic principle underlying the belief in diversity stated in the July 4, 1776 Declaration of Independence, which states that “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal” (US Declaration of Independence, 1). Today, we would more likely say “that all persons are created equal,” with the basic premise being that all human beings have equal value and are deserving of equal respect and treatment. If that basic truth had held and been fully accepted through the ensuing years, there would be no need to address a history of diversity as we do in this publication. However, fourteen years after declaring that self-evident truth, the US Constitution stated that for purposes of representation and taxation, persons within an entire race would be equal to only “three fifths of all other persons” (US Const. art. I, § 2, cl. 3.).

The restoration of that race to basic equality required the removal of slavery by the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 (US Const. art. XIII, § 1.), the granting
of citizenship to the previous slaves by the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 (US Const. art. XIV, § 1.), and granting them the right to vote by the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 (US Const. art. XV, § 1.). The veterinary profession, which was only becoming established in the latter half of the nineteenth century, played no part in any of these actions. Yet the profession has been saddled with the remnants of that legacy throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, throughout the twentieth century, and continues as we address the problems of racial diversity well into the twenty-first century.

While the Fifteenth Amendment extended voting rights to every US citizen based on “race, color, or previous condition of servitude” (U.S. Const. art. XV, § 1.), one-half of the US population was not included. Another fifty years passed before voting rights were extended to women by the Nineteenth Amendment on August 18, 1920 (U.S. Const. art. [XIX]). This legacy of discrimination was to continue for another fifty years. Women were not equally represented in veterinary schools and colleges until the 1980s, and not equally represented in the profession until the twenty-first century.

In 1954, the US Supreme Court removed the last vestige of segregation in the K-12 school system, and the group further prohibited the states from denying equal protection of the laws to any person. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act extended protection to two additional groups of people when it prohibited discrimination based on “race, color, religion, sex or national origin” (42 USC § 2000e-2). Persons with disabilities were the last group to be brought under the protection of the law when the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 established a clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities” (42 USC § 12102).

As the courts and society continued to extend basic human rights to all individuals, the veterinary profession followed by slowly changing the profile of the profession to include all protected classes. This effort was hampered by the profession’s self-perception that the practice of veterinary medicine required certain abilities possessed by only select individuals, mainly Caucasian/White males. This worked primarily against women in the first part of the twentieth century, and it continues to work against those with physical or mental disabilities. Its impact on racial and ethnic minorities has been significantly magnified by the lack of equal economic and educational opportunity of those individuals in the larger society.

Promotion and achievement of diversity in the veterinary profession did not begin until the start of the twentieth century and made extremely slow progress during the next fifty years. Significant progress did not begin until after World
War II, and large gains were not made until the last quarter of the twentieth century. The greatest progress in racial equality is occurring in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The major milestones and achievements will be described in the following brief history of veterinary medicine’s effort to identify and promote the diversity implied in its “Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics,” which requires every veterinarian to follow the Golden Rule and treat every individual as they would wish to be treated.

Gender

The first woman to graduate from a college of veterinary medicine was Aleen Cust, who graduated from the New Veterinary College in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1900. She was not allowed to take the examination of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons until 1922 because of her gender (Nolen 2011). The first woman to graduate from a US veterinary college was Mignon Nicholson, who graduated from McKillip Veterinary College in Chicago, Illinois, in 1903 (McPheron 2007). Two more women graduated in 1910, and by 1940, a total of thirty-six women became veterinarians in the US (Calhoun and Houpt 1976). In the 1940s, eight of the ten still-existing schools and colleges graduated another ninety-seven women, and one woman graduated from one of the seven new schools (Tuskegee) formed after World War II. Even with the seven new schools and colleges graduating students in the 1950s, only another 124 women graduated from the seventeen US veterinary medical schools and colleges.

A “Survey of Veterinary Medical Education” in 1958 addressed fifty-two basic questions regarding the profession, with sixteen of these related to applicants, source of applicants, admission policies, and graduates (American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education and Association of Deans of Colleges of Veterinary Medicine 1958). Prepared as a petition to the 86th Congress for federal support of veterinary education, it did not include a single reference or comment to either gender or racial composition of student bodies or the profession. Twelve years later, another study, “Veterinary Medical Education and Manpower,” devoted two pages to the characteristics of applicants and students. Pennell and Eyestone (1970) noted that in 1969–70 women constituted 8.85 percent of 4,861 students enrolled, and the authors called attention to the rapid changes by stating that “Women continue to enlarge the student ranks . . . including 146 in their first year, 114 second year, 92 third year, and 78 fourth year” (Pennell and Eyestone 1970, 23).

By 1970, all of eighteen US veterinary medical schools and colleges had graduated at least one woman, and the discrimination against women at the time of
admission was beginning to disappear. All residue of discrimination against admission of women fell in 1971 when the Comprehensive Health Manpower Training Act provided that the federal government may make no loans, grants, or interest subsidy payments to any school of veterinary medicine that discriminates on the basis of sex in the admissions process (461). The Higher Education Act of 1972 went further and prohibited “sex discrimination in all federally assisted education programs” and amended “certain portions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include women” (Larsen 1997, 68). The net result was that female graduates increased from 464 in the 1960s to 2,173 in the 1970s, 7,766 in the 1980s, and 13,210 in the 1990s (Hooper 1997).

In August 1973, the Association for Women Veterinarians did a survey of the 1,254 female veterinarians who could be identified at that time. The women self-identified thirty-seven different primary veterinary medical activities for their professional practice, and almost all were working full time. Only 10 percent of the 833 women who responded were not working in veterinary medicine, and half of those were inactive because of family responsibilities. Most of the other inactive respondents had retired because of age or illness (Smith, J. M., pers. comm. to Jack J. Stockton). This was an important contribution in countering the image that women in the profession would soon drop out of the profession and would have taken the place of a man who would have been a full-time veterinarian.

Even with the rapidly expanding enrollments of women in the 1970s, there remained a strong element of discrimination against them. One of the special recommendations of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1976 was that “Schools should also clearly assume responsibility through policy statements and informal faculty pressures to control disparaging remarks about women made by faculty in official school contexts such as the classroom or laboratory. Negative faculty behavior toward women students encourages and sanctions such behavior on the part of their male peers. Finally, much can be accomplished simply by dispelling rumors that women get special treatment in admissions and that they are not really qualified but got in ‘just because they’re girls’” (Urban and Rural Systems Associates 1976, 71).

With the very rapid change of gender in admissions in the 1980s, the profession was beginning a shift from a male-dominated profession to a female-dominated profession. The gender distribution of applicants for admission crossed in 1983, when there were 2,846 female applicants and 2,834 male applicants. Females were not admitted in greater numbers than males until the following year, when 1,176 females and 1,153 males were admitted (Tasker 1990). The trend lines established in the 1970s and 1980s have continued. Yet the number
of female veterinarians did not exceed the number of male veterinarians until 2009. This gender shift has generated great concern for recruitment of male applicants. Male students have rapidly become a minority population in veterinary schools and colleges, and men are becoming a more significant minority in the veterinary profession. As early as 1993, this concern was stated: “During the past 20 years, the number of women entering veterinary medicine has grown from just a few to 61.6% of the entering classes in U.S. veterinary schools in 1990. Although the movement of women into veterinary medicine has had a very positive influence on the profession, a reasonable balance of men and women is believed to be desirable both for the profession and for society in general” (O’Neil et al. 1993, 117).

Racial/Ethnic Diversity

The first African American/Black person to receive a degree in veterinary medicine was Henry L. Stockton, Sr., who graduated from Harvard’s veterinary medical program in 1889 (Smith 2011). A second man, Augustus N. Lushington, graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1897. A total of fifty-six male African Americans/Blacks received a veterinary degree prior to 1949. Three of these were from two different schools and colleges prior to 1910, twenty-nine from seven schools and colleges between 1910 and 1934, and twenty-four from seven schools and colleges between 1935 and 1948 (Waddell 1983). The first two African American/Black women graduated in 1949: Jane Hinton from the University of Pennsylvania and Alfreda Johnson Webb in the first class to graduate from Tuskegee (Larsen 1997). With the exceptions of the publications by Waddell and Larsen, there is very little information regarding racial minorities prior to the formation of Tuskegee’s School of Veterinary Medicine in 1945. The most complete history of the development of the American veterinary profession does not include a single reference to either women or minorities in veterinary medicine, and it even states that Tuskegee’s School of Veterinary Medicine was established “as a direct outgrowth of the shift of emphasis on southern agriculture and the increased need for veterinary services” (Smithcors 1963, 658 ).

For African Americans/Blacks, and subsequently all other racial minorities, a most significant event in achieving veterinary medical diversity was the establishment of the School of Veterinary Medicine at Tuskegee Institute in 1945. The Legacy: A History of the Tuskegee University School of Veterinary Medicine by Eugene Adams is the most authoritative source of information on Tuskegee University
School of Veterinary Medicine’s founding and early years, and should be consulted by anyone interested in detailed information (1995). Formed on July 4, 1881 as the Tuskegee Normal School for Colored Teachers, it did not have a veterinary medicine focus until 1911 when Dr. James H. Bias, an African American/Black veterinary graduate of Ohio State, formed the equivalent of a Veterinary Science Department (W. C. Bowie pers. comm. with B. E. Hooper).

Dr. F. D. Patterson, a veterinary graduate of Iowa State University, became the president of Tuskegee Institute in 1935, and he served as president throughout the formation of the new School of Veterinary Medicine (Tuskegee University). In 1936, Dr. William Waddell, who headed Tuskegee’s veterinary division, began development of a ten-year-plan for a Negro Veterinary School (Waddell 1983). The first veterinary class entered in the fall of 1945 and graduated five members in 1949. The third dean of the school, Dr. Theodore Williams, who was well known for his efforts to increase the number of minorities in veterinary medicine, also was known for his support of women. He is remembered as having said “he would make sure that women had a fair chance at Tuskegee as long as he could do anything about it” (Larsen 1997, 37). Dr. Williams also served as president of the fledgling Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) from 1968–69 (Crown Publications 1987). The fourth dean of the school, Dr. Walter Bowie, played a central role in the expansion of the program to recruit and educate minority veterinarians through his efforts as the only African American/Black dean of a veterinary college working within the AAVMC. The school was renamed the Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine, Nursing and Allied Health in 1996 to promote the “One Medicine” concept of interrelating animal and human health issues (American Veterinary Medical Association 2009).

In July 1970, the Bureau of Health Professions Education and Manpower Training conducted a special survey of the gender and racial composition of veterinary students in the eighteen US schools and colleges in academic year 1969–1970. They reported “a total of 127 nonwhite students were enrolled” (Pennell and Eyestone 1970, 24). Furthermore, “Tuskegee had 86 nonwhite students, or 78 percent of its total enrollment. Fewer than 10 nonwhite students were enrolled in any other college; two colleges had none. The 127 nonwhite students in all classes included 20 women; of the 34 nonwhite students in the first-year class, 6 are women” (Pennell and Eyestone 1970, 24).

Other than the formation of the Tuskegee’s School of Veterinary Medicine in 1945, the most significant events promoting racial diversity in veterinary medicine occurred in a four-year period from 1972 to 1975. Dr. Iverson Bell and Dr. Jack Stockton pooled their considerable talents to convene the first Minority Recruit-
ment Seminars/Workshops. Dr. Bowie joined the effort by hosting national conferences at Tuskegee. Dr. Stockton and Dr. Bowie then led the veterinary deans to appoint a Minority Affairs Committee in the AAVMC in the academic year 1974–75, for which Patricia Lowrie was chair.

The first Minority Recruitment Seminar/Workshop in the history of veterinary medicine was held at Purdue University in 1972, and it was attended by only Indiana veterinarians, faculty, students, and university administrators. The second, held in 1973, and those following were regional, with attendance from faculty and administrators at the veterinary schools and colleges in Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio. The first four were cochaired by Drs. Bell and Stockton. After the death of Dr. Bell in 1984, the fifth and sixth, in 1984 and 1985, were renamed the Iverson Bell Minority Seminar/Workshop on Minority Recruitment, both chaired by Dr. Stockton. The seventh Seminar/Workshop and all subsequent Iverson Bell symposia were national in scope and sponsored primarily by AAVMC.

In 1972, the Seminar/Workshop addressed an Indiana problem where African Americans/Blacks made up 12 percent of the state's population, 1.14 percent of Indiana veterinarians, and only 0.03 percent of the graduates in the first ten classes to graduate from Indiana’s School of Veterinary Medicine at Purdue University. Two major issues were addressed: the cause of the problem and the question of separate standards for minority students. With the considerable national experience that Dr. Bell accumulated through his work with the AVMA, and the considerable academic experience Dr. Stockton amassed with academic veterinary medicine, it was believed that the basic problem was “a sin of omission than commission.” The veterinary profession had simply not voiced a concern about multicultural representation, and the issue had been overlooked in all previous meetings of veterinary and academic associations. On the issue of separate standards it was believed that the position of the profession throughout the twentieth century had been a single standard for all graduates, and that this position was proper and should be continued through all proposed efforts at recruitment, retention, and graduation. The seminar participants proposed five basic actions: (1) increase efforts to attract and facilitate movement of minority applicants across state lines; (2) increase efforts by the university to work with high schools having large numbers of minorities and increase pre-veterinary enrollments; (3) provide summer employment for minority students with veterinarians and faculty; (4) solicit and provide financial assistance to minority students; and (5) provide special counseling to minority preveterinary students (Hooper 1974).

Dr. Bell’s personality, professional attitude, and commitment did much to guide the discussions and debates in all issues related to minority recruitment in
the 1970s and early 1980s. At the first national Iverson Bell Seminar/Workshop, held in 1988, Dr. Stockton remembered Dr. Bell’s attitude as “inspirational, analytical, positive and realistic” (Stockton 1988, 7). One of Dr. Bell’s favorite citations, which is from the pen of an anonymous person, was: “Life is made up of little things. It is very rarely that an occasion is offered for doing a great deal at once. True greatness consists in being great in little things” (Stockton 1988, 7).

Dr. Bowie developed the first national Minority Recruitment Conference at the Tuskegee Institute in February 1974. Some major observations as to the state of African Americans/Blacks in veterinary medicine were made by Dr. Bowie in his opening remarks for the conference. He stated that “All of the institutions of higher education in this country together have only produced a meager 650 to 700 minority scientists in some 90 years” (Bowie 1974, 10). He contrasted the 8.3 percent minority students in the medical schools (total enrollment 47,234) with 1.84 percent minority students in veterinary medical schools (total enrollment 5,149). Of the ninety-five minority students then enrolled, eighty were at Tuskegee, and only fifteen African American/Black students were distributed through the other seventeen veterinary colleges. In its twenty-five years of existence, Tuskegee’s School of Veterinary Medicine had graduated 94 percent of all African American/Black veterinarians (Bowie 1974). The conference developed a number of recommendations that might increase the number of minorities in veterinary medicine, with a major emphasis to be placed on increasing opportunities for minorities in the thirty-three states that did not have a school or college of veterinary medicine.

The 1975 Minority Recruitment Conference at Tuskegee again emphasized development of opportunities across state lines and made eleven other major recommendations directed at recruitment. It made two major recommendations that would cloud and threaten recruitment of minorities for the remainder of that century: (1) a given number of spaces be set aside for minority students in each school or college; and (2) an attempt be made to reach minority representation equivalent to their representation in the general population (15 percent) in five years, with specific goals to be set for each year before that time. With the encouragement of Drs. Bowie and Stockton, the AAVMC adopted those two recommendations in 1976. However, the recommendations were not received well by the faculties of the veterinary colleges, or the profession at large, because they created an incorrect perception that poorly prepared or significantly less-qualified applicants were to be admitted. The issue of racial quotas in admission was working its way through the courts and was scheduled to be heard by the US Supreme Court in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (438 US 265 (1978)). Rather than establish quotas, the response of the veterinary schools and colleges was to work very hard
on increasing the interest of minority students, increasing the support of minority
students in preveterinary programs, increasing the financial support of minority
students, and admitting as many prepared and qualified applicants as possible
(Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, 438 US 307 (1978)). The results of
that effort between 1973–74 and 1992–93 was a 274 percent increase in minority
enrollment, from 175 to 656 students, while overall enrollment increased 49.7
percent, from 5,763 to 8,628 students (Health Resources and Services Adminis-
tration 1994).

The Supreme Court heard arguments on the Regents of the University of Cali-
ifornia v. Bakke case on October 8, 1977. On June 28, 1978, a five to four vote
rendered an extensive opinion in which Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr. wrote for the
majority that “Preferring members of any one group for no reason other than race
or ethnic origin is discrimination for its own sake” (Regents of the University of
California v. Bakke, 438 US 307(1978)). The AAVMC Committee on Minority
Affairs immediately solicited support from the Ford Foundation and sponsorship
from the American Council on Education, and held a National Workshop Con-
ference on Minority Representation in Veterinary Medicine in Washington, DC,
on November 1–2, 1978. The report of that conference helped frame the racial
recruitment and admission policies from that moment forward. The last page of
the report presents a profile of “Trends in Minority Affairs at Schools of Veteri-
nary Medicine for 1976, 1977 and 1978.” In those three years there were 1,183
minority applicants. Of those, 815 (68.9 percent) were qualified for admission. Of
those, 239 (29.3 percent) were admitted. In those same years there was an average
of 1,774 teaching faculty of which 117 (6.6 percent) were minorities (AAVMC
1978).

The opening of nine new schools and colleges of veterinary medicine in the
late 1970s and early 1980s as well as federal funding that encouraged larger out-
of-state enrollments helped increase opportunities for minority applicants, but in
academic year 2010–11 all minority students still made up only 12.65 percent,
and African Americans/Blacks only 2.14 percent of the veterinary student popula-
tion in US schools and colleges of veterinary medicine.

Seminars/workshops/conferences addressed issues related only to the African
American/Black race. No significant attention was paid to other races, to gender,
or to other diversity issues. It was the Minority Affairs Committee of the AAVMC
that progressively broadened the spectrum of concern through the remainder of the
twentieth century. In its early years, the Minority Affairs Committee devoted great
efforts to gathering data that would document the diversity issues. It then identified
and documented institutional programs, sponsored many local and regional meet-
ings to generate interest and action, supported legislation and funding for diversity programs, and moved toward the establishment of regular national meetings of the academic veterinary community. This committee was either the direct stimulus for diversity programs or just slightly in the background of every advancement in diversity issues in veterinary education over the next twenty-five years.

One of the greatest problems regarding the collection of data in the 1970s was the deliberate and repeated decisions by the deans of the veterinary schools and colleges to withhold any information on personal identifiers of either applicants or students. It was not until 1980 that they allowed the pooling of such information. Dr. John Tasker, a member of the Minority Affairs Committee and later dean at Michigan State, began an annual publication of the numbers of applications, the number of applicants, the gender of each group, the racial composition of each group, and the admission numbers for both gender and race. From that point forward, the schools and colleges had the basic information needed for developing targeted programs. This was very valuable because it documented the change in the gender ratios of the student body, but more importantly, it documented the declining interest in veterinary medicine and the early increases for races other than African American/Black. From 1981 to 1990, the total number of applicants decreased 38 percent, Caucasian/White applicants decreased 37 percent, African American/Black applicants decreased 33 percent, Native American applicants decreased 12 percent. The only increases in those years were an increase of 38 percent in Hispanic/Latino and a 47 percent increase in Asian American applicants (Tasker 1990).

In 1986, the AAVMC established a national office in Washington, DC and expanded its efforts to take a broader role in the leadership of the profession. One of these roles was to expand the emphasis on diversity. A member of the Minority Affairs Committee, Dr. Milton Wyman, and The Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine organized a national meeting and named it “The 7th Iverson Bell Seminar/Workshop on Minority Recruitment For Veterinary Medicine: Recruiting, Funding and Retention of Qualified Minorities and Disadvantaged Students in Colleges of Veterinary Medicine.” The Iverson Bell Seminar/Workshop identified a university sense of commitment, faculty involvement in the total effort, and student participation wherever possible as important components in expanding recruitment and retention of minority students. The proceedings of this meeting in 1988 were widely distributed in the veterinary schools and colleges, and used in many other settings where such efforts might be addressed.

The 8th Iverson Bell Seminar/Workshop was renamed the “Iverson Bell Symposium” and has retained that title because it implies a much broader focus on
diversity than the almost exclusive minority affairs focus in previous conferences. Patricia Lowrie and Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine served as the hosts in 1989. The Iverson Bell Symposium introduced the veterinary community to the concept of a rapidly expanding concern for diversity in all of veterinary medical education. Up to that time, the AAVMC had used terms such as African American/Black recruitment, minority recruitment, multicultural, disadvantaged (both economic and/or educational), underserved, and affirmative action. However, the US Department of Justice had just forced the US Senate to change the title of Senate Bill 1606 from “Minority Health Care Bill” to “Disadvantaged Health Care Bill” because the Senate could not define “minority” in such a way as to be nondiscriminatory. At this symposium the AAVMC also presented the first Iverson Bell Recognition Award and has used the award since in each biennial symposium to recognize outstanding contributions in promoting “opportunities for minorities in veterinary medical education.” The presentation of the award to Dean Willie M. Reed of Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine at the 18th Symposium in 2011 captures the broader emphasis on diversity by stating that the award was being presented to someone who “understands that active engagement around issues of diversity and inclusion is a cornerstone for effective leadership in the 21st century. It is clear that diversity and inclusion is a priority in his college and is evidenced through college-wide colloquia and conferences, and the classroom experience for the students” (AAVMC 2011).

A tremendous step forward in the promotion of diversity was the Pew Charitable Trusts grant of $5.5 million in 1987 to study and fund programs that would enhance veterinary medical education. This program provided leadership training and supported strategic planning in each of the veterinary schools and colleges. It then funded many proposals from the schools and colleges in support of specific efforts to improve education. It involved the entire profession in a study of “Future Directions for Veterinary Medicine” and published a book with that title in 1988 (Pritchard). The study identified forty major factors impacting veterinary medicine, identified thirteen major “future directions,” and identified sixteen issues for veterinary education programs in the twenty-first century. A major recommendation was that the profession “Make the achievement of educational, experiential, and cultural, racial and ethnic diversity among veterinarians a goal of veterinary education” (Pritchard 1988, 7). Since these recommendations had broad support from the profession, it began the long, slow process of bringing the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and other veterinary organizations into the efforts to address and promote diversity. The Pew grant also funded one study that would have a major impact on multicultural diversity and
one symposium that would have a major impact on broadening the awareness of diversity issues.

As the Pew project began, all of the deans in the AAVMC requested that Dr. Bowie be named principal on a major grant to address URM attitudes and perceptions about veterinary medicine and veterinary medical careers. Dr. Bowie agreed to do this only if Patricia Lowrie would direct and manage the project. Together they then selected the American Association for the Advancement of Science to be the primary contractor for instrument development and analysis of results. The study was conducted over a two-year period in 1989–91, and it involved eight colleges of veterinary medicine (Auburn, California, Florida, Louisiana, Michigan, Texas, Tuskegee, and Wisconsin). The study was based on the premise that a critical career choice point for pursuing health professions is the junior year of high school. Its specific objectives were to: (1) gain a better understanding of how URM and Caucasian/White students view veterinarians, veterinary medicine, science, and mathematics; (2) determine the effect of teachers’ attitudes and teaching strategies; and (3) build working relationships between middle schools and colleges. The study collected data on 2,265 African American/Black, 2,201 Caucasian/White, 897 Hispanic/Latino, 171 Asian/Pacific Islander, and 94 Native American students. It also collected data on 2,939 parents and 439 teachers at ten schools in ten communities. The primary findings were: (1) students from all racial/ethnic groups hold positive images of veterinarians; (2) Caucasian/White students tend to better understand what veterinarians do, compared to African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino students; and (3) African American/Black students had the fewest experiences with animals, the least positive image of veterinary work, liked animals the least, and were the least likely to be interested in a career in veterinary medicine. The primary conclusion was that “by modifying students’ frequency and duration of experiences with animals and their interactions with professionals in veterinary medicine, changes in their attitudes and interests may follow” (Matyas and Lowrie 1991). The recommendations were that the schools and colleges should: (1) expand middle school partnerships; (2) use enrichment programs throughout the educational continuum; (3) intertwine relationships between veterinary medicine, math, and science with other foundational skills, such as reading and writing; and (4) extend interaction with youth beyond the schools to community service agencies and organizations (Matyas and Lowrie 1991). These findings, conclusions, and recommendations were never formally published, but they were presented and extensively discussed in a day-long workshop at the 9th Iverson Bell Symposium, held at Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine in November 1991. The results of this study significantly influenced minority
recruitment programs at the veterinary schools and colleges, and programs initiated on the basis of the study were extensively reviewed and discussed at the 10th Iverson Bell Symposium, held at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine in October 1995.

The AAVMC and its Diversity Committee continues to develop and promote all components of diversity in veterinary medical education, periodically review their progress, and make future plans through the Iverson Bell Symposia. In a major effort, “Envisioning the Future of Veterinary Medical Education,” they stated the principle that “Academic veterinary medicine should reflect the existing and anticipated diversity in society” (Willis et al. 2007, 16). Then as one of their forty-five recommendations, they stated that “Selection for admission must consider achieving diversity in the profession, which would reflect the diversity in society. Achieving diversity within the profession will lead to a broader understanding of the profession and wider use of veterinary medical services” (Willis et al. 2007). One of the goals in the AAVMC’s strategic plan is to, by 2014, increase the number of underrepresented minority students by 35 percent and increase the number of underrepresented minority faculty members by 20 percent (AAVMC 2010).

As the twentieth century ended, the academic veterinary community still waited and hoped for the profession as a whole to join in these efforts. It was hoped that the AVMA and all other major veterinary medical associations would accept the need and begin the work necessary to achieve greater diversity throughout the profession. The Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA) focused a JAVMA news section on diversity in 2010 and published that “In 2004, the AVMA formally committed itself to promoting diversity in all aspects of the profession. As first steps, the Association in 2005 hosted the first annual AVMA Veterinary Diversity Symposium and authorized the development of a diversity task force as recommended by the Member Services Committee” (Kahler 2010, 369). The AVMA has continued to host these Diversity Symposia during each of their annual meetings. They were not widely publicized until the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association published a review of diversity in the veterinary profession (Kahler 2010). In introducing the feature, Susan C. Kahler stated:

Embracing diversity is vital if the veterinary profession is going to continue to fulfill its mission of serving all of society and all animals to the best advantage. From improving communication with clients to providing a better understanding of cultural attitudes and practices that affect animal care to recognizing how differences in gender attitudes affect the work environment, diversity touches every aspect of the profession. (369)
It would be hard to overstate the importance of that publication because it was sent to every AVMA member and thus effectively called the attention of the profession to diversity issues. The AVMA Strategic Plan, first adopted on April 12, 2008 and revised April 10, 2010, includes a “Workforce Objective” to “Foster increased veterinary workforce diversity pertaining to professional areas of service and to cultural, ethnic, gender and racial representations” (AVMA 2010, 7). The AVMA 20/20 Foresight Commission also proposed increasing diversity by stating “By 2020, the AVMA should ensure representation of women in leadership roles . . .” (Burns 2011, 1373) and “By 2020 the AVMA should create a strong and diverse sense of community within the veterinary profession . . .” (Burns 2011, 1373).

Religion

Many older veterinarians remember the image of discrimination against Jews that existed in veterinary school and college admission departments during the middle of the twentieth century. The previous dean of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine has published information regarding this practice. He states that “Although the use of numerical restrictions for Jews was not widely publicized, many schools and colleges had silent quotas for Jews, usually not exceeding 10% of the entering class” (Smith 2010, 323). He reports that a member of Cornell’s veterinary class of 1935 summed it up this way: “They had this quota arrangement—it was very silent. You didn’t talk about it but everybody knew they took two [students per class of approximately 50] one year, and three the next” (Smith 2010, 323). He states that “Cornell began (in 1934–1935) to evaluate subjective personal qualities such as ‘each applicant’s character, seriousness of purpose and fitness of the work that he proposes to undertake’” and that “Use of this type of language was common in both undergraduate and professional schools and colleges at the time. It was widely believed that it was used as a means to limit the number of Jews” (Smith 2010, 323). None of the data collected over the last forty years suggest that religious discrimination exists in any recruitment, admission, or retention programs, but in the 1993 survey of veterinary students there was still some evidence of interpersonal religious discrimination (Turnwald et. al. 1993).

Climate

At a meeting of the North American Strategic Veterinary Education Task Force (NASVET) near the close of the Pew project, Ed O’Neil, who had headed the Pew
projects for several of the health professions, said that he knew of no other health profession that had addressed the issue of the students’ experiences in dealing with discrimination and diversity issues within the student body (Young 1993). The last major project funded by the Pew Veterinary Medicine Project supported a student survey of the environment for diversity in the US and Canadian veterinary schools and colleges.

The survey was administered to students in each of the first three classes at twenty-eight of the thirty-one colleges of veterinary medicine in the US and Canada near the end of the 1992–93 academic year. Of the 6,686 students in those classes 3,560, or 53 percent, responded. The percentage of female students was 63.9 percent, and their response rate was 66.5 percent. The percentage of male students was 36.1 percent, and their response rate was 33.5 percent. The percentage of minority students was 5.3 percent, and their response rate was 5.2 percent. The survey addressed marital status, dependent status, religion, disabled status, race, geographic background, sexual orientation, age, perceived discrimination, origin of discrimination, impetus for perception of discrimination, reverse discrimination, disparaging comments about racial/ethnic minorities, positive comments about diversity, role models, mentoring, climate for diversity, recruitment of underrepresented faculty and students, promotion of diversity, preparation of students from underrepresented groups, affirmative action, acceptance of LGBT students, good ol’ boyism, and offensive jokes. It also provided for open-ended narrative responses, and roughly 1,000 students responded (Turnwald et al. 1993).

Of the 3,560 responding students, 188 self-identified as disabled, with forty-nine reporting hearing impairment or deafness, thirty-nine reporting a learning disability, twenty-five reporting visual impairment or blindness, sixteen reporting a speech disorder, and fifteen reporting mobility impairment. Over sixteen religions were identified, with the distribution among the faiths approximating that in the general North American population. Two percent of students self-identified as gay or lesbian, and 1.5 percent self-identified as bisexual. Forty-three percent of the students reported experiencing discrimination because of gender, 11 percent because of race, 13 percent based on religion, 10 percent based on age over thirty, and 5 percent or less for either sexual orientation, being a parent, or being a single parent. Sixty-six percent of the students perceived discrimination from fellow students, 25 percent from faculty, 17 percent from college staff, and 11 percent from administrators. Sixty-five percent of the perceived discrimination came from verbal comments, 12 percent from specific actions, 11 percent from nonverbal cues, and 12 percent from other activities (Turnwald 1993).
The conference chair, Dr. Karen Young, described the survey as having brought together students, faculty, administrators, and staff from twenty-seven of the thirty-one colleges and schools of veterinary medicine to consider thoughtfully and carefully the challenges and opportunities that a diverse student body brings to veterinary medicine, the positive and negative roots upon which the values expressed by colleges and schools of veterinary medicine are founded, and strategies for implementing changes to make the environment more inclusive, a place where all can reach their full potential (Young 1993). In summarizing the symposium, Dr. Shirley Johnston, who was to go on and become the first female dean of a veterinary school, quoted Catherine Daley from Auburn as saying “When one is confronted with another person’s struggle, when one individual is touched by another individual, the labels fall away. The hatred which stems from ignorance and fear is dissipated, and bonding and healing of souls begins” (Johnston 1993, 52–53).

Three regional meetings, two at the University of Georgia, addressing the campus climate as a major barrier to recruitment and retention (Larkin 2010), and one at Purdue University, addressing the diversity in the curriculum, have been held. The AVMA and AAVMC have joined forces to launch a national survey on campus climate for students and a concurrent parallel survey for faculty, staff, and administrators (Larkin 2011). The current effort on exploring campus climate will continue the themes developed in the 1993 conference and the Georgia regional conferences as it develops “comprehensive national data regarding veterinary student’s perceptions of comfort with respect to various forms of personal differences, perceptions concerning tolerance of discriminatory behavior at their school or college and perceptions of supportiveness” (Larkin 2011, 1231).

The Status in 2010–11

In 2011, the veterinary medical profession in the US was about 90 percent Caucasian/White, 2.2 percent Hispanic/Latino, 2.3 percent Asian, 1.5 percent African American (AVMA 2011; US Census Bureau 2012), and 53.3 percent female (AVMA 2011). Membership in the Lesbian and Gay Veterinary Medical Association, which includes members of the LGBT community and their allies, was about 0.5 percent of the US population of veterinarians (K. Gorczyca, pers. comm. to editors). In 2010–11, 13.48 percent of tenure-track faculty were minorities (AAVMC 1968–2011). The US veterinary medical student population was 77.4 percent female (AAVMC 1968–2011), 13.4 percent underrepresented minorities, and fewer than 3 percent racially or ethnically underrepresented males
Retention in veterinary educational programs is remarkably high. In 2011, retention rates were 98.83 percent and equivalent between Caucasian/White students (98.92 percent) and URM students (98.74 percent) (AAVMC 1968–2011).

Veterinary medical educational institutions continue to work to overcome the economic, social, and political discrimination that has afflicted the US veterinary profession for more than 150 years. It is making progress, albeit slowly. There is a continuing struggle to achieve greater diversity in veterinary medical education and in the veterinary profession as a whole. This effort was best described by Lisa M. Greenhill in the introduction to the 2009 Iverson Bell Symposium, when she said, “We strive to produce an academic environment that mirrors the United States demographically, but we also have an ethical responsibility to produce an academic environment where inclusion and success flourish and that is a model for the profession at large” (Greenhill and Hill 2009, 345).

References


Comprehensive Health Manpower Training Act of 1971, Public Law 92-157 (November 18, 1971) § 799A.


Matyas, Marsha L., and Patricia M. Lowrie. 1991. “Minority Attitudes and Perceptions about Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Medical Careers.” Distributed at the 9th Iverson Bell Symposium, Baton Rouge, LA.


