

Diversity, Inclusion & Equity in Veterinary Medicine

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Introduction

The veterinary profession still has the distinction of being the least diverse of all health care professions. About 82 percent of all students enrolled in the 32 US Veterinary Colleges are women and about 85% of them are white. This has been the trend for the past 20 years so many are questioning what the future of the profession will look like. This presentation will focus on the efforts that are being made at North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine to address this lack of diversity, equity and inclusion and how it may affect the changing needs of our veterinary profession. There will also be some best practices shared on how individuals can become allies to support diversity, inclusion and equity in veterinary medicine. Attendees will be provided the opportunity to reflect on personal life experiences that contribute to their views on diversity in society and specifically veterinary medicine. There will be discussion about prejudices and biases that keep veterinary medicine ranked amongst the least diverse of all health care professions. Options to address these issues will be shared.

NCSU-CVM History (In Black & White)

1985 – 1994: There was never had more than two Black students in a DVM class

1998: The first time two Black students graduated in the same class

2012: Grand total of 14 Black DVM graduates

2004: Hired full time Director for Diversity

2005: CVM admitted 8 Black students into the DVM Class of 2009

2006: CVM only admitted 2 Black students

2014: CVM only admitted 1 Black student

2015: CVM admitted 8 Black students

2020: CVM admitted 10 Black students

2021: CVM admitted 21 Black students

Why were we successful in 2005?

The veterinary college made a commitment to diversity by hiring a full time diversity officer to lead the effort to create a diverse veterinary class. However, we failed to create a culture that was accepting and supportive of the needs for our diverse students admitted into the program.

Why were we successful again in 2015?

Diversity Retreat – This retreat was formed by the NCSU-CVM Diversity Committee in an effort to engage the CVM leadership team in the committee’s goal to improve diversity at the college.

Strategic Plan – As a result of information obtained from the diversity retreat, the CVM Dean formed a diversity working group to develop our CVM Diversity Strategic plan. This group included an associate dean, a department head, several faculty, staff, students and three non-CVM consultants.

Incidents – Several inappropriate situations required that the university respond to the needs identified during the diversity retreat.

Leadership ownership – The CVM leadership decided to take ownership of the CVM diversity needs and actively become involved.

Commitment – The veterinary college committed to fulfilling the top goals of the CVM diversity strategic plan.

What lead to our success in 2021?

1. George Floyd’s murder
2. COVID
3. Commitment

NCSU-CVM Diversity Features

- 2004 First CVM to hire a full time DVM as the Diversity Director
- 2004 Hosted Inaugural South Eastern Veterinary College Diversity Matters Symposium
- 2006 – 2014 Had the second highest number of Black DVM students enrolled in the US
- 2013 NCSU-CVM graduated its largest group of (6) Black DVM’s
- 2014 Held our first ever CVM diversity retreat
- 2015 CVM Diversity Strategic Plan
- 2016 Admitted our most diverse CVM class (8 Black,8 Hispanic,8 Asian,4 Multiethnic)
- 2021 Admitted (21 Black, 17 Hispanic, 6 Multiethnic, 6 Asian, 1 Native American)

Through lots of hard work and dedication to diversity and inclusion, the NCSU State College of Veterinary Medicine is making a positive contribution towards providing more diversity for our veterinary workforce. In 2016 the college created two \$50,000.00 endowed scholarships in collaboration with the NC Association of Minority Veterinarians. One is called the Old Main Scholarship and is dedicated to Native American Students. The other was the Dr. Alfreda Johnson Webb Scholarship and is dedicated to those identified as underrepresented minorities in veterinary medicine. In 2020 college received an endowed scholarships from Petdesk (<https://petdesk.com/about-us/>) supporting (4) full tuition scholarships for students bringing diversity to our veterinary profession. On Juneteenth in 2020 following George Floyd murder the veterinary college had a campaign that secured funds to endow the Tracy Hanner Scholarship, started by the NCAMV (<http://www.ncamv.com/>), in honor of Dr. Tracy Hanner the first black student to graduate from the CVM in 1986.

Summary – Diversity and inclusion is necessary and beneficial for everyone in our society. Veterinarians take an oath to provide medical care to keep animals healthy and relieve them from suffering. It is imperative that our profession become appropriately trained to communicate with individuals from diverse cultures in order to address the needs of our global society. We need to create outreach program that inspire underrepresented groups to consider join our profession. We must also be prepared to admit, retain and support these future professionals. The future for success in our profession is reliant on the majority members of our profession becoming active allies to make diversity inclusion and equity a reality.