



## The Changing Landscape: Nursing Student Diversity on the Rise

Nursing's leaders recognize a strong connection between a culturally diverse nursing workforce and the ability to provide quality, culturally-sensitive patient care. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, individuals from ethnic and racially underrepresented groups account for more than one-third of the U.S. population.<sup>1</sup> Given these proportions, AACN is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion within academic nursing. AACN is working to advance initiatives that facilitate diversity and inclusivity, promote policies that advance nursing's role in achieving health equity, create opportunities to bring stakeholders together to improve equity in health and health care, and increase engagement in AACN by constituent groups underrepresented in the profession.<sup>2</sup>

### National Calls for Enhancing Diversity

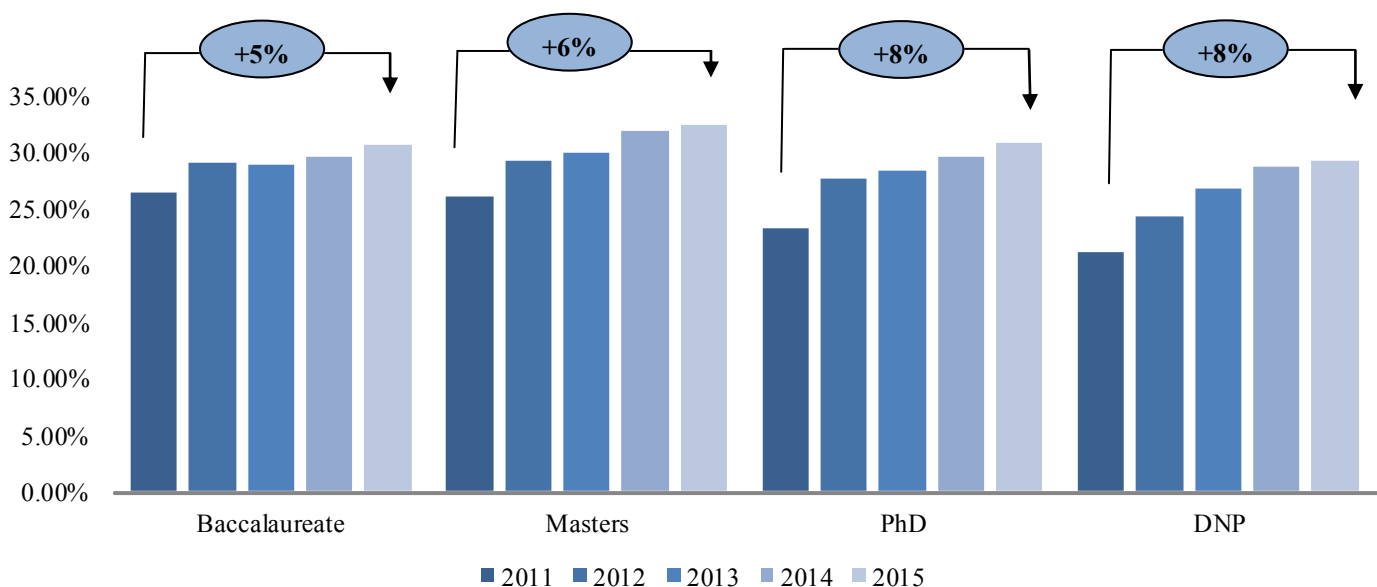
In 2004 the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS) published a report titled *In the Nation's Compelling Interest: Ensuring Diversity in the Health-Care Workforce*. The NAS extolled the benefits of diversity in healthcare providers and provided recommendations to increase opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds in healthcare education. The report states "evidence indicates that diversity is associated with improved access to care for ethnic and racially underrepresented patients, greater patient choice and satisfaction, and better educational experiences for health professions students, among many other benefits."<sup>3</sup>

In the seminal 2010 report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, NAS called for an increase in the diversity of the nation's nursing workforce. The report recommended renewed focus on diversity in nursing education as the nation looks to enhancing the workforce to meet future care challenges.<sup>4</sup>

### Five-Year Trend Data

The number of diverse students in baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs has steadily increased. The graph below shows this upward trend at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels over the past five years.

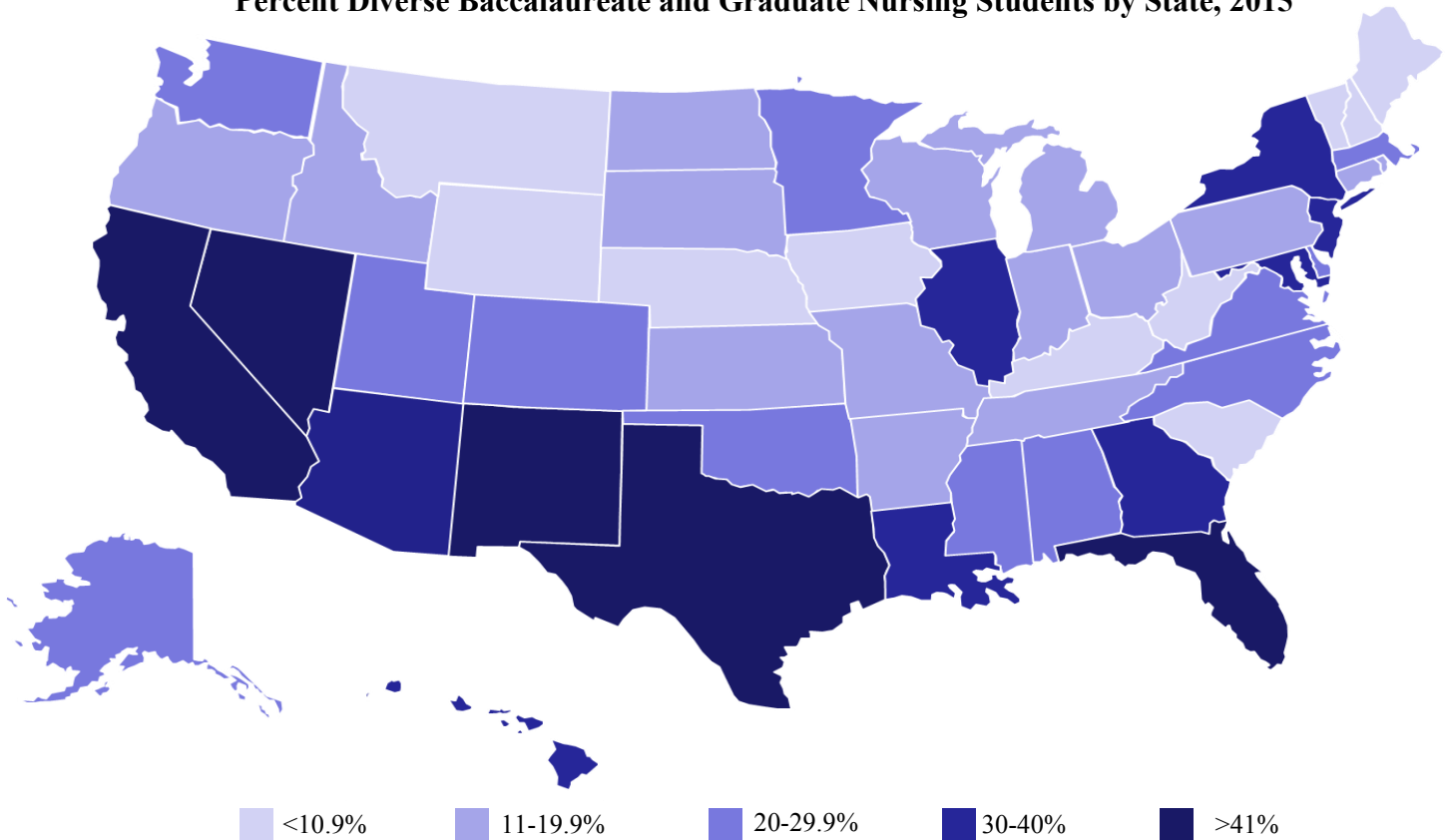
Percent Diverse Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Students By Program Level, 2011-2015<sup>5</sup>



## Diversity Across the Nation

Progress has been made in the percent of diverse students in baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs on a national level. The map below shows the state-by-state breakdown of diversity representation by state and calls attention to the still needed work to be done nationwide and on state levels to increase diverse student representation in the nursing field.

**Percent Diverse Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Students by State, 2015<sup>5</sup>**



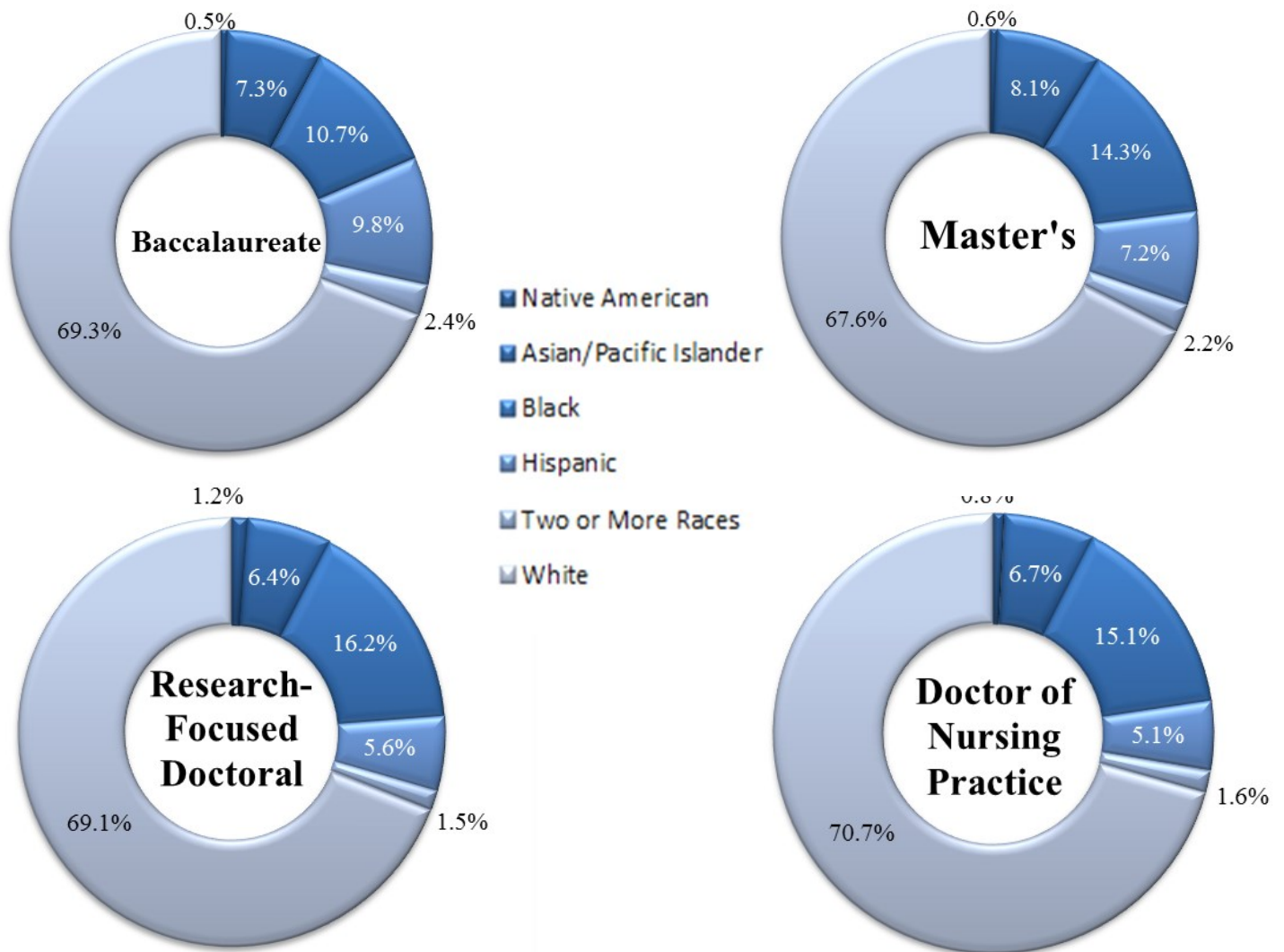
**Percent of Diverse Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Students and Percent of Total Diverse by State, 2015<sup>5,6</sup>**

State	% Diverse	State % Diverse	State	% Diverse	State % Diverse	State	% Diverse	State % Diverse	State	% Diverse	State % Diverse
AL	24.4%	33.4%	IL	34.7%	37.1%	MT	11.0%	12.8%	RI	19.9%	24.9%
AK	31.1%	37.1%	IN	15.1%	19.2%	NE	13.4%	18.8%	SC	19.8%	36.1%
AZ	45.6%	43.1%	IA	8.4%	12.2%	NV	46.5%	47.3%	SD	11.6%	16.4%
AR	14.9%	26.1%	KS	18.4%	22.6%	NH	10.5%	8.3%	TN	18.2%	25.0%
CA	64.1%	60.8%	KY	11.8%	14.2%	NJ	42.3%	42.2%	TX	48.1%	55.7%
CO	23.7%	30.6%	LA	34.4%	40.3%	NM	54.2%	60.4%	UT	25.5%	20.2%
CT	20.2%	30.2%	ME	7.1%	6.0%	NY	39.2%	42.7%	VT	8.6%	6.1%
DE	22.1%	35.6%	MD	37.6%	46.6%	NC	23.7%	35.4%	VA	27.1%	36.1%
DC	33.7%	64.6%	MA	27.1%	25.0%	ND	11.6%	12.3%	WA	27.8%	28.7%
FL	47.1%	43.4%	MI	16.4%	23.9%	OH	14.0%	19.5%	WV	6.1%	7.3%
GA	42.1%	45.0%	MN	29.7%	17.9%	OK	28.5%	32.2%	WI	15.9%	17.3%
HI	80.0%	77.0%	MS	26.6%	42.4%	OR	24.9%	22.4%	WY	4.7%	15.2%
ID	12.3%	16.7%	MO	16.4%	19.5%	PA	18.6%	21.5%			

## Diversity Across Program Levels

Baccalaureate and graduate nursing students show consistent diversity across all levels of education. Nearly 30% of students at each level represent diverse populations.

**Nursing Students by Ethnicity and Program Level, 2015<sup>5</sup>**



## Male Nursing Students

Though nursing has made great strides in recruiting and graduating nurses that mirror the patient population, more must be done to ensure adequate representation. The need to attract students from underrepresented groups, specifically males, is a priority for the nursing profession. Males make up 49% of the American population, however, male students only make up approximately 12% of the baccalaureate and graduate nursing students in 2015.<sup>5,7</sup> Over the last decade, this proportion has increased by 3%. While progress is being made in the profession, males continue to be an underrepresented population in nursing programs across the country.

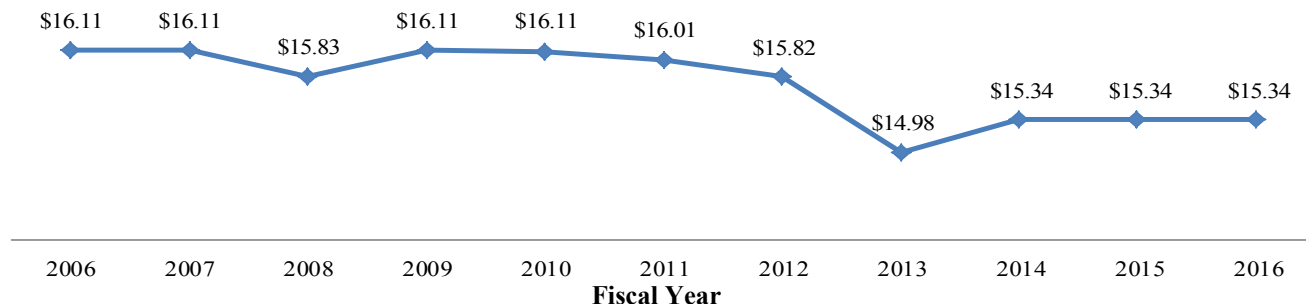
**Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Students by Gender, 2015<sup>5</sup>**



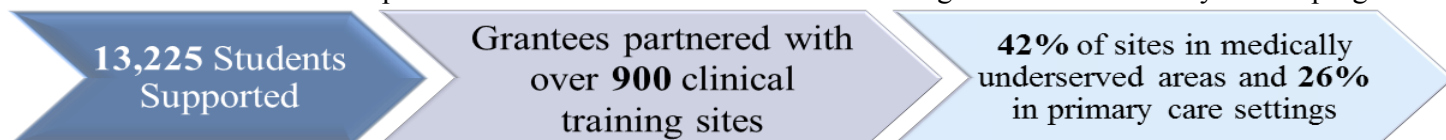
## The Role of the Federal Government

The Nursing Workforce Development programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 296 et seq.]) address all aspects of nursing workforce demand, including education, practice, recruitment, and retention. While each of the six programs plays a role in increasing access to nursing education, the Workforce Diversity Grants program specifically targets groups underrepresented in nursing. According to the Workforce Diversity Grants, the goal is to “recruit and retain students from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds to the nursing profession.”<sup>8</sup> This program awards grants and contract opportunities to schools of nursing, nurse-managed health centers, academic health centers, state or local governments, and nonprofit entities looking to increase access to nursing education for diverse groups. Funding for the Nursing Workforce Diversity Grants Program has been inconsistent in recent years. Renewed investment in this program, and all of the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs, is vital to realizing the goal of a more diverse workforce.

### Nursing Workforce Diversity Grants Program Funding (in millions), 2006-2016<sup>9</sup>



Below are some successes reported in FY 2015 from the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Diversity Grants program.<sup>8</sup>



## Holistic Review in Admissions

AACN proudly supports an increased awareness of holistic review in the admissions process as an effective strategy to enhance diversity and inclusion. Holistic review is an emerging, evidence-based practice that helps schools build a diverse class of nursing students with the background, qualities, and skills need for success in the workforce. In an effort to better engage schools of nursing, AACN and the Urban Universities for HEALTH created a pilot workshop for nursing deans to address this need for education and training in holistic review. The workshop was held twice in Washington, DC and more than 60 deans participated.<sup>10</sup> Additional information on these efforts can be found [here](#). In FY 2017, schools applying for a Nursing Workforce Diversity grant must implement a comprehensive systems approach to enhancing diversity that must include a Holistic Review process for nursing school applicants. AACN is accepting requests from schools to establish a formal agreement to provide technical assistance related to Holistic Review and sustainability. AACN will also provide training on request to schools seeking to implement a Holistic Review Process.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *U.S. Census Bureau Projections Show a Slower Growing, Older, More Diverse Nation a Half Century from Now*. Retrieved from: [www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html).

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2016). *Strategic Plan FY 2017-2019*. Retrieved from: <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/about-aacn/strategic-plan>

<sup>3</sup> Institute of Medicine. (2004). *In the Nation's Compelling Interest: Ensuring Diversity in the Health Care Workforce*. Retrieved from: <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2004/In-the-Nations-Compelling-Interest-Ensuring-Diversity-in-the-Health-Care-Workforce.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Institute of Medicine. (2010). *Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. Retrieved from: <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/The-future-of-nursing-leading-change-advancing-health.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2016). *2015-2016 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*. Washington, DC. Percentages will not add up to 100% due to the exclusion of students that had unknown race/ethnicity. Percent minority is calculated using the percent of students that are American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and/or two or more races.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). AACN calculation of percent minority via *American Community Survey Demographics and Housing Estimates 2010-2014*. Retrieved from: <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *Quick Facts, United States*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/00>

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2016). *Fiscal Year 2017 Health Resources and Services Administration Justification of Estimates for Appropriation Committees*.

Retrieved from: <http://www.hrsa.gov/about/budget/budgetjustification2017.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2015). *Appropriations Funding: FY 2016 Levels Compared to FY 2015 Levels*. Retrieved from <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs/Historic-FY-Funding.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2016). *How Has Holistic Review Been Used In Nursing*. Retrieved from: [www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/holistic-review/nursing](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/holistic-review/nursing)