

# Successful Strategies for Increasing Trainee/Student Diversity at University Centers

Rebecca Carman, MSW; Tory Christensen, MSW, BCBA; Tanisha Clarke, MPH; Jamie Perry, MD, MPH  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities, 2014

Contributors to this poster include:  
Human Development Institute, University of Kentucky  
Utah Regional LEND, University of Utah  
Institute on Community Integration and MN LEND, University of Minnesota  
Center for Leadership in Disability, Georgia State University  
USC UCEDD at the Children's Hospital Los Angeles, University of Southern California



## Background

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) is committed to increasing the diversity of our network to be representative of the communities we serve, and in recent years has focused on increasing the number of diverse student trainees. AUCD network members recognize that achieving a more diverse interdisciplinary training program requires commitment, persistent efforts, intentional recruitment, and creative thinking.

AUCD supports and promotes a network of university-based interdisciplinary programs advancing policy and practice for and with individuals with developmental and other disabilities. Located in every U.S. state and territory, these programs consist of 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs), 43 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities programs (LENDs), and 15 Eunice Kennedy Shriver Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers (IDDRCs). UCEDD and LEND programs prepare trainees from diverse disciplines to assume leadership roles in their respective fields. UCEDD and LEND trainees' post-training outcomes include becoming leaders in the field, working in an interdisciplinary manner, and working with underserved populations.

There is compelling research that health care providers of diverse backgrounds are more likely to work in underserved communities. Therefore, with the nation's growing diverse population and the persistent racial and ethnic disparities that exist, it is essential that the disability workforce resemble and be skilled in addressing the unique needs of underserved populations.

This poster identifies several of the strategies AUCD programs have used to successfully increase the number of diverse students being trained.

## Strategies

To better understand how UCEDDs and LENDs recruit and retain diverse trainees, AUCD staff solicited information from several directors about the strategies they find successful. By having this conversation and sharing this information, programs across the country can learn from each other and build upon ideas, continuing to work toward a racially and ethnically diverse workforce of disability leaders.



## Develop Proactive Recruitment Strategies

Network members are responsible for training leaders so they are better positioned to impact the lives of individuals with disabilities. Members, especially those in states with limited cultural diversity and limited graduate programs, recognize that their approaches have to be deliberate and purposeful.

- Increase the percentage of underrepresented faculty to equal or exceed that of underrepresented students.
- Hire faculty who focus solely on reaching diverse communities.
- Be culturally sensitive when describing the training program. Present inclusive images and emphasize details that will attract a more diverse candidate pool.

## Make Connections and Garner Support

With commitment from their University and faculty, network members have developed strategies to reach diverse student populations. They aim to expand academic excellence while honoring cultural experiences. Partnering and garnering the support of other departments or faculty on campus, as well as agencies in the community, have also proven successful.

- Attract and personally nurture relationships with high school students from minority backgrounds and prospective students early in their college years.
- Become familiar with different agencies or prominent people in the community who have ties to diverse groups.
- Build relationships with admissions departments, multicultural student services, student associations, and minority serving institutions. They should be knowledgeable about your program and willing to promote it to prospective students.

## Facilitate Student Success

The best recruitment tool for any academic program is the success of former students. UCEDD and LEND trainings are designed to be individualized and specific to the needs and goals of each trainee, and each student entering the program should know they are supported throughout -and even after- the program. A reputation for providing support and encouragement for trainees of all racial and ethnic backgrounds will serve a program well in future recruitment.

- Create and sustain a culture that makes a strong connection between academic excellence, quality, and diversity.
- Provide mentoring and career advice.
- Allocate fiscal resources to support all students.

## Trainee Data (FY13)

