



Increasing the Number of Black Men in White Coats in Pharmacy and Osteopathic Medicine



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OBJECTIVE

To bridge pharmacy & osteopathic health care education and practice by promoting diversity through stimulating faculty and student self-awareness and actions that may improve the disproportionately low number of Black males in medical professions.

BACKGROUND

- **Black Men in White Coats** ([BMWV], 2020) is a documentary spotlighting the disproportionately low number of Black men in medical professions.
- A faculty panel discussion impassioned Harding University pharmacy faculty at a Summer 2021 faculty retreat to explore ways to resolve this problem.
- Positive faculty response and collaboration with other professional health programs led to a large multi-institutional interprofessional education (IPE) experience involving pharmacy and osteopathic medical students.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS: 415 students of pharmacy & osteopathic medicine from 3 professional programs in Arkansas and California participated in a virtual IPE that incorporated the documentary titled BMWV (2020).

- Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine (ARCOM), Ft. Smith, AR: n = 177 (OMS-1 students)
- Harding University College of Pharmacy (HUCOP), Searcy, AR: n = 29 (P-2 students)
- University of the Pacific (UOP) Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy, Stockton, CA: n = 209 (P-1 students)

PRE-IPE: Students watched the documentary 1-week prior to the IPE event.

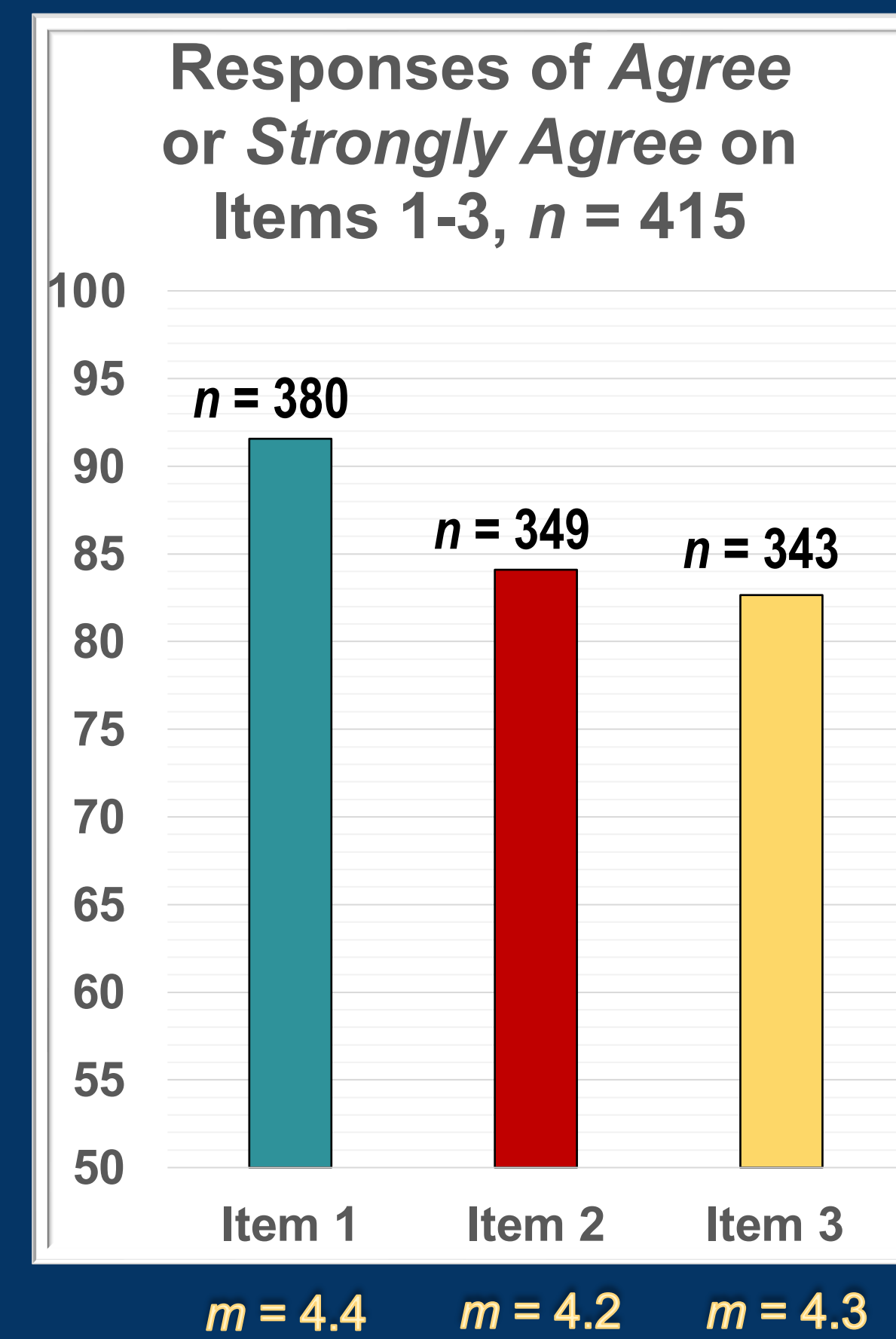
IPE EVENT: All participants were involved in a 40-minute student-led virtual discussion in break-out groups of 6-8 students, followed by a 20-minute group debrief via Zoom (hosted by the UOP).

IPE EVENT ASSESSMENT

POST-IPE: Students completed post-survey which included:

- 3 Likert-scale responses indicate agreement with how the event altered understanding or self-awareness.
 - **Range:** Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)
 - **Item 1.** This IPE helped me to understand diversity/recruitment issues in healthcare.
 - **Item 2.** This IPE is useful to my learning.
 - **Item 3.** This IPE should be offered again to future students.
- 1 open-response indicating action steps, recommendations, or suggestions for improvement
 - **Item 4.** List & discuss 2-3 ways to increase the number of Black men graduating from your program.

ITEMS 1-3 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS



The reported mean score for Items 1-3 was each above 4.0, indicating that most respondents agreed that the IPE event was helpful for learning and understanding diversity/recruitment issues. 83% recommended this IPE event for other students.

DISCUSSION

The BMWV documentary was a successful conduit for increasing faculty/student awareness of the low number of Black men in the health professions and for creating opportunities to develop self-awareness, understanding, and a desire for change in faculty and students. The outcomes of the HUCOP faculty panel and the multi-institutional IPE event included specific, collaborative strategies to improve diversity across the wider healthcare profession, university programs, and the local community. This experience provided engaging discussions on diversity and equity, actionable recommendations to increase faculty and student diversity, and opportunities to improve equity and inclusion in the Colleges through local and interprofessional partnerships.

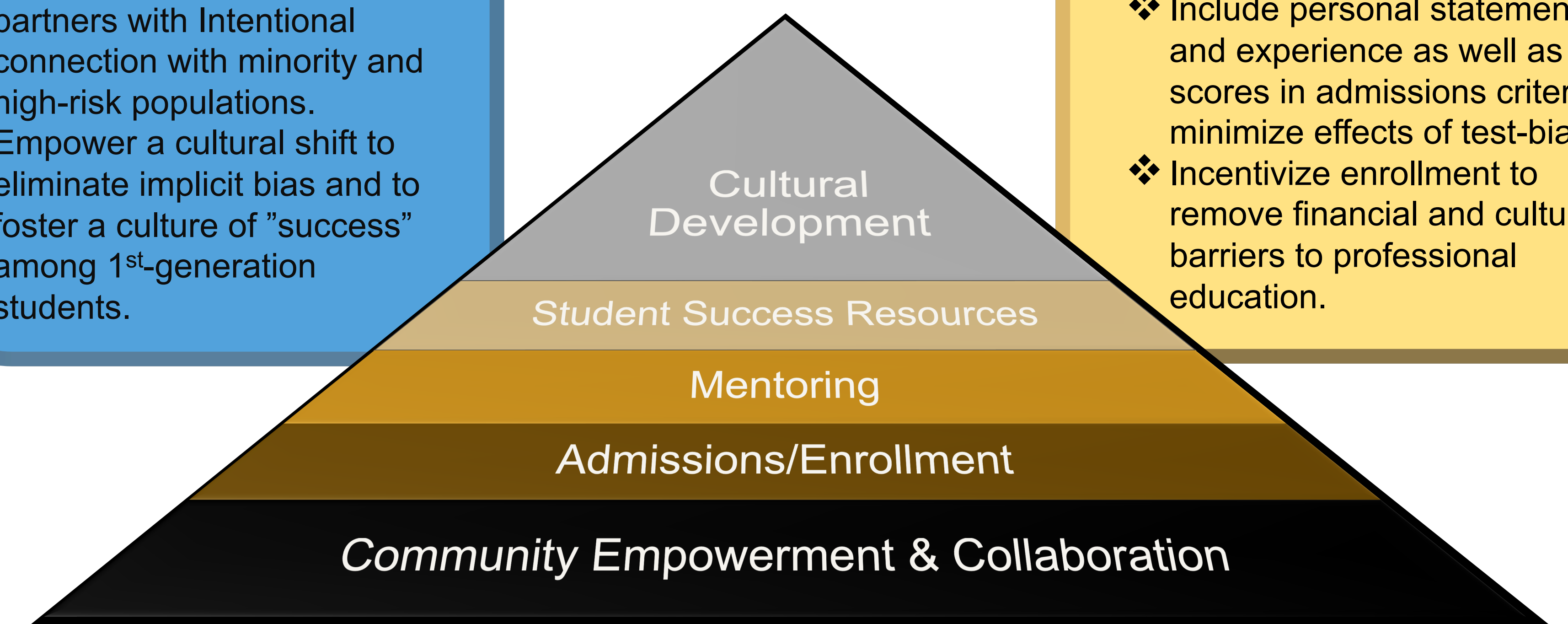
ITEM 4: QUALITATIVE THEMES

Community Empowerment & Collaboration

- ❖ Create consistent, long-term relationships and visibility with the community and school partners with intentional connection with minority and high-risk populations.
- ❖ Empower a cultural shift to eliminate implicit bias and to foster a culture of "success" among 1st-generation students.

Admissions/Enrollment

- ❖ Post-bac support particularly for Black men to foster preparedness; include standardized test-support prior to admissions.
- ❖ Include personal statements and experience as well as test scores in admissions criteria to minimize effects of test-bias.
- ❖ Incentivize enrollment to remove financial and cultural barriers to professional education.



Mentoring

- ❖ Collaborate with alumni and community members to develop high school/undergraduate programs, postbaccalaureate STEM programs or support, experiential learning expansions, and small group or 1:1 mentoring.

Cultural Development

- ❖ Support and collaborate to create high school & undergrad courses to teach mindset, behaviors, and support for realizing a vision of success; mirror these efforts in the professional curriculum; address "success limitations" in minority cultures.
- ❖ Create overtly "safe" spaces for minority students to learn, share, and grow.
- ❖ Involve minority and majority leaders to establish a collaborative integrated vision.

Student Success Resources

- ❖ Provide/develop/create academic and personal management resources for professional students that could include 1:1 study partners, tutoring, & standardized exam support.
- ❖ Create outreach for HS/undergrad programs to recruit and prepare potential candidates; consider financial assistance to offset professional exam and exam-preparation fees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Student recommendations to improve Black male graduation from professional health programs were coded into 5 themes. All respondents recommended 2 or more of these themes as an action step to address the problem. Each theme can be applied at the community, program, classroom, or individual level, providing scaffolding for in-depth cultural change if implemented systemically. Suggestions are for other programs to gather data on their students' perceptions about the problem of BMWV and to create local and community plans to create social change.

Future research may include exploring factors that may contribute to perceptions—demographic, cultural, racial, or geographical characteristics. Understanding the framework for individual perceptions may inform a more effective cultural shift that promotes and supports an increased graduation of BMWV. Additionally, colleges or programs that implement these recommendations may track demographic, cultural, and perception data of participants to validate these suggestions as factors that may contribute to social change.