

## Washington Center for Nursing to Introduce Diversity Mentorship Program

**By Christine Espina, CNP MN RN**  
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As health care providers and administrators, we work alongside patients to make health decisions, with the goal of health and healing among individuals, families and communities. At the Washington Center for Nursing, we're working to ensure that our nursing workforce is prepared to address the growing complexity of patient diseases in the changing landscape of our health care system, and to provide high-quality care for patients from all communities.

Historically, communities of color in the U.S. have an increased risk

for illness and disease for numerous, complex reasons that contribute to disease development. As we look at the composition of Washington State's nursing workforce, we see that it does not reflect the state's racial and ethnic composition.

Christine Espina, DNP MN RN, the Center's Diversity Network Director, has been meeting with key stakeholders across Washington State including nursing faculty, policy makers, student support service staff and nursing students to learn about various barriers that prevent many minority students from becoming nurses. She is also learning what kind of resources WCN could offer students to help create a more diverse workforce that reflects our state's population and is ready to address the causes of the differences in health outcomes for marginalized communities.

The priority of WCN's Diversity Initiative is to develop an online mentoring network for racially and ethnically underrepresented students and new graduates of nursing. Espina, along with the WCN Diversity Initiative Advisory Committee, is developing a questionnaire

for pre-nursing students, nursing students, new graduates, and experienced RNs (potential mentors) to influence the design of the mentoring program. Having developed and managed the mentoring program at Whatcom Community College's School of Nursing for the past three years, Amy Riedel, MA, the college's Workforce Career Advisor/Projects Coordinator, is serving as a consultant to the development of WCN's mentoring program. WCN's goal is to start the program in spring 2013.

We want to build a diversity network of nurses in training, new nurses, and experienced nurses who are ready to lead in the profession.

The Diversity Initiative work aligns with one of the goals of the \$300,000 two-year Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Academic Progression in Nursing (APIN) in Washington State, which aims to identify promising practices in nursing education across the state that support, promote, recruit, and retain a diverse student body through nursing school.

Through the larger work of develop-

ing a mentoring program, Espina is making connections with numerous nursing and education leaders who are committed to and are actively ensuring the success of nursing students and new graduates from underrepresented communities.

To contact WCN or Christine Espina,

go to [www.WACenterforNursing.org](http://www.WACenterforNursing.org) or [christinee@wcnursing.org](mailto:christinee@wcnursing.org)

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