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Descriptive Analysis of Student Diversity in East North Central PA Programs

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Introduction

- Lack of diversity in the PA profession is a well-documented and relatively recent phenomenon.¹⁻⁴
- Approximately 9% of PAs identified as Black in 1980, but that percentage plummeted around 2010.⁴
- In 2020, only 3.3% of all PAs identified as Black/African American and only 6.5% identified as Hispanic.⁵
- No research to date has specifically examined PA student diversity in the Midwest and how this compares to the demographics of the population being served.

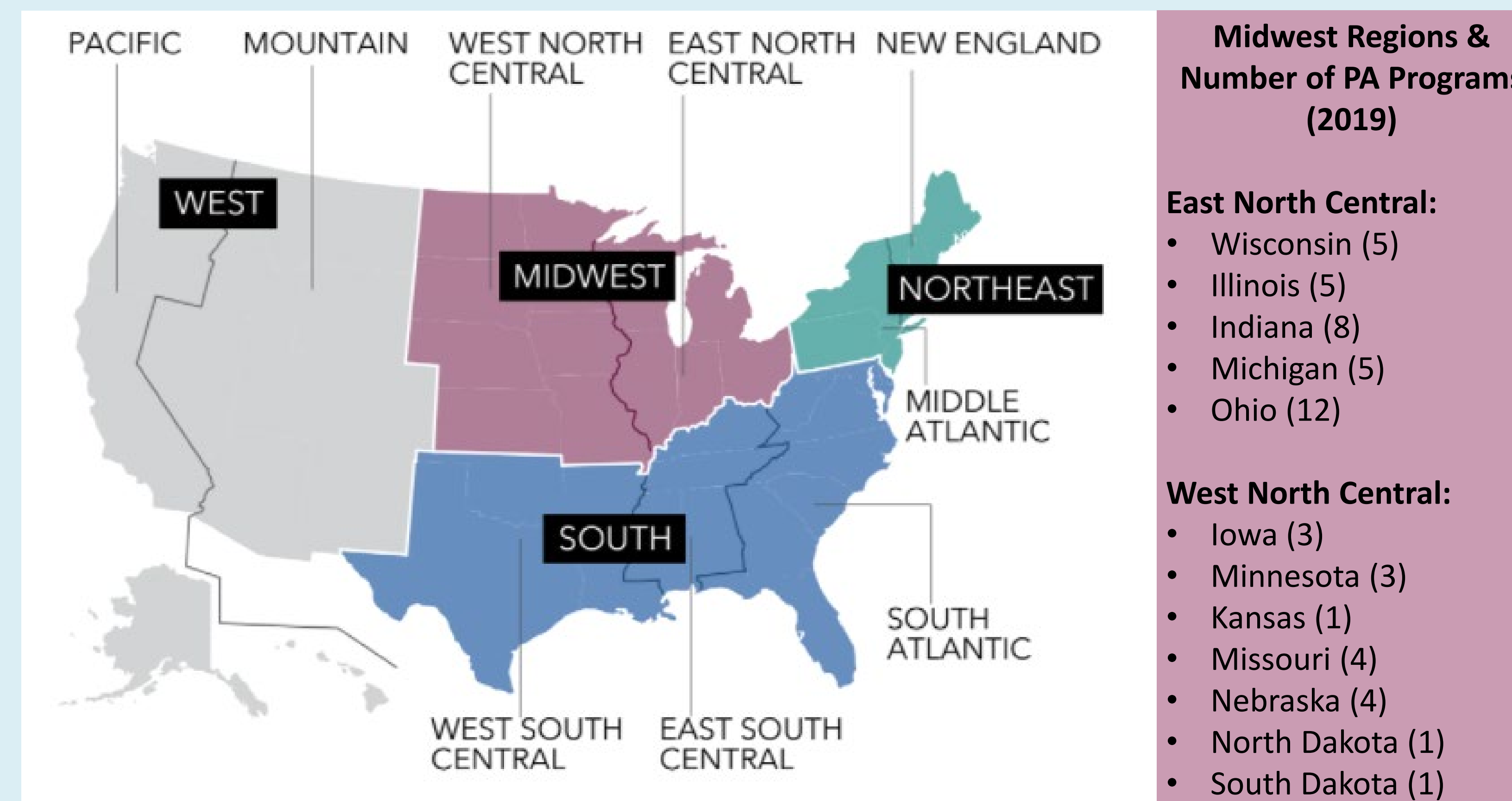
Purpose

- To describe the demographic diversity of PA students in the Midwest
- To examine the findings relative to the population of the region and the PA student cohort nationwide

Methods

- Secondary analysis** of data from the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) 2019 Program Survey.⁶
 - Participants:** 242 PAEA member programs
 - Response rate:** overall 97% (n=235 programs); however, only 91% completed questions on student race and ethnicity (n=220 programs)
- Responses to items pertaining to age, ethnicity, gender, race, and receipt of financial aid were extracted from the larger survey for secondary analysis.
- The East North Central region was selected as the geographic area of interest as WI could not be analyzed separately due to the small number of programs.
- Data Analysis**
 - SPSS⁷ was used to perform simple descriptive statistics to describe demographics of PA students in the region.
 - 2020 US census data⁸ was used to compare the racial and ethnic diversity of East North Central PA students to the general population of this region.
 - Mann-Whitney U tests were used to compare the proportion of Black/ African American, Hispanic, and White students in East North Central PA programs to programs in other regions of the country.

Results

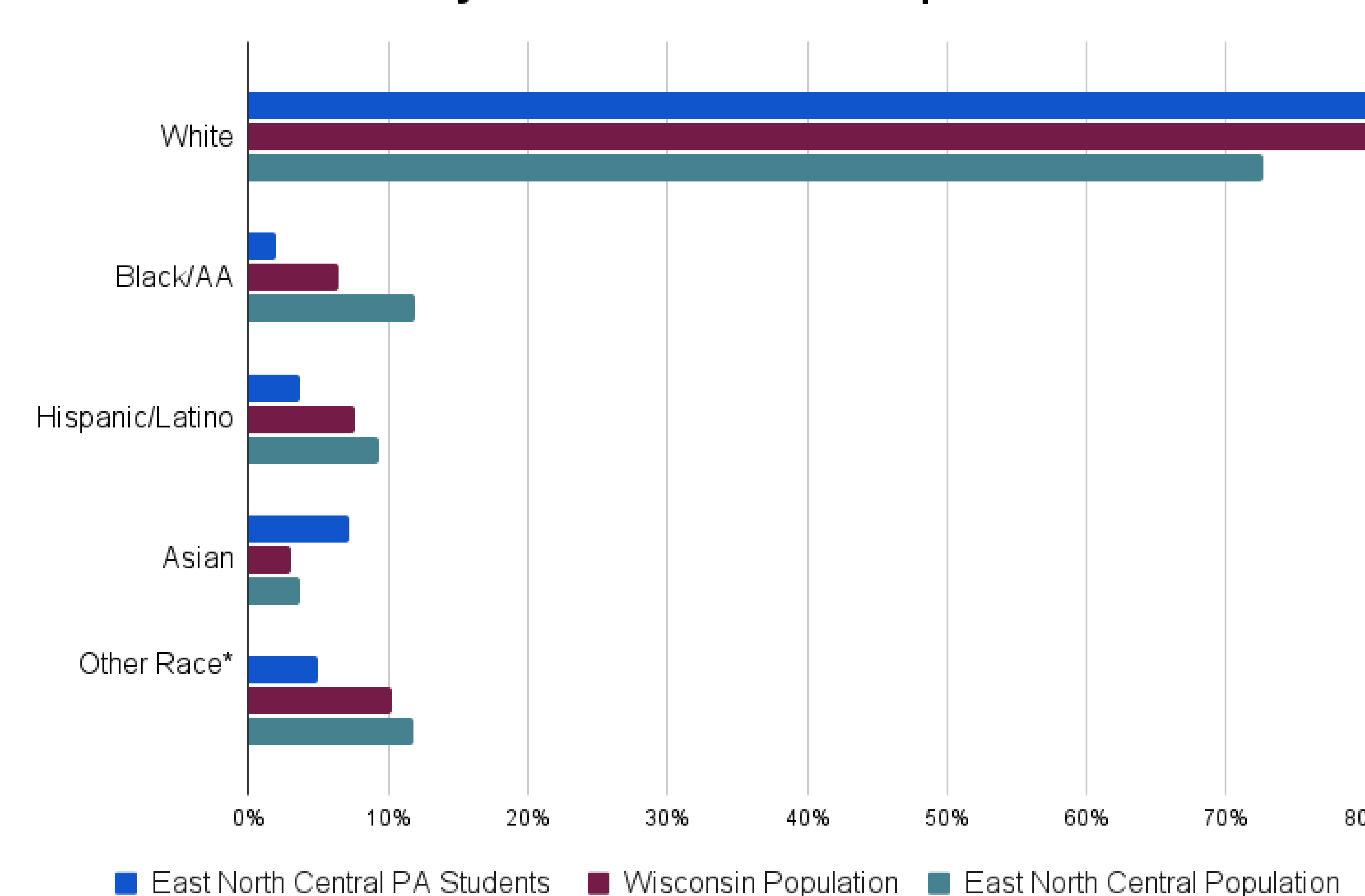


From Program Report 35, used with permission⁶

East North Central PA Program Matriculant Demographics in 2019, n=1308

- Mean **age** range of 22-27 years old
- Mean **gender** of 30.5 females and 8.5 males
- Mean **racial distribution** of 2 Asian (range 0-15), 1 Black/African American (range 0-3), and 28.4 White (range 16-78)
- 87% of programs report that >75% of students receive federal **financial aid**

Race and Ethnicity of PA Students Compared to Census Data



*Other Race includes American Indian, Alaskan native, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, multiracial, other, and unknown race.

Results

- There is no significant difference between the East North Central US and other Midwest (West North Central) PA students with regards to age, gender, race and ethnicity, or receipt of federal financial aid.
- Midwest PA Program matriculants in 2019 were less racially and ethnically diverse than the rest of the country.
 - Lower proportion of Black students (2.6% vs. 4.9%, p=0.028)
 - Lower proportion of Hispanic students (3.6% vs. 8.2%, p<.001)
 - Higher proportion of White students (83.7% vs. 67.7%, p<.001)
- Results for race and ethnicity were similar for the 2019 graduating cohorts.
- Proportion of students in 2019 graduating cohorts receiving federal financial aid did not vary based on program location (p=0.278).

Discussion

- Black, Hispanic, and male populations are markedly underrepresented in Midwest PA programs.
- Findings support the need for diversification in PA education, and by extension, the PA profession, to improve patient care and overall success of healthcare systems.^{9, 10}
- The problems related to lack of diversity, as well as the solutions, belong to everyone. **What can your PA program, your healthcare organization, and WAPA do to develop intentional pathways to improve diversity among PAs?**
- A limitation of this analysis is that specific regions of the Midwest that are more or less diverse than the region as a whole could not be examined separately.

References and Acknowledgement

These data were provided by the Physician Assistant Education Association, Washington, DC. Provision of these data does not necessarily constitute an endorsement of the findings of this research report [presentation] by the Physician Assistant Education Association.



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