Evaluating the Impact of the ADEA Admissions Committee Workshops


Abstract: Drawing on the interconnection of workforce diversity and oral health access, the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) is leading a novel approach to improve student body diversity in U.S. dental schools through an admissions committee development program. With funding provided by the Pipeline, Profession, and Practice: Community-Based Dental Education program and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, ten dental directors/deans of admissions from a cross-section of U.S. dental schools were selected through a competitive application process to participate in a Train-the-Trainers Admissions Committee Workshop. After completing intensive training that was built on legally sound admissions practices, these new trainers copresented ADEA Admissions Committee Workshops in two-member teams at six U.S. dental schools. This report summarizes the evaluation of both the train-the-trainers workshop and six workshops held in summer 2009. Also summarized are post-workshop outcomes relative to structural diversity at the participating schools.

Dr. Price is Associate Dean for Admissions, Recruitment, and Access, School of Dentistry, West Virginia University; Dr. Wells is Associate Executive Director for Educational Pathways, American Dental Education Association; Dr. Brunson is Associate Director, Center for Equity and Diversity, American Dental Education Association; Dr. Sinkford is Associate Executive Director for Equity and Diversity, American Dental Education Association; and Dr. Valachovic is Executive Director, American Dental Education Association. Direct correspondence and requests for reprints to Dr. Anne Wells, American Dental Education Association, 1400 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005; 202-289-7201 phone; 202-238-3975 fax; WellsA@adea.org.

Keywords: dental school admissions, dental admissions committees, diversity, dental students, holistic admissions

The interconnection between diversity and oral health access has served as an impetus to call for expansion of the compositional diversity of dental school student enrollments.¹ ² Further, there is an expanding body of literature that links dental admissions practices and student body diversity. Brunson et al. note the mutually linked roles of dental admissions, student affairs, diversity units, and organizational leadership in fostering diverse dental classes.³ A retrospective study by Lopez et al. reinforces use of a systematic and consistent holistic application review process to assess applicants’ academic and non-academic factors, with the potential to improve student body diversity.⁴ Additionally, admissions committee workshops have been used to help enhance diversity at several dental schools that participated in the Pipeline, Profession, and Practice: Community-Based Dental Education program.⁵

The American Dental Education Association’s Admissions Committee Workshop (ADEA ACW) has been presented at a number of dental schools throughout the United States since 2004. Designed to provide technical assistance to admissions committees in creating admissions practices that seek student body diversity and assess noncognitive factors, the ADEA ACWs have the ultimate goal of contributing to producing a dental workforce that reflects the diversity of the populations they will serve. A companion article describes the ADEA ACW content and scope.⁶

In 2009, support was made available through the Pipeline, Profession, and Practice: Community-Based Dental Education program Round II, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, for a cadre of dental school admissions officers to participate in a Train-the-Trainers Admissions Committee Workshop and then copresent the ADEA ACWs in pairs at additional dental schools. This report summarizes the process and outcomes of the train-the-trainers workshop and the six ADEA ACWs presented during summer 2009.

The project was coordinated by Anne Wells, Ed.D., ADEA Division of Educational Pathways. The project team included David Brunson, D.D.S., ADEA Center for Equity and Diversity; Charles Alexander, Ph.D., Associate Vice Provost for Student Diversity and Director, Academic Advancement Program, University of California, Los Angeles; and Arthur Coleman, J.D., Education Counsel L.L.C. Shelia Price, D.D.S., Ed.D., Associate Dean for Admissions, Recruitment, and Access, West Virginia University School of Dentistry, designed and administered the assessment of the train-the-trainers program and summer workshops.
Methods

The call for applicants to participate in this training opportunity resulted in twenty applications from dental admissions and/or diversity officers at U.S. dental schools. Each applicant provided a curriculum vitae or resume, statement of interest, and description of his or her experiences with holistic admissions practices. From a strong national pool of candidates, the project team selection committee chose ten dental school admissions officers to serve as facilitators (i.e., trainers) for the ADEA ACWs and to participate in the train-the-trainers event. Facilitator selection was based broadly on diversity including gender, race/ethnicity, geography, type of dental school, and depth of experience in dental school admissions. Those selected to serve as workshop facilitators were Cynthia Beeman, D.D.S., Ph.D., Assistant Dean, Admissions and Student Affairs, University of Kentucky College of Dentistry; James Betbeze, M.P.A., Director of Admissions, University of California, San Francisco School of Dentistry; Carolyn Booker, Rh.D., Associate Dean, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry; Rosa Chaviano-Moran, D.M.D., Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey/New Jersey Dental School; Lisa Deem, D.M.D., J.D., Associate Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs, Temple University, The Maurice H. Kornberg School of Dentistry; Ernestine Lacy, D.D.S., Director of Student Development, Baylor College of Dentistry; Naty Lopez, Ph.D., Assistant Dean for Admissions and Diversity, University of Minnesota School of Dentistry; Venita Sposetti, D.M.D., Assistant Dean for Admissions and Financial Aid, University of Florida College of Dentistry; Gregory Stoute, D.M.D., M.P.H., Director of Minority Affairs, Boston University Goldman School of Dentistry; and Cornell C. Thomas, D.D.S., Assistant Dean for Admissions and Student Services, Southern Illinois University School of Dentistry.

Training the Trainers

The ADEA ACW training and presentation schedule is shown in Table 1. In preparation for the train-the-trainers workshop, a webinar meeting of the presenters was held to review the existing ADEA ACW presentation that had been developed by ADEA staff Dr. Anne Wells and Dr. David Brunson and had been presented at a number of dental schools. An initial face-to-face meeting took place at the ADEA Annual Session & Exhibition on March 14, 2009, in Phoenix, Arizona. The purpose of this introductory meeting was to allow the ten workshop facilitators and project team to become acquainted, to hear from those facilitators who had previously hosted an ADEA ACW, and to discuss commonalities and differences in admissions practices at their schools.

The admissions officers next convened with the ADEA ACW project team at the ADEA Central Office May 5–6, 2009, for an intensive train-the-trainers session that featured a thorough review and discussion of each section of the ADEA ACW framework, with time for the entire team to refine the presentation. Arthur Coleman, J.D., a specialist in legal aspects of admissions, facilitated a half-day discussion about diversity, admissions, and the law. There was also discussion about presentation styles, including strategies to facilitate discussion throughout the workshop and techniques to manage potential challenges.

After an announcement that the ADEA ACW would be offered at a limited number of dental schools in summer 2009 on a first-come, first-served basis, six dental schools indicated they would like to host the workshop. ADEA staff worked with the schools to identify workshop dates and assign presenters to each site. Identification of schools to host the workshop was based solely on sequential requests. The ten facilitators presented workshops at five sites in summer 2009. The sixth workshop funded through this grant was presented by ADEA staff due to scheduling conflicts with all ten facilitators.

Evaluating the Summer 2009 Workshops

Based on the evaluation of a pilot admissions committee workshop, an evaluation process of the ADEA ACW was developed and conducted in two
phases: 1) evaluation of the train-the-trainers workshop in May 2009, and 2) examination of the effectiveness of workshops held at six U.S. dental schools, July–September 2009. Long term, the ADEA staff will continue to evaluate structural diversity by monitoring enrollment of underrepresented minority (URM) students at each of the schools where the ADEA ACW has been presented.

Data for evaluation of the train-the-trainers workshop were gathered with pre- and post-workshop questionnaires designed to obtain general demographic information and to assess participants’ awareness of admissions processes and various aspects of diversity. Also, a train-the-trainers online evaluation formatted for Likert-style, yes/no, and narrative responses assessed the quality of the training. The content of the pre- and post-workshop questionnaires, which would also be used to evaluate the 2009 ADEA ACWs, were adapted from a questionnaire used by Price et al. at one of the initial ACWs presented at West Virginia University in 2004.7

The train-the-trainers workshop began with instructions provided by the evaluator regarding evaluation purpose and the Institutional Review Board-approved assessment protocol. Each trainee was provided a number-coded evaluation packet containing a cover letter, a consent form, and identically number-coded pre- and post-workshop questionnaires. Each trainee read and signed the consent form and completed the pre-workshop questionnaire. After the training session, time was allotted for trainees to execute the post-workshop questionnaire. Trainees then placed the completed evaluation documents in their individually coded packets and inserted them into a designated collection envelope.

Trainees were instructed on the procedural steps to administer pre- and post-workshop evaluations at each dental school site. ADEA staff also sent workshop presenters the complete set of evaluation instructions via e-mail immediately prior to their scheduled workshop. Completed pre- and post-questionnaires were coded to allow comparison of responses and were entered into an Excel spreadsheet. To evaluate knowledge transfer, the JMP statistical computer package (SAS, Carey, NC) was used for data analysis.

Results

Train-the-Trainer Workshop

The ADEA ACW facilitators are from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and have varying degrees of experience working with admissions committees. The self-reported data in Table 2 show the variations in diversity and their experiences with dental student admissions and recruitment.

On a five-point Likert-style scale, with five representing excellent, pre- and post-workshop questionnaire responses suggest that facilitators began the workshop most knowledgeable about which groups are considered URM in the dental profession (4.9 average score) and familiarity with admission committee roles in acceptance of a diverse dental student population (4.8 average score). Conversely, they entered the training program least knowledgeable about administering recruitment programs and postbaccalaureate programs (4.10), interpreting Supreme Court decisions relative to acceptance of ethnic minority students in dental school (4.11), and understanding how court decisions impact the dental admissions process (4.11) (Figure 1).

Pre- and post-workshop data also found positive transfer of knowledge (4.33 to 4.89 average score) with respect to facilitators’ reported ability to review the applicant pool and design an effective recruitment program for URM and economically disadvantaged students. Additionally, all facilitators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission or Recruitment Committee Years of Experience</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>11–14</td>
<td>15–20</td>
<td>&gt;20</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
selected the highest post-workshop score (5) to indicate their improved knowledge about admissions committee roles in acceptance of diverse dental student populations and the role of noncognitive factors in accepting diverse dental classes (Figure 2). Additionally, there were two statistically significant increases in knowledge regarding their ability to review the student applicant pool and design an effective recruitment program ($p=0.0312$) and how recent Supreme Court decisions affect admissions processes ($p=0.0312$).

All ten facilitators completed the ten-item online evaluation and rated the workshop “excellent” and “just right” with regard to program quality and amount of time devoted to delivery of workshop information, respectively. Of the nine facilitators who responded to the following statement, each selected strong agreement: “I now can incorporate the information presented during the workshop to help dental education enhance diversity in dental classes.”

When asked to identify challenging areas of the presentation, the facilitators expressed concern in four areas: balancing standardization of the presentation with a personalized message; effectively articulating relevant legal information; facilitating discussion that emphasizes the holistic approach to application review; and, as a minority presenter, gaining receptivity from admissions committee members.

**Summer 2009 ADEA ACWs**

Data for evaluation of the six ADEA ACWs presented in summer 2009 were procedurally gathered in the same manner as that from the train-the-trainers workshop. Pre- and post-workshop questionnaires assessed the participants’ awareness of various aspects of diversity and the admissions process. Demographic information was also gathered and analyzed. A post-workshop online evaluation was provided for all workshop participants to evaluate workshop value and presentation quality. In addition, unlike the train-the-trainers workshop evaluation, for the ADEA ACWs a follow-up telephone interview was conducted with admissions deans or directors at the participating schools.
Before beginning the ADEA ACW, the facilitators distributed evaluation packets to all participants and explained the evaluation process. Immediately after the workshop, a designated school contact collected all consent forms and questionnaires (in individually coded packets) and mailed these evaluation materials directly to the evaluator. After the workshop, participants also received an e-mail request from the evaluator to participate in an online survey to measure the workshop quality.

Follow-up telephone interviews with admissions directors/admissions deans marked the final phase of the ADEA ACW evaluation. The telephone script assured participants that the interview was not recorded, names of participants would not be disclosed, and information gathered from the interviews would be reported only in aggregate. The script contained nine questions formatted for yes/no, Likert-scale, and open-ended responses. Data from the six ADEA ACWs are presented collectively.

Shown in Table 3 is the number of ADEA ACW participants and survey respondents at each of the six participating dental schools. There were seventy-one total attendees at the six workshops combined. The pre-/post-survey yielded an 89 percent response rate, and online workshop evaluation yielded a 54 percent response rate.

Forty-seven of the workshop attendees have served on admissions and/or recruitment committees from less than ten to over twenty years. Nearly one out of two respondents reported less than ten years’ admissions or recruitment committee service, and 25 percent of workshop attendees opted not to report years of committee service (Table 4). Thirty-one females and thirty-two males participated in the pre-/post-workshop evaluation. Table 5 shows the age range and racial distribution of the attendees. The largest age group was between fifty-one and sixty years, and twelve individuals were in the sixty and above category. Most workshop participants identified their race as white (81 percent). Other races represented were Asian (3 percent), black (8 percent), Hispanic (6 percent), and American Indian (2 percent).

Very similar to the train-the-trainer workshop findings, a comparison of pre- and post-questionnaire data illustrates that, in general, 2009 ADEA ACW participants began the workshop least knowledgeable about administering recruitment (3.23 average score) and postbaccalaureate programs (3.15 average score).
However, on average, they entered the program with a slightly better understanding of the admissions committee’s role in recruiting a diverse dental student body (3.56 average score).

Another notable finding is the change in level of agreement with the statement “I am knowledgeable about noncognitive factors and their role in the acceptance of a diverse student body.” The pre-workshop average score rose from 3.56 to a post-workshop score of 4.48. Workshop participants reported similar levels of pre- and post-workshop knowledge regarding recent Supreme Court decisions, the impact on acceptance of ethnic minority students into dental education, and the effect of the rulings on dental admissions processes. In both instances, there was almost a one-point increase from 3.31 pre- scores to 4.24 and 4.21 post- scores, respectively, indicating a significant improvement in knowledge (p<.0001) (Figure 3).

Of the seventy-one workshop attendees, thirty-eight (53 percent) completed the online program evaluation. All respondents reported satisfaction with the workshop experience. Similarly, all respondents considered the workshop professionally valuable, with the exception of one person who marked undecided and one who did not respond. Most important, thirty-one respondents (82 percent) indicated that as a result of the workshop, they can now help their school enhance diversity in its classes. When polled about the likelihood of implementing ADEA ACW strategies, thirty-six attendees responded, with thirty (83 percent) in the affirmative. Almost two out of three attendees said they believe the workshop needs no improvement. Conversely, suggestions for improvements centered on presenters’ handling of the legal component, making the session more interactive, and in general allotting more time for the workshop.

### Table 3. Number of 2009 ADEA ACW participants and survey respondents at participating schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Sites</th>
<th>Number of Attendees</th>
<th>Number Completing Pre- and Post- Questionnaires</th>
<th>Number Completing Online Workshop Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4. 2009 ADEA ACW participants’ years of experience with dental student admissions or recruitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>&lt;10</th>
<th>11–14</th>
<th>15–20</th>
<th>&gt;20</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5. Age and race distribution of respondents to 2009 ADEA ACW pre-/post-workshop questionnaires (N=63)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Age</th>
<th>&lt;30</th>
<th>31–50</th>
<th>51–60</th>
<th>60+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Telephone Interviews with Admissions Directors/Admissions Deans

Follow-up telephone interviews with admissions directors/admissions deans marked the final phase of the ADEA ACW evaluation. Five of the six directors/admissions deans consented to participate
in a confidential telephone interview. Their responses to the nine questions addressed via teleconferences are summarized here.

1. Do you anticipate implementing ADEA Admissions Committee Workshop strategies at your school? All directors/admissions deans responded affirmatively and, in general, said they felt the training solidified and substantiated their committee’s desired direction. Nearly all schools had begun implementing ADEA ACW strategies to varying degrees. With regard to immediate changes to the admissions process, the most noted modification is broadened evaluation of applications. One admissions dean reported an increase in number of applicants invited to interview based on a holistic application review process. This step is viewed as positive albeit challenging with respect to additional time required of committee members who already have demanding schedules. Additional plans to modify admissions processes include creating or updating the admissions committee mission statement, updating the interview evaluation form to include noncognitive assessment, changing the interview format, and collaborating with medical admissions personnel to create a standardized interview format that would assess noncognitive factors. Due to impending leadership transitions, two directors/admissions deans expressed concern about the extent to which ADEA ACW strategies will be adopted at their schools.

2. In your opinion, what is the most challenging aspect of the workshop with regard to implementation of strategies presented? Challenges to implementing ADEA ACW strategies included the following: 1) committee member participation in all admissions meetings is a noted deterrent at some schools; due to multiple faculty responsibilities, it is often difficult to find mutually agreeable meeting times; 2) another respondent expressed a vague understanding of Supreme Court decisions in the Michigan admissions cases as well as admissions practices that are race-neutral and legally appropriate; and 3) key challenges for one committee are “the number of schools that are ‘tugging’ at the same pool of URM applicants” and devising ways to make its school stand out to URM applicants. One respondent commented that both he and the admissions committee are still grappling with the holistic admissions concept and remains concerned about admitting anyone other than candidates with the highest GPAs and DAT scores.

Figure 3. 2009 ADEA ACW participants’ responses (N=63) in two areas of significant change from pre- to post-workshop
3. Are there parts of the workshop that need follow-up information? One respondent suggested additional discussion of a nondefinitive list of attributes of successful applicants that had been introduced as an icebreaker to encourage interactive discourse. Another admissions dean/director recommended more information about the correlation among DAT scores, entering GPAs, and success in dental school. Two respondents commented that the ADEA ACW presenters followed up by sending slides for distribution to the full committee and felt the handout was very useful.

4. Would members of your committee participate in future admissions committee development programs offered in the following format: online training/webinar; onsite training; ADEA conference; other venue? Onsite training at the dental school was identified as the most convenient venue for future development programs (Figure 4). Four respondents felt online training or a webinar is convenient and would be helpful to members who were unable to attend the onsite workshop. However, both venues would impede interactive opportunities. Participating in an ADEA-sponsored conference was viewed as not financially viable to many, due to tight budgets and restricted travel.

5. What could ADEA or workshop trainers have done to improve the workshop? Overall, the workshop trainers received positive comments about the workshop logistics and quality. The most prominent suggestion for improvement was to expand the program length. One director/admissions dean suggested a full-day workshop, while others felt extending it a few hours would be helpful. Scheduling the session early in the day as opposed to afternoon and holding the workshop in locations that promote group discussion such as a conference room are important factors. (The time, date, and location of workshops were at the discretion of host schools.) There were uniform positive comments about the ADEA ACW presenters. However, some presenters were perceived as being more at ease discussing relevant court decisions, while others were better at managing time to allow full discussion of all workshop topics.

6. Please rate the overall workshop on the following five-point scale: 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=average, 4=very good, 5=excellent. Three directors/admissions deans (60 percent) rated the workshop “excellent.” Two respondents selected “very good” and qualified their responses with comments to indicate some segments were excellent,
while some aspects were very good, and overall the workshop was a worthwhile investment of time.

7. How would you describe your admissions committee’s general reaction to the workshop? Directors/admissions deans expressed the opinion that committee reaction to the workshop was overwhelmingly positive. In general, they felt it was educational with an overriding sense that workshop participants grasped the presented concepts and felt better prepared to apply them when making admissions decisions.

8. Have you met with the dean since the workshop to plan next steps? Four admissions directors/admissions deans had met with their dean following the workshop. Deans at five schools actually participated in the workshop. One school plans to have the dean meet with the admissions committee to discuss the school’s vision to expand diversity of classes. At the time of the interview, one director/dean had already held a post-workshop meeting with the admissions committee.

9. Would you like to give other comments about the workshop such as content or presenters? Each of the five respondents complimented the workshop presenters and, in general, perceived them as very knowledgeable, well trained, upbeat, and comfortable in presenting the topics. One respondent referred to an earlier response to question 5 (one presenter seemed uncomfortable and not as prepared as the copresenter). Equally positive comments were given about the workshop content. One dean/director expounded on an earlier comment regarding time management. The latter part of the session was rushed and some discussion had been abbreviated; hence, a suggestion was made to make the workshop an all-day event.

Structural Diversity Outcomes

As a basis of comparison of the structural diversity changes at other dental schools, Figure 5 shows URM enrollment trends in the first nine dental schools where the ADEA ACW was presented between 2004 and 2007. The arrow indicates the year when the workshop was presented. Each of the nine schools has experienced growth in URM enrollment, although the pace and amount of growth have varied

Figure 5. Percentages of first-year entering URM students at dental schools at which the ADEA Admissions Committee Workshop had been presented, 2004–07
among schools. It should be noted that the schools that have experienced the most consistent increases in URM enrollment have also experienced the most stability in staff and admissions committee membership, thus showing the positive impact of innovative admissions practices that have now been in place for a period of years. Also, those schools where the dean participated in the workshop have shown more immediate URM enrollment changes, suggesting that the dean’s support of achieving a more diverse student population is a strong factor in a school’s ability to do so.

Figure 6 shows URM enrollment trends for the six dental schools where the ADEA ACW was presented in summer 2009, immediately prior to the start of the 2010 admissions cycle. Enrollment data for the 2010 entering class are preliminary, as reported by the admissions deans prior to the start of the 2010–11 academic year. Three of the six institutions reported increases in URM enrollment in the 2010 entering class. One institution’s URM enrollment remained the same, and two schools experienced declines. Institution 2 experienced a decrease of one student from the previous year. Institution 4’s decline may be partially attributable to a methodology change in the way this school counted minority students, as well as the appointment of a new admissions dean at this school. These outcomes are comparable to what was seen the first year after the ADEA ACW was presented at the initial nine schools, where most remained relatively stable but a few demonstrated significant increases in URM enrollment. It can be noted that the dean was present at five summer 2009 workshops and that the admissions personnel have remained the same, except at Institution 4. ADEA staff will continue to monitor future years’ URM enrollment at all dental schools where an ADEA ACW has been hosted.

**Discussion**

The ADEA Admissions Committee Workshop can make a difference helping dental schools admit a more diverse student body. The workshop serves as a catalyst for schools to examine their admissions practices, involve the dean in the admissions process, learn how other schools have successfully implemented admissions practices, and justify change. Participants in a school’s workshop include admissions committee members who are not likely to attend professional admissions meetings or have other forums to address their concerns about making admissions decisions based on qualities other than grade point average and test scores. The ADEA ACW provides a venue to explore, examine, and challenge.
This pilot project to identify a cadre of dental school admissions officers who embrace the concept of holistic admissions practices and train them as facilitators for the ADEA ACW has expanded the capability to present the workshop at additional dental schools. Each of the facilitators copresented one workshop during summer 2009. Since the pilot concluded, six facilitators have copresented three additional workshops, and several more workshops are scheduled. It is the goal of ADEA to offer the ADEA ACW to all schools that would like to host a workshop. ADEA will continue to monitor URM enrollment as dental schools strive to achieve structural diversity.

There have been additional benefits of this pilot project. Findings from the evaluation of the summer 2009 ADEA ACWs show that the facilitators’ knowledge about various aspects of holistic admissions and admissions committee practices grew significantly as a result of the training experience. Not only has this benefitted the expansion of the workshop, but the facilitators have also shared their experiences and expertise with dental school admissions colleagues at professional meetings and with colleagues in other health professions within their own universities. All report that they have implemented strategies from the workshop with their own admissions committees.

Next Steps

Identifying and training the cadre of ten facilitators enables ADEA to offer the workshop to all U.S. dental schools at their invitation. With additional funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, ADEA is exploring collaborative initiatives to promote best practices and holistic admissions concepts with other health professions. As a first step, ADEA offered a pilot interprofessional Admissions Committee Workshop in fall 2010. Participants included administrators, faculty members, and admissions officers from the multiple health professions programs at a single university. Evaluation of this workshop will focus on the feasibility of expanding the ADEA ACW to other health professions.

ADEA is also reconvening the facilitators for additional training about key diversity issues, to update the workshop presentation, and to refresh presentation skills. Plans are under way to make the updated ADEA ACW presentation available on the ADEA website, with an accompanying manual. A follow-up survey from a 2007 ADEA survey of admissions directors about current admissions practices was conducted in 2010 to determine the extent of change in admissions practices at the U.S. dental schools. ADEA also continues to explore collaborative efforts among the health professions to promote holistic admissions practices that contribute to achieving a more diverse health care workforce. Although dental schools that have hosted ADEA Admissions Committee Workshops are utilizing a deep reservoir of replicable and customizable admissions strategies to improve diversity, they must simultaneously address other mutually impactful factors such as institutional environment and faculty diversity. The involvement of the dean in the admissions process is critical to success. Equally important are measures to sustain momentum in light of inevitable fluctuations in leadership and admissions committee composition.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge funding by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Appreciation is extended to Drake Washington, Project Coordinator, American Dental Education Association, and Wendy Ridenour, Recruitment Specialist, School of Dentistry, West Virginia University.

REFERENCES