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The Multicultural Vantage Program: A Model for Increasing Minority Enrollment in the Medical and Allied Health Fields

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“The cost of attending colleges offering health professions is beyond the reach of all but a few of the underrepresented students being considered.”

It is disputed that ethnic minorities will continue to be a growing percentage of all employment as we near the year 2000 and beyond. Administrators and faculty from the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the University of Nebraska at Omaha recognized that there was a problem with an underrepresentation of individuals from certain racial/ethnic groups in graduate and professional school programs which lead to positions as professionals in the health fields.

The impact of an underrepresentation of certain minority groups is apparent in diminished access to health care services and in sufficient numbers of cross-culturally sensitive and linguistically competent health care professionals and scientists who would act as role models for underrepresented students.

The immediate reasons for the underrepresentation of certain minorities in the health professions may be the result of a small and disproportional number of ethnic minorities applying to schools of health professions and graduate science programs. Some underlying causes may be that a very high percentage of these underrepresented students are first-generation college students and have not been exposed to the college-preparatory mathematics and science curricula required for the health professions. In many cases, there is a serious dearth of role models in the families, in the communities, and in the lives of these ethnic groups of students.

The cost of attending colleges offering health professions is beyond the reach of all but a very few of the underrepresented students being considered and there has been no reason for this group of students to aspire to such fields of endeavor.

In 1992, the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the University of Nebraska Medical Center initiated a cooperative venture to address the need for greater diversity in the health professions by encouraging multicultural students to pursue health care careers. The philosophy behind the endeavor, titled the Multicultural Vantage Program, was to recruit incoming freshman students from the metropolitan-area high schools. The program was directed toward three underrepresented minority groups: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans.

PRESENTER

Odra W. Bradley received a Doctorate of Education in Administration, Curriculum, and Instruction at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (1985). She has more than 30 years of

successful administrative experience in diverse academic and professional settings including high schools, private companies, and university teaching administration.

Interpersonal and communications skills have been utilized in building and maintaining favorable rapport with staff, students, faculty, parents, and the community. She has been Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs since the beginning of the 1994-1995 school year. Since that time, she has redirected the activities of her office, has built a model retention program, has initiated an "Early Warning" system, and has expanded her staff by recruiting three volunteer workers. She has established a working relationship with the teaching faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences and has built a bridge from her office to the offices of financial aid, admissions, and registration.