

# THE ART OF RECRUITMENT

## TOPIC OVERVIEW

Tangela Williams-Hill, DVM (she, her)



## AWARENESS

### What is diversity recruiting?

Diversity recruiting intentionally seeks and recruits individuals from a broad spectrum of social identities. It is still merit-based recruitment and aims to find the best possible candidate, but it's structured to give all applicants, regardless of background, an equal opportunity.

## UNDERSTANDING

### Key take-home messages.

- 1 Team members have the opportunity and responsibility to help assemble a diverse team through their network of friends and affiliations.**
- 2 All team members contribute to the organization's brand and can play a role in promoting its commitment to DEI. The DEI look and feel of your workplace may be a determining factor whether a potential candidate chooses to become an employee.**
- 3 Recruitment of a diverse team requires a thoughtful, purposeful, and planned leadership-driven approach.**

## TRANSFORMATION

### Specific actions you can take to generate positive DEI change with your team, workplace, clients and community.

- 1** Develop a recruitment pitch for candidates that highlights your commitment to DEI.
- 2** Audit your job posting procedure. Research new places to post job openings where a diverse audience is more likely to find your opportunity.
- 3** Use an anonymous survey to ask your team if they would recommend your organization to their network. Ask, "What is the best part of working with our team" and incorporate this information into your marketing messages. Ask, "Are there things that would make you reluctant to recommend becoming a member of our team," and consider making changes to address those issues.
- 4** Expand your perspective by making a conscious effort to seek out diverse perspectives and experiences. This can include reading books, attending events, or engaging in conversations with people outside of your professional network.

## TOPIC ESSAY

# Diversity Recruitment Strategies for Veterinary Workplaces

Diversity is the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs. In veterinary medicine, around 88% of veterinarians in the U.S. are white, 4% are Asian, and less than 2% are Black (Data USA, n.d.). This is disproportionate to generic demographic data, where around 40% of the U.S. population is Black, Hispanic, Native, or Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.); therefore, it is evident diversity is lacking in veterinary medicine. It has been reported for some time that racial and ethnic minorities will be the majority of the U.S. population (Day, 1996; Wang, 2002), further emphasizing how the makeup of the veterinary profession fails to reflect that of the U.S. population.

What are the barriers to diversity of underrepresented groups in veterinary medicine? Over the last few decades, women have made strides in veterinary medicine and vastly outnumber their male counterparts. Women currently represent around 80% of the student population of U.S. colleges of veterinary medicine (American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges, 2021). Tuskegee University graduates more than 70% of Black veterinarians at colleges of veterinary medicine. The American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges Definition of Diversity position statement states, “AAVMC has identified and recognized the presence of specific historically underrepresented populations in veterinary medicine (URVM) whose advancement in the veterinary medical profession has been disproportionately impacted due to legal, cultural or social climate impediments in the United States. The specific dimensions are gender, race, ethnicity (African Americans, Asian Americans, American Indians, Native Alaskans, and Hawaiians, Hispanics), and geographic, socioeconomic, and educational disadvantage” (American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges, 2021). The lack of role models of color is often given as a reason that more students from underrepresented minority groups are not recruited into veterinary medicine. When asked who was most influential in their decision to become veterinarians, 41% of current veterinary students at KSU listed a veterinarian whom they greatly admired (Elmore, 2004).

Why does this matter? Research indicates that a more diverse organization will lead to more creativity, efficiency, and employee morale, leading to better decision-making and more productive teams. Study after study also shows that diversity can have quantifiable results that lead to an organization’s revenue growth. Also, the topic of whether there is a veterinary workforce crisis, which include staff shortages, is constantly discussed. Several factors attributed to this “crisis” are mental health issues (burnout, depression, compassion fatigue, substance abuse, etc.) and veterinary staff wages and benefits, to name a few. This is yet another reason to expand the pipeline and recruit more diverse groups. So, how is creating a more diverse team achieved? An organization must implement diversity recruiting. Diversity recruiting is the practice of hiring candidates through a process that is free from biases for or against any individual or group of candidates. It is still merit-based recruitment and still aims to find the best possible candidate, but it’s structured to give all applicants, regardless of background, an equal opportunity.

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Steps you can take to create a diverse team:

The first step to creating a diverse team is to establish a process in recruitment efforts that will generate a diverse candidate pipeline. This step will ensure that when a company hires employees, they will not only be the right talent and best performers, but will also align within the company's culture and come from diverse backgrounds. Start reaching out to a larger candidate pool and not relying on your or your employees' networks because they may need to be more diverse. Your network may not provide the diversity desired, and it will narrow the candidate pool.

Consider utilizing professional recruiting agencies that specialize in identifying diverse candidates as well as those that specialize in recruiting veterinary staff. Recruiters may save the practice time and effort. Recruiters may also reduce the practice's workload when trying to hire the most qualified candidate for the job. Recruiters use different methods to locate job candidates. Some contact veterinary schools or have a strong social media presence. Others might advertise openings or cold call employed veterinarians located within the practice area (Olah, 2021).

The next step in recruitment strategies is to provide an inclusive environment for your employees. This strategy can attract potential employees, especially those that are included in underrepresented groups. Creating an inclusive work environment is a major endeavor and is a continual process that needs to be revisited, not just a check-the-box effort. Building an inclusive working culture starts at the top with leadership. Leadership must demonstrate that they sincerely and authentically embrace diversity. This can be exemplified by setting expectations of professional and respectful behavior, addressing any incidents of discrimination or biases, and encouraging each team member to celebrate each other's differences.

When creating inclusive environments, organizations must offer their employees open feedback. Feedback can be accomplished by utilizing employee surveys, group discussions, or anonymous digital forms to submit the feedback. Giving employees multiple ways to share their feedback will encourage them to share their perspectives and stories, therefore resulting in better employee engagement. Feedback can also create an open dialogue that can lead to more positive outcomes for the whole organization.

Another benefit of inclusive environments is that they encourage building rapport and trust among leaders, their employees, and all employees at an organization. When creating diverse work cultures, trust is essential and produces many positive outcomes like productivity, innovation, creativity, and engagement. This attribute is especially important for underrepresented individuals coming into an organization. One of the most important things your organization can do to promote inclusion is create a comfortable environment for all employees. Some individuals may be hesitant to voice their opinion or share their perspectives, especially if they are underrepresented, so a comfortable and trusting environment can allow for a safe working environment.

Consider initiating a diversity recruitment training program with set goals for your hiring managers. Review trending industry data and evaluate the data within your organization's own recruitment efforts. How do your efforts compare, and have they improved over time? Identify gaps and areas to work on. Re-evaluate the goals set periodically to see what progress has been achieved. If additional training is needed, consider enrolling in Diversity Workforce Certification courses.

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As your organization's trends are identified, unconscious bias may be evident during the screening process when resumes from potential candidates are assessed. To address unconscious biases, your organization can create a training program that raises awareness and knowledge surrounding recruiting for diversity and provides information on recognizing unconscious bias. Enrolling in certified unconscious bias training programs is also an option if financially feasible. In addition to unconscious bias training, performing simple steps can help alleviate bias. Hiring managers should be blind to potentially biased information (race, gender, etc.). So, removing photos and names from materials and blacking out the candidate's name can also help with unconscious bias. Studies show that people may make assumptions about that person or rule them out of opportunities based on their name. Additional steps like blacking out the school they graduated from can also alleviate unconscious bias, especially if they didn't graduate from a prestigious school.

Another helpful strategy is to recruit candidates in different spaces not previously explored. Try new, more diverse places when using job posting sites, job fairs, or colleges. Post on affinity group job posting boards. Many are listed below in the resource section. Visit college fairs at historically black colleges and universities. Instead of recruiting candidates at the same colleges and job fairs, make connections in your city and at different events to attract diverse candidates. Make connections at smaller networking alumni events that may not have previously been explored. Remember, network broadly; if you always source talent from the same networks, your applicant pool is likely to always look the same.

Lastly, write job descriptions that will open more possibilities for diverse candidates to apply. The language used can be impactful because it may stop a potential applicant from applying and finding out more about the position and the organization. According to a report by the Harvard Business Review, women are likely to only apply for a job if they meet 100% of the requirements set in the job description. Both men and women don't apply for these jobs because they don't want to waste their energy if the employer wouldn't hire them anyway (Johnson, 2020). Focusing too heavily on requirements or necessary skills/experience can alienate top candidates. Using gender-neutral language can help to avoid alienating potential candidates. In addition to more inclusive language, including your commitment to diversity in the job description is essential. Stating your organization's commitment to diversity and the goals of providing an inclusive working environment can go a long way with possible candidates. In many cases, job descriptions are your first and only connections to a potential applicant, so ensure the language is inclusive and inviting to attract the right candidate.

An effective recruiting process is essential in creating a more diverse team and providing a more diverse pipeline in the veterinary field. ■

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Tangela M. Williams-Hill received her DVM from Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Williams-Hill, practiced for six years in small animal medicine and exotic medicine before joining industry with IDEXX now currently Elanco, then relief work thereafter. Dr. Williams-Hill has been an AVMA speaker discussing topics on DEI and women in leadership. She is also active in community programs that help promote and educate students from underrepresented areas about veterinary medicine. She presently sits as a board member and president-elect of Women's Veterinary Leadership Development and is one of the founders of an IDEXX diversity, equity, and inclusion community.

## RESOURCES

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The inclusion of resources by this author does not imply or constitute an endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association or the Veterinary Medical Association Executives.

# DIVERSITY ORGANIZATIONS



We encourage you to intentionally expand your network to include diversity. To get you started, here are some groups you may be interested in exploring. Keep in mind that this is not an all-inclusive list, so go ahead and do your own search to find additional organizations that grab your attention.

## **AFFINITY GROUPS**

**American Association of Asian Veterinary Professionals**

**American Association of Veterinarians of Indian Origin**

**Association of Medical Professionals with Hearing Losses**

**Black DVM Network**

**Diversity Veterinary Medicine Coalition**

**Indo-American Veterinary Medical Association**

**Institutes of Healthcare Educational Leadership & Professionals**

**International Veterinary Students' Association**

**Latinx Veterinary Medical Association**

**Multicultural Veterinary Medical Association**

**National Association for Black Veterinarians**

**Native American Veterinary Association**

**Native American Veterinary Services**

**Pride Veterinary Medical Community**

**VOICE**

**Women's Veterinary Leadership Development Initiative**

## **SERVICE GROUPS**

**Chapter VIII: Veterinary Inclusion and Intersectionality Initiative**

**Not One More Vet**

**Pawsibilities**

**Vet Set Go**

**VetaHumanz**

**Veterinary Mental Health Initiative - SHANTI Project**