

More diverse workforce, better care for all is Institute's goal



**INSTITUTE FOR DIVERSITY
in Health Management**

An affiliate of the American Hospital Association

As part of its commitment to building a more diverse workforce, the AHA co-founded the Institute for Diversity in Health Management in 1994, along with the American College of Healthcare Executives and the National Association of Health Services Executives. The Institute gained additional members, including the Catholic Health Association of the United States, Diversified Investment Advisers, Aramark Healthcare and HCA. It joined the AHA in 2002 as an affiliated subsidiary. AHA News recently spoke to Fred Hobby, Institute CEO and president, about its efforts to increase the number of people of color in health services administration to better reflect the increasingly diverse communities that health care organizations serve, and to improve opportunities for professionals already in the field.

AHA News: *Why is the Institute's mission so critical in today's health care landscape and how is the organization meeting its mission?*

Hobby: We know disparities in health care and health outcomes exist, but if we don't address these disparities now, the situation will only get worse as the racial and ethnic minority populations continue to increase. By having hospital leadership teams and boards that reflect the diversity of the community, you ensure that the community's unique challenges and opportunities are fully considered. The Institute, along with the AHA's Center for Healthcare Governance, leads the field in these efforts through our Trustee Education Program, which recruits and trains qualified diverse indi-

viduals to serve on hospital and health system boards. We also maintain an online database with profiles and resumes of trustee candidates who complete the education program. But I believe our Summer Enrichment Program (SEP) – an enhanced internship program that gives real-world work experience to graduate students in health administration – is the program that best reflects our mission.

AHA News: *What is the biggest challenge that the field is facing around diversity and disparities, and how have the challenges changed since the Institute's founding in 1994?*

Hobby: Our biggest challenge is voluntary involvement. If senior management does not voluntarily start to engage their hospital in efforts to eliminate dispar-

ities before the minority groups rise to become 50% or more of the population, we could have a more serious problem in the future. The challenges have not changed very much over the years, and that is why the AHA and four other leading national health care groups this year issued a "call to action" to eliminate disparities in care. [Editor's note: The AHA earlier this year joined forces with the Association of American Medical Colleges, American College of Healthcare Executives, Catholic Health Association of the United States and National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems to create a national call to action to eliminate health care disparities. The organizations have assembled information about successful efforts to address disparities. It is available at www.EquityofCare.org]

AHA News: *What role do you see the Institute playing in this initiative?*

Hobby: Much of the Institute's work centers on addressing the three goals of the call to action – increasing diversity in governance and leadership; increasing the collection and use of race, ethnicity and language preference data; and increasing cultural competency training. In addition to our Trustee Education Program and SEP, we work with search firms to identify diverse candidates for senior leadership and board positions. Working

with the AHA's Health Research & Educational Trust this year, we unveiled a guide, "Building a Culturally Competent Organization: The Quest for Equity in Health Care," which explores how hospitals and health systems can increase their cultural competency to provide care that is respectful of patients' diverse values, beliefs and behaviors. We also continue to promote data collection, and this year participated in a Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health advisory committee to provide guidance on the National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services.

AHA News: *Can you briefly describe some of the Institute's accomplishments?*

Hobby: Since 1994, more than 500 students have successfully completed the SEP and many have launched careers in health care administration at the sites they interned. In addition, the Trustee Education Program has prepared more than 350 qualified candidates for service on hospital and health system boards. During the past five years, our membership has increased from 280 to nearly 800, and I think that is a result of providing quality guid-



Hobby

ance and programming to the field. This year, we had 20 people complete a year-long Certificate in Diversity Management Program that aims to decrease health disparities and improve health care workforce diversity by providing skill, leadership and career development opportunities for practitioners in diversity management. We hope to expand the program next year.

AHA News: *What can we expect to see from the Institute in 2012?*

Hobby: We recently extended our deadline and encourage hospital leaders to complete our survey, "Diversity & Disparities: A Benchmark Study of U.S. Hospitals," by Jan. 13, and we'll unveil the survey results at the Institute's 2012 National Leadership and Education Conference in Nashville, TN, which will be held June 5-6. The survey is designed to help hospital and health system leaders assess and compare their internal diversity efforts, and identify areas that need further attention. The findings also will help the Institute recognize hospital leaders promoting diversity within health care. At the conference, we will have speakers and panelists from leading health care and related organizations who will share successful strategies and practices for increasing diversity and equity.

For more about the Institute for Diversity in Health Management, visit www.diversityconnection.org.