SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES TO increase racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in the nursing workforce are long overdue. The number of minority nurses in the U.S. has not significantly increased in the past 4 decades. Of the nearly 4 million registered nurses, Blacks represent only 7.8% with all minorities accounting for a total of 26.7% of the RN population (AHRQ, 2019; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2018). Men in nursing represent 9.6% of the total number of RNs in the country. The continuing lack of diversity in the nursing workforce may contribute to perceptions by a significant number of care recipients that their needs are not being fully addressed. Differences in levels of care may exist, in part, due to mistrust and misunderstandings between minority patients and their non-minority health care providers (Smedley et al., 2003). When a care recipient perceives that their values, beliefs, and experiences are not acknowledged and respected, there is an increased risk for care that is not culturally sensitive.

A strategy to address the lack of nursing diversity is the National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) Mini Nurse Academy, an innovative program designed to provide students from traditionally underrepresented communities with opportunities to share experiences with professional nurses. The inaugural Academy, piloted in Alabama by the Birmingham chapter in 2018 and 2019, is now expanding into NBNA chapters across the country. In this issue of NBNA News, four NBNA chapters offer details on how they have operationalized the Academy in their local areas.

NBNA’s mission, for over five decades, has been to position “Black nurses to advocate for and implement strategies to ensure access to the highest quality of healthcare for persons of color”. We believe that the recruitment, retention, and graduation of a diverse nursing workforce is likely to increase opportunities for access to culturally sensitive health care for all Americans. I challenge each NBNA chapter to consider joining the NBNA Mini Nurse Academy program. Our care recipients are counting on us to remain committed to our goal of increasing the numbers of nurses who share the values, beliefs, and lived experiences of all Americans. For more information, contact the NBNA Mini Nurse Academy Regional Coordinators (Loretta Lee, llee@uab.edu; Jennifer Coleman, jacolema@samford.edu).

REFERENCES