

# FDA Supports Hispanic Action Agenda Develops Diversity Databank

By Rosamelia Lecia

Closing the Gap, Hispanic Agenda for Action • October 1998

Development of a Diversity Databank is just one of the ideas the U.S. Food and Drug Administration pursued in support of the Hispanic Agenda for Action (HAA). It helps the FDA—the world's oldest and most respected consumer protection agency—identify scientists and professionals from Hispanic and other underrepresented groups for employment within the agency.

Located in the Office of the Commissioner since its establishment in 1995, the Diversity Databank is an integral part of FDA's vision, "To provide superior public service by developing, maintaining and supporting a high-quality, diverse workforce," said Dr. Jonca Bull, special assistant to the Commissioner. The databank assists FDA managers in identifying qualified minority professionals seeking full- and part-time employment, as well as candidates for membership on FDA advisory committees and boards.

With the support and collaboration of FDA offices in Human Resources and Management Services, External Affairs, and the Office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights, the Diversity Databank maintains an active outreach program with minority professional organizations and academic institutions.

Candidates in the Diversity Databank have granted FDA permission to include information that will allow the agency to monitor applications from underrepresented groups.

However, submission of a résumé or curriculum vitae to the Diversity Databank does not constitute an application for employment which requires responding to a specific FDA vacancy announcement.

## Increasing Consumer Representation

FDA actively recruits minorities, women, and people with disabilities to serve on its advisory committees. Consumer representatives serve on 32 chartered advisory committees and 16 panels, and the disciplines they represent vary. They include consumer advocates, college professors, lawyers, nurses, physicians, microbiologists, biologists, pharmacists, engineers, and veterinarians.

The primary roles of advisory committees are to provide independent expert scientific advice in the evaluation of regulated products. They also help the agency make sound decisions based upon the reasoned application of good science.

"Public participation is an integral and vital component to FDA's decision-making process," said Charles Gaylord, acting associate commissioner for consumer affairs. "Consumers who serve on the Agency's advisory committees provide a point of view that is necessary to ensure a proper balance with industry and scientific views."

Consumer representatives have important roles in committee deliberations. Their role is to lead discussions on key issues from the perspective of consumers while the other committee members focus on issues from the perspective of

scientists and clinicians. Consumer representatives serve as special government employees for terms lasting from two to four years. Appointees must comply with conflict of interest and other government requirements.

## HAA Activities

FDA also supports the HAA through conference participation, student recruitment and training and special outreach efforts, including follow-up regional meetings from the September 1996 HHS Hispanic Health Symposium.

One key has been the involvement of FDA's senior management, who have been thoroughly briefed on the overall scope of HAA and the development of recruitment initiatives for addressing underrepresentation of Hispanics at the agency.

FDA supported and participated in conferences, discussing such issues as HAA, tobacco, recruitment, mentoring, and public participation at FDA. The conferences

included the National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Organizations, National Council of La Raza, League of United Latin American Citizens, IMAGE, National Hispanic Medical Association, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), and the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science.

FDA also hired four HACU interns over the past three years and provided support to the InterAmerican College of Physicians and Surgeons' Summer Youth Program. Approximately 200 students visited FDA and were provided information on job opportunities, tobacco, food safety and FDA's responsibilities.

The agency is expanding outreach regarding its vacancy opportunities by advertising in publications such as *Hispanic Business* magazine. FDA is also sponsoring a two hour seminar, "Merging Paradigms: Cross-Cultural Mentoring Perspectives" as part of Hispanic Heritage Month.

*To apply to be a member of an advisory committee, submit a résumé with cover letter to FDA, Office of Consumer Affairs, 5600 Fishers Lane, Room 16-85, Rockville, MD 20857. Individuals who would like more information should call (301)827-5006.*

*For more information on the Diversity Databank, contact Dr. Jonca Bull, MD, Special Assistant, Office of the Commissioner, 5600 Fishers Lane, Room 14B-03, Rockville, MD 20857, or call 301-827-3350.*

*The Diversity Databank Web site is [www.fda.gov/diversity](http://www.fda.gov/diversity). Our Web site provides up-to-date information on current FDA job openings as well as a link to the Resumix site, which provides help in résumé preparation.*

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