

Projections of Future Medical School Enrollment

In 2006, in response to analyses of workforce trends and studies concluding that physician shortages existed or were soon to exist in particular states and specialties, the AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) recommended a 30 percent increase in U.S. medical school enrollment by 2015. The recommendation was calculated using the 2002 first-year enrollment of 16,488 students as a baseline. A 30 percent increase would yield 4,946 additional medical school enrollees per year, for a total of 21,434 first-year medical students in 2015. The AAMC recommended this goal be met by increasing enrollment at existing medical schools and, where appropriate, creating new medical schools. To gauge progress, the AAMC has surveyed medical school deans each fall since 2004 on their schools' current enrollment as well as their five-year projected enrollment. In conjunction with the survey, the AAMC collaborates with the American Association of Colleges of

Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) on a survey of the deans of osteopathic medical schools to develop a sense of the overall physician workforce for the future. This *Analysis in Brief* summarizes the 2008 data.

Methodology

The deans of 129¹ LCME accredited or preliminarily accredited (granted the ability to accept applications) U.S. medical school programs were asked to participate in the annual AAMC Deans Enrollment Survey in the fall of 2008. As a supplement to the enrollment survey, the AAMC requested data from the LCME Applicant- and Candidate-status medical programs.² For this report, our calculations include only schools in the formal LCME accreditation review process.

The questionnaire asked deans to provide their medical school's enrollment for the current year (2008) as well as their anticipated enrollment for the next five years (through

2013-14). For those schools that did not respond, first-year enrollment in 2008 from the AAMC Student Records System was assumed to continue unchanged through 2013.

Results

A total of 121 (94%) deans or their designees, most often an associate dean, responded to the 2008 survey. One preliminarily accredited school reported expected future enrollment via e-mail.

Ninety-eight (78.4%) of the 125 schools accredited by the LCME in 2002 had increased their first-year enrollment by the 2008-09 academic year. An additional 15 schools reported plans to increase enrollment by 2013-14. In all, 113 of these schools (90.4%) had either already increased or planned to increase their first-year enrollments. Ninety-six schools increased by more than one position, and 29 schools increased by more than 20 positions.

Table 1. Baseline and Projected First-Year Enrollment for Current and New U.S. Medical Schools, 2002–2013*

Accreditation Status	No. of Schools	First-Year Enrollment					
		Baseline No. of Students		Projected No. of Students			
		2002	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Accredited by 2002	125	16,488	18,125	18,546	18,723	19,011	19,123
Accredited 2005-08	5		228	292	384	456	508
Total as of 2008	130	16,488	18,353	18,838	19,107	19,467	19,631
Accreditation Applicant Schools	5		40	160	220	280	315
Projected Totals	135	16,488	18,393	18,998	19,327	19,747	19,946
Projected increase from 2002			1,905 (11.6%)	2,510 (15.2%)	2,839 (17.2%)	3,259 (19.8%)	3,458 (21.0%)

*Programs surveyed in 2008 indicated their first-year enrollment estimates for the proceeding five years (2009–2013).

1 The Commonwealth Medical College was granted preliminary accreditation after the survey was released, therefore their information was gathered via personal communication efforts.

2 LCME Applicant-status schools are those that have submitted the initial payment and have been deemed by LCME staff to meet the basic eligibility requirements. LCME Candidate-status schools are those that have completed the applicant process and submitted additional information that has been favorably accepted by the LCME.

Table 2. Planned Increase in First-Year Enrollment by Institution Type and Region

Institution Type	No. of Programs	First-Year Enrollment	
		2002-03	Planned Increase by 2013-14
Private	52	6,607	847 (12.8%)
Public	78	9,881	2,296 (23.2%)
Region			
Central	31	4,497	555 (12.3%)
Northeast	36	5,021	504 (10.0%)
South	47	5,129	1,699 (33.1%)
West	16	1,841	385 (20.9%)
All Schools	130	16,488	3,143 (19.4%)

With the inclusion of 10 new schools (five accredited as of 2008 and five Applicant schools), the total planned enrollment for academic year 2013-14 is predicted to be 19,946, a 21 percent increase from the baseline year of 2002-03 (see Table 1).

As Table 2 demonstrates, of the 3,143 projected new positions from the 130 medical schools accredited as of 2008,³ 847 (26.9%) would come from private institutions and 2,296 (73.1%) from public institutions. Regionally, the southern and western schools show larger projected increases than do the central or northeast schools.

Discussion

Projected Enrollment Beyond 2013

Although expected increases appear to fall short of the AAMC’s call for 30

percent growth by 2015, existing schools show substantial increases in their first-year enrollments. Projecting beyond 2013 (using an historical growth rate of 2 percent since 2004), the existing schools would reach the 30 percent increase by 2018. With the addition of LCME applicant and candidate schools, the goal would be nearly reached by 2017 (Figure 1).

Osteopathic Enrollment Projections

To accurately assess growth in the overall physician workforce, it is important to review the trends in osteopathic enrollment. The AACOM’s survey is similar to the AAMC method of collecting future enrollment data. Their 2008 enrollment numbers (4,732) represent a 53.7 percent increase from the first-

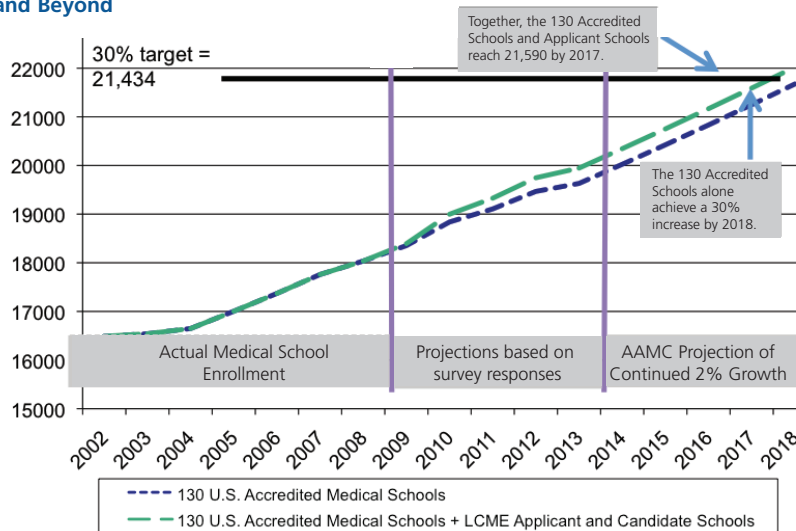
year enrollment in 2002 (3,079). AACOM projects 5,519 first-year enrolled students in 2013, a 79.2 percent increase from 2002. The combined first-year enrollment in M.D. and D.O. schools in 2013 is projected to be 5,898 above the combined enrollments in 2002.

Conclusion

The AAMC recommended that the increase in medical school enrollment should come from both growth at existing schools and new medical schools. Data demonstrate this has been the case. Expansion at the 125 LCME schools accredited at the time the recommendation was made is expected to comprise 76 percent of the anticipated growth in first-year enrollments by 2013; schools accredited since the recommendation or currently under review by the LCME will likely account for 24 percent of the increase.

The data indicate enrollment is likely to rise by 30 percent by 2017 or 2018. The target could be achieved sooner if the schools in the LCME’s review process and those under discussion at the local level move forward more rapidly than currently planned. However, the current financial recession may limit the growth of existing schools that rely on state funding or delay the start of new medical schools.

Figure 1: Projected Number of New Enrollments at U.S. Medical Schools in 2013 and Beyond



³ This includes the 129 schools who received the full electronic survey and the one school who submitted their information through personal communication.

Authors:

Stacey Schulman, M.A., research analyst, Center for Workforce Studies, Office of the Executive Vice President, AAMC, ssschulman@aamc.org, 202-862-6053

Edward Salsberg, M.P.A., director, Center for Workforce Studies, Office of the Executive Vice President, AAMC, esalsberg@aamc.org, 202-828-0415

Association of American Medical Colleges

2450 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037-1127
analysis@aamc.org
www.aamc.org/data/aib