



Group on Student Affairs Committee on Admissions Annual Report

Current Membership: Robert A. Witzburg, M.D., Chair (replacing Cynthia M. Heldberg, Ph.D. in 6/06), Sunny Nakae-Gibson, M.S.W. (MAS), Cynthia E. Boyd, M.D. (MAS), Catherine Solow, M.A. (Central Region), Filomeno Maldonado (Southern Region), Molly Osborne, M.D., Ph.D (GSA National Vice Chair, replacing Georgette Dent, M.D. in 11/06), Christopher Leadem (Western Region), Kathleen Baer (Northeast Region, replacing Robert A. Witzburg, M.D. in 6/06), Gabriel Fine (OSR, replacing Sara A Brenner in 6/06), and Jeremiah L. Putnam, Ph.D. (NAAHP, replacing C. Larry Sullivan in 6/06).

A major focus of the COA has been the enhancement of working relationships between admissions officers and health professions advisors. This effort, building upon a strong foundation of collegiality, has been reflected in the discussions at the national level, as well as in the regions.

The COA met three times during this year, heard reports from the key service areas of the AAMC, and considered a broad range of issues on behalf of its constituencies. The key concerns of the group include the following:

- The Professional Development Conference for Medical School Admissions Officers took place in Sottsdale, AZ from June 21-24, 2007 and was well attended. The format of the conference was revised, to allow an in-depth and detailed exploration of a small number of topics. The admissions community appreciated this format and recommended that it be considered for other professional development conferences.
- Criminal Background Checks (CBCs) have been a subject of intense debate in the COA as it has in other GSA areas. The COA has strongly supported the growing consensus that a national clearinghouse mechanism for conducting CBCs on accepted applicants must be created and that this should be done under the auspices of the AAMC. Several members of the COA have participated in this discussion with the AAMC leadership and are serving on the Criminal Background Check Advisory Committee. The COA also completed the development of a guidelines and effective practices document which has been posted on the GSA members-only website, intended to support medical schools as they develop policies and procedures to conduct CBCs and to handle criminal history information.
- The COA voted to develop a 2-year project to assist medical schools in implementing Individualized Holistic Review in their Offices of Admissions. This was a major focus of the PDC and it is expected that the COA will work closely with AAMC staff in this effort.

- Physician Workforce expansion surfaced as a topic of concern. Members of the COA have expressed skepticism about the adequacy of the current and future applicant pool to sustain an enrollment increase in the range of the 30% being recommended. In addition, it is not clear how medical schools would finance the expansion of facilities, faculty, and clinical networks needed to support such a large expansion, nor is there confidence that simply increasing the number of graduates from medical school will address existing problems of geographic and specialty distribution. Members of the COA have engaged with AAMC staff in an analysis of data on the applicant pool, and look forward to participating in further discussion on this vital issue.
- MCAT conversion to computer based testing has been a focus of interest for several years. In particular, there is ongoing concern that the testing network lacks surge capacity for the peak testing times in the admissions cycle. Dr. Mitchell and her staff continue to work on this with the COA and our colleagues from NAAHP. In addition, the COA and Dr. Sabalis have distributed a recommendation that each medical school develop and publish a policy regarding any changes in the deadline for receipt of MCAT scores. Future changes in the MSAR format may accommodate the need to update this schedule on a school specific basis.
- Continuing efforts to support medical schools and advisors in the conversion to electronic communication. Members of the COA are serving on an Advisory Committee with staff from AMCAS who are developing plans for the provision of all letters of recommendation in electronic form, beginning with the 2008-2009 application cycle.

Robert A. Witzburg, M.D.

Chair, National GSA Committee on Student Affairs, 2006-2007