

**Group on Student Affairs**  
**Committee on Student Financial Assistance (COSFA) Annual Report 2009**

COSFA has had a busy year. It began with the well-attended GSA-sponsored plenary session at last year's Annual Conference in San Antonio entitled "The Millennium Becomes a Physician" and now ends with the turnover of the COSFA leadership to incoming chairperson Robert Coughlin of Harvard University School of Medicine.

In many ways, the last year was a "legislative year" of action. The AAMC sponsored outgoing COSFA chair Carrie Steere-Salazar in a new round of Negotiated Rulemaking with the Department of Education. During that rulemaking session, the Department announced their willingness to allow married students to file for Income-based Repayment benefits using joint federal tax returns, something the AAMC and COSFA had been fighting for since last year.

The growing medical school student loan debt is viewed by the GSA Steering Committee to be of major concern, and COSFA continued working closely with the GSA leadership to make sure student loan benefits would be quickly understood, supported and advertised by campus leaders.

The newly energized *FIRST for Medical Education* led the way within the financial aid community with publications on the new Income-based Repayment and Loan Forgiveness for Public Service programs, which COSFA helped to develop and promote. COSFA also helped develop FIRST forms for foreign students, dual degree programs and withdrawing students. COSFA also helped review the new Financial Aid Literacy online program (a replacement for MD2) and work on refining "From Inspiration to Practice" a timeline for medical students. At a time of diminishing resources and ever-increasing student debt, COSFA is indeed lucky to have an entire AAMC team actively supporting the needs of the Financial Aid Community!

At its meeting in July, COSFA met with members of the College Board to discuss financial aid need analysis programs. The Health Professions' programs have special data needs that are not met by most of the currently available software (e.g. tracking SDS demographic information and collecting parental data).

Finally, student support divisions at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) have become invigorated with new support from the Obama Administration. After more than 25 years they are considering an update of their guidance for the Health Professions programs. COSFA has already drafted suggested changes to some of the guidance and hopes to work closely with HRSA as they begin crafting new language.

Carrie Steere-Salazar  
Chair, National GSA-COSFA 2006-2009