



Group on Student Affairs National Chair's Annual Report

On behalf of the national officers, committee chairs, and regional chairs who constitute the GSA Steering Committee, I am pleased to summarize the activities and accomplishments of the Group on Student Affairs (GSA) over the past year. The initiatives started, and work completed, are the result of contributions from hundreds of GSA members, students, AAMC staff, and colleagues who support our efforts.

GSA Steering Committee Activities

The Steering Committee has had fruitful discussions on a wide variety of topics and I briefly mention two. Over the past year, AAMC leadership has worked on completing the “Strategic Thinking and Positioning” document and also initiated an AAMC governance review process. GSA and GSA-MAS national officers have been engaged in the discussion of both initiatives. In February, the AAMC Executive Council approved a draft revision of the Strategic Thinking and Positioning document which is intended to set strategic directions and priorities for the next several years. The document was discussed by many AAMC constituencies, including a conference call with GSA and GSA-MAS national officers. Input from different groups led to a revised document which has been reviewed by the AAMC Executive Council and will be considered at its September meeting. The governance review process is proceeding. In June, GSA and GSA-MAS national leadership was part of a diverse forum that participated in a Governance Town Hall Meeting. A number of important questions about the role of governance were raised from the meeting, and will be discussed further as the process unfolds. AAMC leadership has committed to an open and inclusive process and plans to engage the Steering Committee throughout the effort.

As noted in committee activity below, the Steering Committee continues to work with the NRMP, representatives of residency programs, and OSR, to improve the Residency Match and Scramble process. ERAS has been asked to participate in future deliberations. In order to address some of the continuing concerns about the process, a wide variety of key constituencies have been invited to participate in the Transition Forum at this AAMC Annual Meeting. This initial discussion will set the stage for a Student Affairs PDC in June 2008 that will be focused on transition issues from medical school to residency.

GSA National Committee Activities

The **Committee on Admissions** (COA) has published a very useful document titled “Effective Practices for Criminal Background Checks” on the GSA web site. This is a working document designed to assist schools in integrating or improving incorporation of

criminal background checks into the admissions process. Members of the COA are on the Criminal Background Check Implementation Committee, which is working with AAMC staff on the Beta-test of an AAMC-supported system for completing and reporting criminal background checks. The full system is expected to be in place, for schools who wish to participate, for 2008 – 2009 applicants. COA is working with AAMC staff on a unified system for submission of letters of recommendation for applicants. The COA is maintaining close dialogue with the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions regarding assessment of professional characteristics of applicants to medical school. COA discussed proposed “traffic rules” for MD/PhD applicants and programs. In addition, COA is considering adoption of a two-year project to support the implementation of Individualized Holistic Review in medical school admissions to enhance diversity.

The **Committee on Student Financial Assistance** (COSFA) has completed a timely and important document titled “Statement of Effective Interactions in Financial Aid”. It outlines expectations of schools and financial aid officers in their relationship with lenders. COSFA worked with AAMC Office of Government Relations and AAMC leadership on a number of important items including: the status of the Student Loan Sunshine Act and the Higher Education Amendments of 2007, support for full elimination of the three year limit on Economic Hardship Deferment, support for increasing the annual subsidized Stafford Loan limits for graduate and professional students to \$12,000, support for increasing the aggregate Stafford Loan limit to \$223,793, and support for participation of financial aid professionals on lender advisory boards with reimbursement for reasonable expenses. COSFA continues to review HRSA regulations for a number of programs and is working with the OSR Administrative Board to develop tools to assist medical students in understanding and managing educational debt.

The **Committee on Student Records** (COSR) discussed a variety of issues related to verification of medical school degrees by organizations other than the medical school or the AAMC. COSR also discussed “home” school responsibilities for maintaining copies of evaluation forms, verifying attendance at, and issuing academic credit for electives completed at another institution. COSR is working closely with AAMC staff on the development of the Visiting Student Application Service and with Student Record System staff regarding the reporting of students’ racial and ethnic identities. COSR plans to update its “Guidelines for Maintaining Permanent Student Records” document to address new requirements associated with the initiation of criminal background checks and the Visiting Student Application Service. The “Student Records Administrators Handbook” revision is planned for completion in early 2008.

The **Committee on Student Affairs** (COSA) continues to develop its web-based “effective practices” resource in support of the GLBT recommendations for students. It was approved by AAMC Governance and distributed to member medical schools in the spring of 2007. COSA is finalizing a draft survey of medical schools regarding the funding and staffing of student affairs offices. This will provide important information to assist with plans for increases in class size by many medical schools. COSA proposed that NRMP and ERAS collaborate in requesting that residency programs inform

applicants as to whether they will participate in the Scramble, how they will communicate with applicants, and the estimated length of time it might take to make decisions to fill vacant positions. COSA is beginning efforts to create an “Effective Practices for the Scramble” document to assist schools in supporting senior students.

The **GSA-Minority Affairs Section** (GSA-MAS) continues to work through its long-term strategic plan and awaits additional information about the part of the AAMC Team on Groups report that addresses potential restructuring of the GSA-MAS. The GSA-MAS Data, Research, and Publication Team will work with the AAMC Division of Diversity Policy and Programs to evaluate data from the recent GSA-MAS Survey. These data will help define the expanding role of MAS officers. GSA-MAS continues to host highly successful regional mini-PDCs for minority affairs officers and is discussing a possible 2008-2009 national PDC. GSA-MAS will again host a Minority Student Career Awareness Workshop and Recruitment Fair at the 2007 AAMC Annual Meeting. GSA-MAS recommended the establishment of a formal ongoing liaison relationship between the GSA-MAS Coordination Committee and the Association of American Indian Physicians. GSA-MAS will celebrate the 30th anniversary of its creation at the 2007 AAMC Annual Meeting.

Meetings

The GSA is a professional development group, and thus all meetings have a professional development focus. Members of GSA and AAMC staff are busy planning meetings for next year. The following meetings are planned for 2008: a PDC for Health Professions Financial Aid Administrators, January 23-26 in New Orleans, LA; a PDC for Student Affairs Officers, June 19-22 in Tucson, AZ; and the GSA program for the 2008 AAMC Annual Meeting, October 31 – November 5 in San Antonio, TX.

AAMC Staff Transition

At the time of this writing, Bob Sabalis is planning to leave his position as Associate Vice President, Section for Student Affairs and Program at the AAMC to assume the position of Associate Vice President, Section for LCME and Accreditations and Assistant LCME Secretary. All of us who have had the opportunity to work closely with him will miss his thoughtfulness, candor, wise counsel, and wonderful sense of humor. He has played a key role in the functioning of the GSA, and we have greatly benefited from his tireless efforts. He will be forever remembered for his good work and sorely missed by colleagues and friends. We extend best wishes to him in this new endeavor.

In closing, please know that it has been a privilege serving in my role as GSA National Chair. I have had the opportunity to meet and work with an outstanding group of people in GSA, GSA-MAS, student leaders in OSR, the wonderful AAMC staff, and our colleagues in NAAHP. This has been an important learning experience for me, and you have been patient and thoughtful teachers. The talent and passion you have for your work is unsurpassed and the institutions that you represent are fortunate to have you serve in the complex roles that you occupy. I am forever grateful for this wonderful opportunity and look forward to continued work with you in the future.

Respectfully submitted,
Dwight Davis, M.D.
GSA National Chair