

Group on Student Affairs National Chair's Annual Report 2009

The purpose of the AAMC Group on Student Affairs is to develop policies, programs, and professional development activities that will support student affairs officers to provide optimal learning environments for their students. On behalf of the national officers, committee chairs, and regional chairs constituting the GSA Steering Committee, I am pleased to summarize the activities and accomplishments of the Group on Student Affairs (GSA) over the past year.

GSA National Committee Activities

Committee on Admissions

For the last two years the Committee on Admissions (COA) has been working with the AAMC Advisory Committee on Holistic Review and the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP) to develop and promote holistic review processes for the evaluation of applicants to medical school. In addition to evaluating quantitative data, such as GPAs and MCAT scores, holistic review admissions processes incorporate evaluation of a range of applicant attributes such as life experiences; resilience; personal growth and maturity; and diversity along cultural, linguistic, racial, and ethnic dimensions. At the July COA meeting, Chair Dr. Witzburg suggested that a Holistic Review packet be assembled for all medical school admissions offices.

External rankings of medical schools, such as those found in *US News and World Report*, focus almost entirely on quantitative measures of applicants, and this has contributed to the reluctance of some schools to fully incorporate qualitative assessments of applicants into their admissions processes. Because COA recognizes that external rankings of medical schools may serve as an impediment to holistic review, it recommended to the GSA Steering Committee and the AAMC Council of Deans (COD) that the AAMC develop an alternative system for assessing the quality of medical schools. This recommendation resulted in the constitution of an AAMC Rankings Group which developed the *Medical School Missions Report* released spring 2009. It includes multiple domains for assessing school quality based on the school's outputs (e.g., number dual degree students, number of graduates pursuing careers in rural medicine) as opposed to inputs (e.g., MCATs and GPAs).

In addition to the work with the AAMC Advisory Committee on Holistic Review, the COA continued to work with the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) to support the Criminal Background Check Pilot and is working with AMCAS on a new pilot program to develop an electronic process for distributing letters of recommendation. Other topics considered by COA during the past year include discussion of applicants and students with disabilities, discussion of the adequacy of the applicant pool in the face of medical school expansion, work with the NAAHP to develop assessment of professionalism in the application process, discussion of the prerequisites for admission to medical school and discussion of the prevalence of external influences

on the admissions process. In addition the COA has approved the MD/PhD traffic rules with the intention for these new traffic rules to go into effect for 2010 application cycle.

In addition, the COA had a very successful PDC with COSR in June, 2009.

Committee on Student Financial Assistance

The Committee on Student Financial Assistance (COSFA) has been working closely with AAMC staff to develop web-based resources for financial aid officers, students, residents, and pre-health advisors. The AAMC launched the FIRST campaign over one year ago. FIRST stands for Financial Information, Resources, Services, and Tools. The goal of FIRST is to help medical school borrowers expand their financial literacy, make smart decisions about student loans, and manage their student debt wisely. COSFA has developed "FIRST fact sheets" on a variety of topics including budgeting, identity theft, credit, debt management, lenders, loan repayment options, and the cost of applying to medical schools. Their ongoing priorities include working with the Department of Education to get clarification and information regarding Income Based Repayment and Public Service Loan Forgiveness. They will also closely follow and take a proactive role with reauthorization of Health and Human Services.

Committee on Student Records

The Committee on Student Records (COSR) completed its revision of the Student Records Administrators Handbook (SRAH). In addition to the usual topics of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), records management, licensure, credentialing, and transition to residency, new or expanded sections were added to address the varying roles, responsibilities, and structures of registrar's offices; enrollment management practices; data reporting; visiting students; academic ceremonies; and technology, data security, and information systems. The new handbook also includes best practice recommendations and more detailed information regarding dual degree programs, leaves-of-absence, and changes in enrollment status. The appendix includes a visual diagram of the life cycle of a medical student record and an annual calendar of events and related functions for the registrar.

A few years ago, COSR recommended that the AAMC develop an electronic application service for visiting students and the Visiting Student Application Service (VSAS) Service has been very successful. As a measure of its success, COSR has proposed that VSAS be extended to Canadian students and Osteopathic students.

Committee on Student Affairs

One major area of concern for the Committee on Student Affairs (COSA) is improving the transition to residency for medical students, particularly addressing the challenges of matching and the subsequent 'scramble.' In addition, at the annual meeting there will be a GSA brown bag session addressing "Tips to avoid the Scramble and Help Your Students Match Successfully," and including the committee's document "Effective Practices for the Scramble." The scramble continues to be challenging, and the committee developed by the AAMC and the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP) is considering traffic rules that would offer an opportunity for unmatched students and unfilled

programs to communicate through ERAS for a 48 hour period with a subsequent electronic process allowing Program Director preferences to be accepted by students via an 'electronic handshake.' COSA continues to support closer ties between the GSA, the NRMP, Careers in Medicine and Program Directors to improve the transparency of the residency application process for students.

COSA completed the final version of "Compensation, Staffing, and Funding of Student Affairs Offices" for review by the AAMC survey approval process and COSA has revised the Handbook for Student Affairs Officers that was first released in 2005.

Committee on Diversity Affairs

The new Committee on Diversity Affairs (CODA) is continuing to develop its infrastructure and key components while transitioning from the new affinity group, Group on Diversity and Inclusion (GDI). One of the first actions CODA took was to support an LGBT survey. Other actions include addressing the pipeline issues, and the important new LCME standard MS-8 regarding the pipeline standard, which went into effect 7/1/09. There will be a GSA-MAS sunset program in Boston in at the AAMC annual meeting.

Meetings

The Professional Development Conference for Financial Aid Administrators will be held January 13-15, 2010 in Tampa, FL, and the National GSA/GDI/OSR Spring Meeting will be held April 17-21, 2010 in Austin, TX. The theme is "REsponsibly FORMing our Future", and the plenary sessions are (1) Responsibility to Our Patients: Healthcare Reform, (2) Responsibility to Our Students: Medical Education/Social Networking, (3) Responsibility to Our Communities: Reforming our Relationships, (4) Responsibility to Our Future: The Ideal Students: Identifying, Attracting, and Cultivating.

GSA Subcommittees and Task Force

Mental Health Sub-Committee

Another issue of concern for GSA is student mental health, and in response to this concern, a Mental Health Sub-Committee has been convened to study this issue and make recommendations for further studies including consideration of surveys of students and student mental health professionals.

Fourth Year Electives Sub-Committee

This working group is addressing affiliation agreements as well as the incorporation of Canadian and Osteopathic students.

MSPE Task Force

In response to the overwhelming interest demonstrated at the Transition Forum in November 2008 at the AAMC annual meeting, the GSA has convened a task force to address the MSPE. There are multiple issues including the content and release date of the MSPE, the use of MSPE by Program Directors, and the timing of the opening of ERAS.

Conclusion

As we look back on what we have accomplished during the past year, it is worth remembering that many individuals from the GSA, AAMC staff, OSR, and NAAHP and now the GDI have all contributed to the effort. One of the most gratifying aspects of working in student affairs is the opportunity to work with the large number of extremely dedicated and knowledgeable individuals who share their time and deep commitment to service within these organizations. It has been a privilege and an honor to serve as the national chair during the past year. To work with so many individuals who are committed to providing the best support possible for our students as we work together to shape the careers of the next generation of physicians is exciting, challenging and above all, rewarding. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

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GSA National Chair