

# AAMC-Organization of Student Representatives Annual Meeting 2009

*A Preview of Our Adventure in New England*

*Boston, Massachusetts*

*Communications Committee*

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## THE BUZZ IN BEANTOWN: THE CHAIR-ELECT WELCOMES THE OSR TO BOSTON

*By Catherine Spina*

Boston is the largest city and capital of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. An economic and cultural center for much of United States history, Boston is one of the nation's oldest cities. Today, it is the home of nearly 4.5 million people — the tenth largest metropolitan area in the country.

Boston was first founded in 1628 by English Puritans as the center of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Originally given the name *Trimountaine*, the city once consisted of three conspicuous hills. Yet, visitors today will find that only one of these hills, Beacon Hill, remains. Early citizens made an effort to change the landscape in order to fill in the marshes and mud flats that dominated the area. The city greatly expanded its size and received its current name, Boston, in 1630 after an English town in Lincolnshire. "The City Upon a Hill" remained the largest, wealthiest, and most influential city in the United States until 1760.

Yet, Boston's legacy was crafted by the area's central role during the American

Revolution. The Boston Massacre energized the earliest Whigs and showed this country the brutality of the British empire. The Boston Tea Party marked the moment that the inhabitants of America would no longer sit idly to the abuses of the British crown. Paul Revere's famous midnight ride through Boston would mark the first rallying cry of many battles that would ensure the independence of our great country called the United States of America.

Today, Boston is a conglomerate of the new and the old, combining a rich history with a vibrant, young population of citizens ready to make their mark on this country's future. This is most dramatically identified by the 51 colleges and universities in the Boston metropolitan area. The city hosts the nation's first American school, Boston Latin, and the country's first American college, Harvard College, but each and every center of learning provides a boost to the city. In fact, education contributes almost 5 billion dollars annually to Boston's economy.

This educated mentality results in the city laying claim to literary giants young and old. Louisa May Alcott, Emily Dickinson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau are just a few of the educated elite that spent their lives in Boston.

Yet, Boston is also known for its fervent ties to the sporting giants that have ruled on high over the last decade. Home to the Boston Red Sox, New England Patriots, Boston Celtics, and Boston Bruins, the city has celebrated six championships in the last decade. You may just run across such sporting icons as Tom Brady, Kevin Garnett, and David Ortiz during your stay in Boston.

The city's most famous sporting landmark is none other than the majestic Fenway Park, the nation's oldest Major League Baseball stadium.

Any true preview of Boston would not be complete without a description of the delicacies offered throughout the city. Boston's Italian neighborhood, the North End, offers an experience so unique you would think you were in Italy. Just one block away, your palate will be spoiled by the authentic tastes of Boston's Chinatown. For those with no particular preference, Boston's South End offers a collection of popular dining options, from Indian to American, oysters to tapas. Yet, no dining experience would be complete without a visit to Legal Seafood where their clam chowder is frequently the soup du jour at Presidential inaugurations.

Finally, Boston offers a wide variety of options for that curious mind. The city is filled with museums showcasing art, history, culture, and science. A spare afternoon should lead you to the revered Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, or the Museum of Science.

On behalf of the OSR and the city of Boston, I hope that you enjoy the AAMC's Annual Meeting and the time that you spend in the Cradle of Liberty.

**THE AAMC-OSR ANNUAL MEETING:  
TWO SESSIONS YOU SHOULD NOT MISS**

***Healing in the Middle East: Creating a Health Care System in Afghanistan***

*By William Teeter*



In the last few decades, Afghanistan has experienced health care which is among the worst in the world. Between the Afghan-Soviet war, ineffective government programs under the Taliban, and the recent War on Terror, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have entered into a society with almost no medical infrastructure in place and uniformly poor health indices. The health care crisis in this country is further complicated by preventable and easily treatable communicable diseases, high levels of malnutrition, and inequitable distribution of available resources. Worst of all, Afghanistan has a massive shortage of doctors with NGOs now providing a large portion of the health care in the regions that have health care at all.

Moderated by Eric Meyer, Jenny Olges, M.D., and Jenny Guido, M.D., this session will provide OSR representatives with an insider's perspective on the challenges of creating a health care system in Afghanistan. Dr. C. James Holliman, a Professor of Military and Emergency Medicine at the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences and Program Manager of the Afghanistan Healthcare Sector Reachback Project for the Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine, will speak on his efforts to provide health care to this war-torn country. His team has been working with the Afghan National Security Forces to develop health care infrastructure and training programs for local populations. Dr. Holliman will discuss his experiences and achievements as part of the United States military's efforts to rebuild the Afghani health care system.

This session will be held on Saturday, November 7 from 1:30-3:00 pm.

**The GSA & OSR Mental Health Services Survey: Serving Our Student's Well-Being Through Innovative Programming**

*By Mary Ann Sullivan*

Medical school is not easy. Students are very well aware of this fact when they begin their medical studies. However, this knowledge does not adequately prepare many students for the true level of stress that medical school creates. Mental health problems are not uncommon among medical students, yet many medical schools are lacking services and resources to help students facing mental health difficulties. Recently, the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) recognized these problems and established standards for medical schools to implement psychological and psychiatric counseling services and developmental programs to promote medical student wellness. Even with these recommendations in place, many schools are still struggling to implement wellness programs. Students and administrators continue to have concerns about these issues.



Recent studies of U.S. medical students have revealed alarmingly high rates of depression and anxiety. In 1992, the Group on Student Affairs (GSA) called for schools to ensure access to confidential counseling for all students in their *Recommendations Regarding Health Services for Medical Students*. In the fall of 2008, the GSA distributed a survey to Student Affairs Officers to garner information related to the following: mental health issues faced by medical students, how these issues affect student promotion, the availability and affordability of mental health services, leaves of absence for mental health causes, and the release of this information to residency programs. The AAMC-OSR Student Affairs Committee created the OSR Mental Health Services Survey, which was similar to that used by the GSA, to assess student willingness to seek information on mental health services, availability and affordability of counseling for students, and potential areas of weakness in the student provision of mental health services.

"The GSA & OSR Mental Health Services Survey: Serving Our Students' Well-Being Through Innovative Programming" session will describe these surveys and results. This session will include speakers Liselotte N. Dyrbye, M.D., Assistant Professor from the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine; Scott Rodgers, M.D., Associate Dean for Medical Student Affairs from Vanderbilt University School of Medicine; and Jenny Olges, M.D., OSR National Delegate for Student Affairs.

This session will also highlight innovative mental wellness programs at various medical colleges, including an overview of the wellness program at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. Participants will be allowed the opportunity to discuss mental health and wellness programming provided for students. Finally, the session will conclude with an opportunity for students and administrators to learn about various strategies to successfully involve students in wellness programming at their respective schools.

This session will be held on Friday, November 6 from 3:30-5:00pm.

**DR. JONATHAN WOODSON:  
THE 2009 ARNOLD P. GOLD HUMANISM IN MEDICINE  
AWARD RECIPIENT**

*By David Halpin*

The Arnold P. Gold Foundation Humanism in Medicine Award annually recognizes a medical school faculty physician who exemplifies the qualities of a caring and compassionate mentor in the teaching and advising of students. The process is administered through the AAMC-OSR and based on student nominations of faculty who are thought to demonstrate exceptional ability in the areas of: positive mentoring skills, involvement in community service, compassion/sensitivity, collaboration with students and patients, and modeling ethics of the profession. Through his life of service to his patients, students, and country, this year's recipient, Dr. Jonathan Woodson of the Boston Medical Center, has demonstrated a commitment to upholding the tradition of compassionate medical care.



Dr. Woodson was nominated for this award by students at the Boston University School of Medicine. Most would not immediately think of a Surgeon and Brigadier General in the U.S. Army Reserve when honoring a physician who most embodies empathy and humanism. However, this year's recipient does the medical community a great service by breaking down these stereotypes.

Dr. Woodson is board certified in internal medicine, general surgery, and vascular and critical care surgery. He serves as an Associate Professor of Surgery and Associate Dean of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs at Boston University School of Medicine. He is an avid researcher, author, and has been the winner of numerous teaching awards. His extensive military service has been recognized by 20 military awards and decorations. As Director of the Early Medical School Selection Program and Advisor to the Gateway to Medicine program, Dr. Woodson focuses his efforts on exposing underrepresented minorities to the practice of medicine in hopes of diversifying our future cadre of practicing physicians.

This year's recipient is heralded by his students for his commitment to training future physicians to possess both humanistic character and technical skill required to truly become an excellent physician. To quote his nomination materials, according to Dr. Woodson, "skills alone won't cut it." This dedication is further demonstrated by Dr. Woodson's work in the Office of Student Affairs where he does not let his demanding schedule impede his ability to collaborate with students on various projects. According to his students, Dr. Woodson makes all efforts to ensure the energy of the next generation of leaders is "turned loose" and put to good use. When it comes to community service, Dr. Woodson knows no boundaries. As a leader of the International Surgical and Medical Response Team, he helped to care for the victims of the World Trade Center Attacks on September 11, 2001. Additionally, on his missions to reach out to underprivileged children, Dr. Woodson recruits Boston University medical students to serve as mentors to both encourage and foster the potential of these young minds. If this were not enough, he will soon take on the role of assistant surgeon general for mobilization, readiness, and reserve affairs, deputy commanding general for the Army Reserve Medical Command with assignment to the Office of the U. S Surgeon General.

There are very few times in life when people are fortunate enough to come into contact with an inspiring figure who sparks the desire and determination necessary to achieve their dreams. From the glowing recommendations and accounts of Dr. Woodson's work, it seems that the students of Boston University School of Medicine have been granted this unique privilege. His work has already and will continue to make a positive impact on the lives of his patients, students, and community members both locally and around the world. Dr. Woodson has done us all a great service, and the OSR community should look forward to hearing him speak. We congratulate Dr. Jonathan Woodson as the 2009 Arnold P. Gold Humanism in Medicine Award Recipient.

Dr. Woodson will address the OSR regarding humanism in medicine on Saturday, November 7 from 12:00-1:15 pm.

**CAREER FAIR 2009:  
VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED**

The 2009 Minority Student Medical Career Awareness Workshops and Recruitment Fair will be Saturday, November 7 from 1:30 - 2:45 pm, and we need your help. Each year, hundreds of students from under-represented groups come to the AAMC Annual Meeting to get more information on applying to and attending medical school. There are many aspects to their day, but each year's highlight has been the conversations with current medical students. We all know the application process can be overwhelming, and this is a great chance to lend encouraging words and the benefits of our experience to students who can use them. Don't doubt the influence of your advice. It does not take much time and participating in the fair is a blast.

If you would like to participate or have any questions about the session, please email your National Delegate for Community and Diversity, Dominique Arce at [DominiqueArce@gmail.com](mailto:DominiqueArce@gmail.com). Please also include your full name and the best email address to contact you.

## ELECTRONIC RESIDENCY APPLICATION SERVICE: AN UPDATE FROM THE OSR LIAISON



*By David Halpin*

The overwhelming majority of Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) users, from program directors to students, agree that ERAS has improved and streamlined the residency application process. Program directors are pleased with both the increased number and quality of applicants applying to their programs. Students are thankful that they no longer are required to send out individualized packets to each residency program to which they apply. By instituting this centralized database, the road to residency has been made much less cumbersome. By no means is the system flawless, but most would agree that the current system wins out over the chaotic processes of the past.

In an effort to better serve its constituents, ERAS has taken on the monumental task of re-engineering the system on which medical students and program directors have come to depend. Through an exhaustive internal evaluation and cooperative survey of stakeholders, a group within the organization has been designated to overhaul the system. The goals to be achieved over the next several years include: development of an on-line submission process for letter writers, a web-based system for student affairs officers and program directors, and an overall improvement in user friendliness and functionality. Student feedback has been solicited and welcomed, and many of their concerns will be addressed in the reengineered product. The majority of these issues center around the design of the system. Problems with formatting when uploading documents, tracking the progress of applications, and the lack of a spell checker were major concerns that will be addressed in the new system. In addition, features that facilitate the process by which an applicant assigns documents to programs will also be improved.

Furthermore, strong efforts are being made to enhance both the user friendliness and adaptability of the new system. The ERAS IT staff are employing a program in which prototypical personas are created to represent various stakeholders, i.e. students, Dean's offices, and program directors. These personas will then be used to evaluate the functionality, capability, and needs of the new system from various points of view. The new system will also expand ERAS to be used in the Managed Scramble. Unmatched applicants who have registered with ERAS and participated in the National Residency Match Program (NRMP) will be permitted to use the system during the scramble to secure a residency spot. Although ERAS and NRMP are on different reengineering schedules, the current ERAS system will be enhanced to meet the needs of the Managed Scramble until the reengineered ERAS is available. The exact date of implementation of this new system is yet to be determined.

However, ERAS did not think that all concerns merited a change. Many students expressed concern about the lack of flexibility and limited number of categories in the Curriculum Vitae (CV) section of ERAS. However, program directors maintain that they would like to have all applications remain in the same format. The program directors also thought that broadening the number of categories would be cumbersome and would detract from rather than add to the applications. Therefore, this CV section will not be changed.

For the vast majority of students, there is only one shot at the Match. With this in mind, every measure must be taken to ensure success when the re-engineered product is unveiled. Business analysts, information technicians, and members of the medical community have been hard at work putting together the improved ERAS product. However, overhauling and implementing a revised ERAS system is no simple task. Coordinating all the parties and systems involved creates the potential for many technical difficulties. Therefore, the newly engineered product will be released incrementally over the next several years. This is to ensure that the transition is as seamless as possible.

Those individuals charged with re-engineering the ERAS system are excited by the task ahead. Great strides lie ahead for the Electronic Residency Application Service.

## MAXIMIZING YOUR ANNUAL MEETING EXPERIENCE: SIX SUGGESTIONS FOR THE AAMC-OSR MEETING

*By Naseem Helo*

The AAMC-OSR Annual Meeting can serve as one of the most inspiring, energizing, and productive experiences an OSR representative will have during their medical school careers. However, to achieve this desired effect, each representative must make an effort to maximize this unique experience. Below are six suggestions to get the greatest dividend from the 2009 Annual Meeting.

**Know The Issues** — Before you arrive in Boston, discover what issues in academic medicine are at the forefront of your classmates' minds. Review the Annual Meeting agenda and seek the opinions of your colleagues on meeting topics. One prudent suggestion is to discuss the Annual Meeting at your next student government meeting. Inquire about the issues and answers that they seek. For example, possible questions include: What are the average number of required clerkships during the fourth year? Which medical schools have international clerkships? Be prepared to find the answers to these questions at your region meetings.



**Select Sessions To Attend** — In addition to the regional meetings, there are a number of additional plenary and break-out sessions that you may find of great interest. Prior to the meeting, read through the Annual Meeting program and mark the sessions that you would like to attend.

**Take Notes During the Sessions** — Remember to jot down some interesting information from each session, including any contact information provided by the speaker. This information will be of great benefit when you send out a meeting summary to your classmates at your medical school.

**Attend Regional Meetings** — An agenda of discussion topics will be created during the first regional meeting. Every region solicits their representatives for discussion items. This is your opportunity to make your school's issues a priority. During the sessions that follow, you will be able to ask questions and discuss issues with the other representatives. Please also share any information that you believe would benefit another school's OSR representative.

**Constantly Make Introductions** — The best part of every OSR meeting is getting to

know your OSR colleagues. Make friends with people in your region, OSR representatives outside your region, and the National Administrative Board. You will find that your colleagues are a passionate community of individuals committed to enhancing medical education and the medical student experience. You will find that many are involved in creative projects through the AAMC and their own medical school. Learn, question, and most importantly make friendships.

**Participate to the Fullest** — Attend as many sessions and contribute to discussions as much as possible. You were elected to represent your student body on the national scene and it is your duty to participate to the fullest. If you find that you want to make a bigger contribution, run for a National Office. National positions are available to any primary representative. You do not need any experience to run, simply a commitment to improve the medical education experience. Even if you do not win, the national exposure you receive will be of great benefit for your next run.



## THANK YOU

The Communications Committee would like to thank the National Administrative Board for all of their outstanding work planning and preparing the 2009 AAMC-OSR Annual Meeting in Boston. Thank you to:

Matthew Rudy – Chair	Catherine Spina – Chair-Elect	Diane Reis – Immediate Past Chair
Dominique Arce – Community and Diversity	Bryan Harris – Legislative Affairs	
Eric Meyer – Medical Education	Jenny Olges – Student Affairs	Sameer Vohra – Communications
Brittany Dawson – Southern Region Chair	Jenny Guido – Central Region Chair	
Antony Hazel – Western Region Chair	Janae Phelps – Northeast Region Chair	Jason Lott – Ex-Officio Board Member

The Communications Committee would also like to thank the three extraordinary AAMC employees who staff the OSR. Without them, no OSR business would be possible. Thank you to:

Ally Anderson, M.A. - Director, Student and Community Service Programs	
Monique Mauge - Administrative Specialist	Julie Taylor - Senior Administrative Associate

To contact these three extraordinary women, please visit: <http://www.aamc.org/members/osr/contact/start.htm>

For more detailed information on any of the items discussed in these pages or any comments about the preview, please feel free to e-mail Sameer Vohra at [svohra@siu.edu](mailto:svohra@siu.edu).

## A REACTION TO HEALTH CARE REFORM: IT IS TIME FOR A MEDICAL STUDENT VOICE

*By Sameer Vohra*

I was lying in bed exhausted after another long, difficult day at the hospital. As I pulled the covers over my body, I began my nightly ritual of watching CNN to discover the stories that are affecting our planet. As he is prone to do, our President, Barack Obama, graced my television set, and I noticed that our Head of State had invited doctors to the White House to promote the passage of health care reform. These physicians looked very pleased in their white coats, as they demonstrated to United States citizens across the country their belief that it was time to change the system.

The President has opened the White House doors quite a bit over the last six months in an effort to build a coalition on health care reform. I have watched as insurance companies, nurses, doctors, hospital CEOs, drug companies, and others have all been graciously invited to the table to share their views on our health care system. Now, I salute the President for soliciting a diverse set of viewpoints in his effort to tackle an issue that has been a great bane to Presidents of the past. Yet, as a medical student and future

doctor in this country, I feel a little neglected. Where was my invitation or that of my medical student colleagues? Why did we not get a seat at the table?

This is where one of my gray-haired professors or even gray-haired Congresspersons would sit me down and explain how I am being overzealous. How could my medical school colleagues or I understand the health care system when we have yet to actually practice medicine? How could we possibly understand the ramifications of changing incentives when we have yet to ever bill a patient? I would be reminded of how at the present moment, I lack any great political power or revenue stream to actually dictate or recommend to anyone anything on health care reform.

Yet, the very changes that are being discussed will take at least 5 to 10 years to implement. These changes will ultimately be the basis on which my medical school colleagues and I will practice medicine. I readily acknowledge that the years of experi-

ence provided by the current players are of great value, but so are the opinions of those who will actually see these changes come to fruition.

Now, many of you have opinions on the current bills in the House of Representatives and the Senate. For those who have already expressed your views, I thank you. For the rest of us, including me, I believe it is time to make our statement. Whatever your thoughts on a public option, medical malpractice reform, budget deficits, or primary care incentives, it is time to write your Congressperson, your Senator, and even your President to make those opinions known.

I love the United States of America. I love the very concept that a group of ordinary citizens can organize to demand and acquire positive change from our government. It is time for our group – medical students across the country – to make our demands. It may not mean an invitation to the White House, but at least, we will know that we made our voices heard. Hopefully, we can say that we had an impact on the future of health care in the country we call home.