Holistic Review in Admissions: Challenging Conventional Thinking and Practice

Workshop Description
The “Holistic Review in Admissions” workshop is designed to assist medical schools in enhancing student body diversity as a means of achieving the mission-based excellence they seek. The workshop broadly frames diversity using the Experience-Attributes-Metrics (E-A-M) Model to screen, interview, and select applicants. Through a logically structured sequence of interactive and hands-on activities, the workshop provides a forum for participants to think strategically about the school’s admission process through the lens of holistic review and identify where and how to integrate and improve its procedures and practices.

The workshop blends a self-study module; a half-day, onsite, facilitated component; and, follow-up, school-led conversations and activities. Of the sequence, the school-led component is the most important. It provides dedicated time and space for admissions committee members and staff to address the topics and questions participants identify as important to discuss in more depth. In combination, the components catalyze thinking and discussion about how, in the context of the school’s mission, diversity is integral to excellence and how holistic review can be integrated into admissions to support that goal.

During the workshop, participants will:
- discuss and apply the principles, concepts, and processes that are integral to implementing holistic review practices in admissions in ways that are mission-driven, institution-specific, evidence-based, and legally viable;
- engage in thought-provoking discussion about individual and institutional values and perceptions, exploring how these elements can influence the medical school admission process;
- affirm the mission-centric characteristics the school values and seeks in its medical students and future physicians; and
- explore the dynamic tensions that often exist when weighing and balancing applicants’ experience and attributes with their academic achievements using an evidence-based assessment tool and case study exercise.

Purpose
The purpose of this workshop is to enable admissions committee members to support the school’s mission-driven diversity interests using core holistic review principles and related practices to screen, interview, and select applicants.

Objectives
After completing this three-part workshop, participants will be able to:
- Describe the interrelationship of the school’s admission process, diversity interests, and mission-related goals.
- Articulate how the criteria the school uses to screen, interview, and select applicants support the school’s mission and goals.
- Identify existing individual and institutional preconceptions and their affect on the admission process.
- Apply the four core principles of a holistic review admission process to identify where and how to integrate holistic review practices in order to derive the benefits of matriculating a broadly diverse medical school class.
- Develop specific action steps to operationalize the recommendations the committee and staff identify to further enhance the school's process.

Audience
This workshop is primarily for admissions committee members and staff, although screeners, interviewers, diversity affairs officers, faculty, and other key medical education stakeholders may broaden perspectives and input thereby enriching the discussion.
**Prerequisite**  
In advance of the workshop, participants should review the school’s mission and admission policies and practices so they can take full advantage of the experience.

**Length**  
The three-part workshop consists of:  
- a brief introductory self-study module to be completed by participants prior to the onsite component,  
- a four-hour onsite component comprised of guided discussion and activities at a date and time to be coordinated with AAMC staff, and  
- ensuing admissions committee discussions and activities planned and conducted by the school.  

*Note: One or more calls with AAMC staff, the workshop facilitators, and medical school admission dean or director and/or select staff will be scheduled in advance of the onsite component. These calls will allow the AAMC to tailor, to the extent possible, the experience for the school’s needs and interests.*

**Facilitation Team**  
The workshop component will be conducted by a team of trained facilitators who possess the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide the quality of learning experience necessary for:  
- successfully maintaining a trusting and collaborative atmosphere;  
- effectively guiding participants through prescribed discussions and activities, thus placing the content in a relevant context; and  
- providing useful feedback to participants and staff.  
The AAMC has selected the workshop’s facilitators from current medical school admission deans and directors, diversity affairs officers, and student affairs officers. Each facilitator comes to the workshop with knowledge of and experience with holistic review admission practices, as well as training in effective facilitation techniques.

**Cost:**  
$7,000.00 (cost includes instructional materials, facilitators’ travel expenses and honoraria, an invitation for two representatives from the school to participate in the Workshop School Alumni Forum on November 1 at the 2013 AAMC Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, and ongoing implementation consultation.)

**Application Considerations**  
Before applying, it may be helpful for the school to take into account the following:  
- The workshop content:  
  - is designed to support the process of composing a broadly diverse matriculating class that reflects the medical school’s mission, educational goals, and values; and  
  - is tailored, to the extent possible, to the school’s experiences, needs, and constraints.  
- The effectiveness of a school’s workshop depends in large part on the participants’ commitment, with support from the school’s leadership, to think critically and strategically about the school’s admission practices and processes.  
- The school should be:  
  - interested in enhancing its student body diversity as part of the physician workforce by using holistic review approaches in admission,  
  - poised to develop and implement action steps subsequent to the onsite workshop by conducting follow-up discussions and activities, and  
  - committed to evaluate its admission outcomes in collaboration with the AAMC’s ongoing impact evaluation of the workshop.  
- Workshop attendees might be expected to have varying degrees of interest in holistic review concepts and practices.

**For More Information**  
To request an application, email the project at: HolisticReview@aamc.org  
For questions about the workshop, contact: Liz White, sewhite@aamc.org