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## Dean's Office Leadership at U.S. Medical Schools

Medical schools are complex institutions that require strong leadership to fulfill their core missions of research, clinical care, education, and community engagement. Medical school leaders are responsible for establishing and executing strategic initiatives, overseeing day-to-day operational functions, and delivering the MD degree program. Although there is substantial variation in dean's office structures across medical schools, understanding national trends may help guide schools that are considering restructuring or rightsizing their dean's office. This data snapshot provides benchmarks for the number of senior leaders across U.S. medical schools, the decanal levels of these positions, and the proportion of these roles who report directly to the dean. Determining the appropriate quantity, seniority, and reporting of decanal positions is highly unique to each school; however, medical school leaders may find this snapshot useful in comparing their current and future states to current national ranges.

## Method

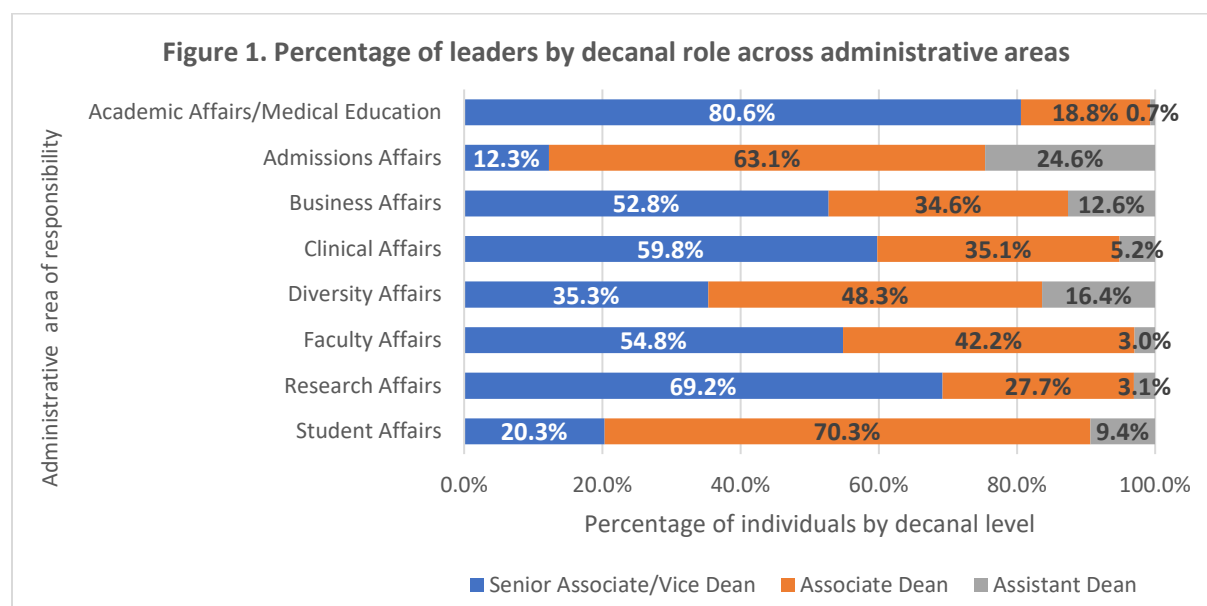
This data snapshot examines the results of the 2022-2023 Survey on the Compensation of the Dean's Office Staff (DOS), focusing on medical school chief officers (that is, the most senior leaders) within the dean's office across eight administrative areas, including academic affairs/medical education, admissions affairs, business affairs, clinical affairs, diversity affairs, faculty affairs, research affairs, and student affairs. Data from the DOS survey represent 149 of 157 U.S. medical schools. Survey questions detailed the decanal level of chief officers across each administrative area and whether leaders report directly to the dean.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, data are presented from the AAMC's Women in Medicine and Science (WIMS) Benchmarking Survey, which was administered in fall 2023. This survey collected a wide variety of data points including statistics about all decanal roles within each school, to which 81 schools provided data. Deciles were calculated to identify trends in the number of faculty and staff leaders that hold decanal titles at U.S. medical schools, including senior associate or vice dean, associate dean, and assistant dean.<sup>2</sup> Benchmarking categories used in the analysis are derived from the 2023 AAMC Organizational Characteristics Database<sup>3</sup> and the Faculty Roster.<sup>4</sup>

## Key Findings

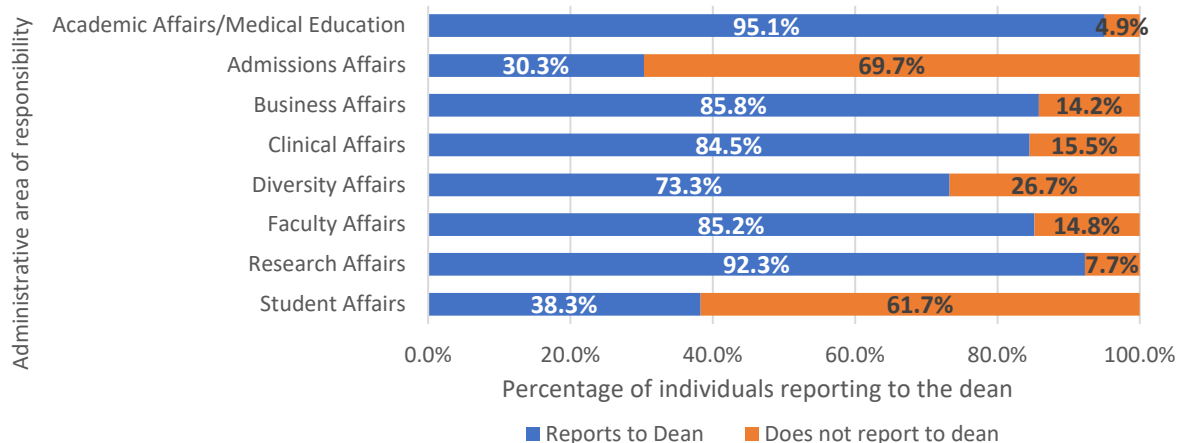
### Findings From the Survey on the Compensation of the Dean's Office Staff (DOS)

In 2023, 80.6% of chief officers within academic affairs/medical education held the title of senior associate or vice dean, with a smaller percentage holding the title associate dean (18.8%) or assistant dean (0.7%; Figure 1). The three administrative areas most likely to have a senior associate or vice dean as a chief officer were academic affairs/medical education (80.6%), research affairs (69.2%), and clinical affairs (59.8%). The three administrative areas most likely to have an associate or assistant dean as a chief officer were admissions affairs (87.7%), student affairs (79.7%), and diversity affairs (64.7%).



The DOS survey also asked which administrative area reports directly to the dean of the medical school. Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of chief officers across each administrative area who report to the dean. Except in a few cases, the academic affairs/medical education and research affairs chief officers reported to the dean. Also, a majority of admissions affairs and student affairs chief officers did not report to the dean.

**Figure 2. Percentage of leaders reporting directly to the dean across administrative areas**

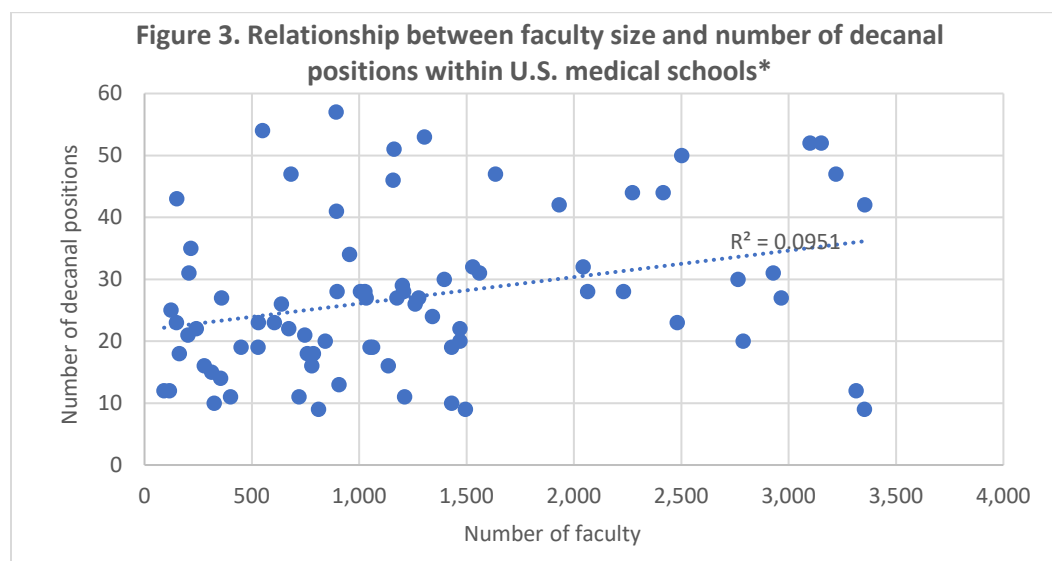


## Findings From the Women in Medicine and Science (WIMS) Benchmarking Survey

Approximately 52% of U.S. medical schools (n=81/157) provided information about the number of decanal leaders through the 2023 WIMS Benchmarking Survey. Across institutions, the median number of faculty and staff decanal leaders within the dean's office was 26, with a range of nine to 57 individuals. Table 1 provides decile benchmarks for counts of decanal positions per school across several variables. When examining results by school ownership type, private schools had slightly more leaders at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile than public schools (27 vs. 23). Schools with over 1,000 faculty also reported having more leaders in the dean's office at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile than those with less than 1,000 faculty (28 vs. 21). While the deciles indicate a modest increase in decanal positions based on faculty size, no clear relationship was found between the number of faculty and the number of decanal positions reported (Figure 3).

**Table 1. Faculty and Staff Dean's Office Leadership at U.S. Medical Schools**

	All Schools	Private Schools	Public Schools	Faculty Under 1,000	Faculty Over 1,000
Decile	Count of Individuals	Count of Individuals	Count of Individuals	Count of Individuals	Count of Individuals
10%	11.2	11.0	11.2	11.0	11.5
20%	16.0	19.0	15.4	13.2	19.0
30%	19.0	22.0	18.0	16.0	23.5
40%	22.0	24.0	20.0	18.4	27.0
50%	26.0	27.0	23.0	21.0	28.0
60%	28.0	28.0	27.0	22.6	30.0
70%	30.4	31.0	29.4	25.2	32.0
80%	41.6	41.0	39.2	30.4	44.0
90%	47.0	47.0	46.8	41.8	50.5



\*Two schools were removed from the analysis due to perceived outliers.

Additional questions within the WIMS Benchmarking Survey asked respondents to report the number of faculty and staff leaders by decanal level (Table 2). At the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, schools reported having five senior associates or vice deans (range: 0-15), eight associate deans (range: 1-24), and seven assistant deans (range: 0-40). Overall, associate deans tended to be the most common decanal role, followed by assistant deans. Understandably, schools had fewer senior associates or vice deans likely due to the implication that those are the most senior roles in a particular functional area, whereas schools may have multiple associate or assistant deans within an area.

**Table 2. Faculty and Staff Dean's Office Leadership at U.S. Medical Schools by Decanal Level**

	Senior Associate or Vice Deans	Associate Deans	Assistant Deans
Decile	Count of Individuals	Count of Individuals	Count of Individuals
10%	1.0	4.0	2.0
20%	1.6	6.0	4.0
30%	3.0	7.0	5.0
40%	4.0	8.0	6.0
50%	5.0	8.0	7.0
60%	6.0	10.0	9.0
70%	6.6	12.0	10.0
80%	7.4	15.4	12.0
90%	11.0	20.0	18.0

## Conclusion

The DOS survey and WIMS Benchmarking Survey show a range of structures and leadership roles within the dean's office of U.S. medical schools. Nevertheless, there were some commonalities among some schools that may be beneficial when assessing the structure of the administrative areas reporting to the dean. Almost all chief officers within the dean's office were either senior associate/vice deans or associate deans, and except for student affairs and admissions affairs, the administrative functions generally report to the dean. The overall number of decanal positions at medical schools varied widely, with the most prevalent decanal positions tending to be at the associate dean level. No relationship was found between the school's faculty size and the number of decanal positions a school has.

Organizational structures are highly specific to each institution's needs. Particularly for schools that are growing or restructuring, these data may be helpful in informing the size of the medical school's decanal staff and what reporting structures make the most sense for their organizations.

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## References

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4. AAMC. *Faculty Roster: U.S. Medical School Faculty*. AAMC; 2023. <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/faculty-institutions/report/faculty-roster-us-medical-school-faculty>