

**From:** Jennifer M. Schlener, AAMC Chief of Staff

**Sent:** Monday, November 17, 2025

**Subject:** Acknowledging Your Feedback on the Evolution of AAMC Affinity Groups



Dear Colleagues,

I was pleased to engage with so many of you earlier this month in San Antonio at Learn Serve Lead 2025: The AAMC Annual Meeting. My AAMC colleagues and I continue to be grateful for the candid, constructive, and encouraging feedback you have shared with us about the [evolution of AAMC affinity groups](#).

We have been collecting, synthesizing, and reflecting on feedback provided in other ways: via our feedback form, through steering committee meetings and listening sessions, and in individual conversations and messages you are having with our constituent engagement team.

We hear you. We acknowledge the concerns that have been raised, including a palpable fear of loss of identity. And we understand how essential these professional and peer communities are to you and your institutions. Specifically, several primary issues have been elevated across our groups:

- Affinity groups provide myriad benefits to constituents. Through conversations at Learn Serve Lead and in individual group conversations, I regularly hear these descriptions: professional home, community, connections, trust, mentorship, accessibility, partnership, growth, networking, and opportunities. Our evolved group structure should deliver these benefits.
- Role-based identity and community are critical in helping to reinforce professional identity and affirm their significance in the leadership of academic medicine. We recognize this and absolutely see a pathway for peer-group engagement to occur within the new group structure.
- Volunteer leadership at the national level via AAMC affinity groups is one of the most significant contributions you, our constituents, make to the AAMC and academic medicine. We also acknowledge that such national service is vital achievement in the faculty promotion and tenure process. While we are continuing to develop new governance structure(s) for the groups, we are committed to harnessing the experience of former leaders and fostering future leadership opportunities. And as with any structural change, an “inaugural” year provides the opportunity to creatively design the composition of governance bodies.
- Groups like the Group on Community Engagement and Collaboration (GCEC, formerly GDI) and Group on Women in Medicine and Science (GWIMS) have elevated and

brought national attention to critical issues impacting how individuals of all backgrounds are able to thrive in academic medicine. GCEC and GWIMS also have led the way in fostering collaboration across groups. Our new group structure must account for these perspectives across all 11 groups.

- Over the years, activity in group-specific regions has provided access, scholarship opportunities, and mentorship, especially to individuals earlier in their careers. Constituents have elevated concerns that opportunities to engage at the regional level will end. No decision about regions has been made at this time. We continue to listen carefully and plan to seek constituent input as we work toward finalizing this decision. The AAMC remains committed to being the organization that provides research and scholarship opportunities across the continuum of medical education and academic medicine more broadly.
- Constituents have expressed reservations as to whether this evolution in affinity groups really is signaling a shift in the AAMC ending other important work, such as equity. It is not.

We remain confident that this necessary evolution of our affinity group structure will allow us to convene constituents together around broader themes, while continuing to provide ways for you to come together with role-based peers through in-person and virtual convenings. We see great opportunity in creating structures and processes that will facilitate far more movement between and among groups. And for those who seek a true connection with a number of like-minded colleagues, there will be that opportunity as well. For example, while someone might choose to participate in one group's in-person professional development conference, they might engage in other affinity groups or one or more virtual communities and take advantage of virtual learnings hosted by a different group.

While there is never a perfect time to initiate a major change effort, it was by very thoughtful design that we announced this change on Oct. 3, providing nine months to gain insights from our constituent community as we build various components of this new structure and, equally important, honor and celebrate the work of our current groups. This generous timeline will provide the space for meaningful engagement around key questions as we build out the operational model to support this evolved affinity group structure. That said, we acknowledge that it requires a willingness to hold additional tension during a time of significant change swirling around us and impacting many of us directly.

While your primary pathway into the AAMC may be evolving, the mission of the AAMC and its foundational core of advancing medical education is not changing. The AAMC remains committed to being your professional home and the premier source of convening, leadership development, and learning for the academic community. We know you expect this from us; we realize the bi-directional benefit of meaningful engagement, and we will continue to deliver on this commitment.

Prior to joining the AAMC 18 years ago, I walked in your shoes. My engagement with the AAMC Group on Institutional Advancement (GIA) was a lifeline for me, especially as a seasoned development professional new to academic medicine. GIA served as my professional home for seven years. I appreciate the feelings this announcement has surfaced, and I remain confident

that our evolved affinity group structure, while different, will continue to provide that professional home for our constituents that span the breadth of academic medicine.

As I've stated previously, I am committed to communicating updates and new information with you regularly throughout this transition. Thank you for your continued support — and engagement — as we work thoughtfully and diligently to operationalize this new structure and build an even stronger community together.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer M. Schlener  
AAMC Chief of Staff