

Projections of Future Medical School Enrollment

In 2006, in response to growing concerns of a likely future physician shortage, the AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) recommended a 30 percent increase in U.S. medical school enrollment by 2015, using the 2002 first-year enrollment of 16,488 students as the baseline. The AAMC recommended that this goal be met by both increasing enrollment at existing medical schools and, where appropriate, creating new medical schools. This Analysis in Brief examines current enrollment plans of existing and new medical schools.

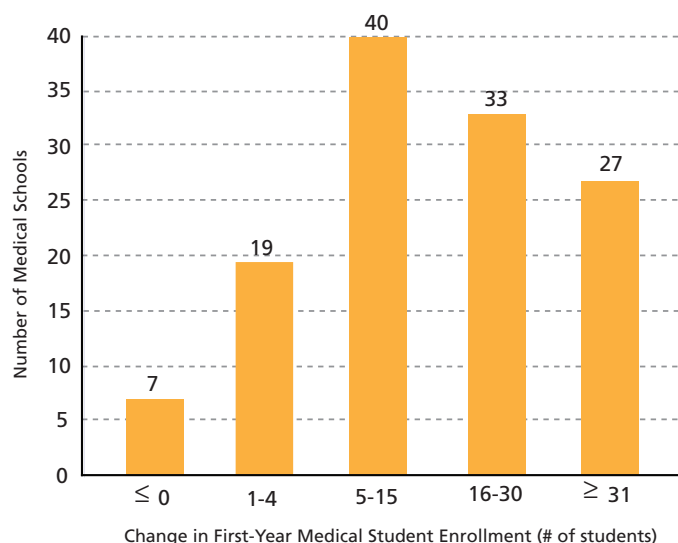
Methodology

In fall 2007, we administered a survey of medical school enrollment plans to the 126 U.S. medical schools accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME)¹. Ninety-one percent (115 of 126) of schools completed the survey. Respondents provided self-reported information; we did not verify their data with the exception of current year enrollment. We also gathered public information on new medical schools being planned or under discussion to provide a more complete picture of likely future enrollment.

Plans to Increase Enrollment Existing Schools

Respondents were asked to provide the medical school's current first-year enrollment figure as well as their

Figure 1. Magnitude of Projected Changes in First-year Enrollment for Existing Medical Schools, 2002 to 2012



expected first-year enrollment for each of the next five years, ending with the 2012–13 academic year. For schools that did not respond to the survey, we used historical and current first-year enrollment data to determine previous changes in class size but projected current first-year enrollment forward with no change in class size. Compared to their baseline 2002–03 enrollment figures, 108 (85.7 percent) of the 126 LCME accredited schools have either already increased or plan to increase their first-year enrollment, including 100 schools (79.4 percent) with an increase in first-year enrollment of five or more students by the 2012–13 academic year.

The magnitude of these increases varies from school to school. Eleven schools indicated increases in first-year enrollment of more than 50 percent compared to their baseline 2002–03 enrollment. This includes four schools with plans to more than double their class size. Of the schools without current or planned increases in enrollment, only one indicated significant plans to decrease enrollment compared to its 2002–03 baseline. Figure 1 shows the magnitude and number of schools with projected changes in first-year enrollment by 2012.

In aggregate, total first-year enrollment at existing medical schools

¹ In February 2008, the LCME granted preliminary accreditation to the medical education programs at three U.S. medical schools—these schools were not included in the survey. However, data on planned enrollment for these schools along with the projected enrollment for other proposed schools are included in this analysis.

Table 1. Planned Increase in First-Year Enrollment by Institution Type and Region at Existing Medical Schools

	Baseline Enrollment 2002–03	Planned Increase 2012–13	Percentage Increase from Baseline
Institution Type			
Private	6,607	814	12.3%
Public	9,881	1,821	18.4%
Region			
Central	4,497	548	12.2%
Northeast	5,021	480	9.6%
South	5,129	1,208	23.6%
West	1,841	399	21.7%
All Schools	16,488	2,635	16.0%

should increase by 2,635 students (16.0 percent) between 2002–03 and 2012–13. Of these 2,635 expected new enrollment slots, 1,821 (69.1 percent) would be added in public institutions and 814 (30.9 percent) would be added in private institutions.

Not surprisingly, the regions of the country with the largest increases in population—the South and the West—are projected to have substantial increases in medical school enrollment. Table 1 shows the expected increase and percentage growth in enrollment by institution type and region for existing schools through the 2012–13 academic year.

New Schools

Based on public information from the LCME and media reports, more than a dozen new medical schools are under development or discussion. As a supplement to the enrollment survey administered to existing medical schools, we requested future enrollment figures from each potential new school. Nine institutions provided such figures. Based on this information, we estimate 786 first-year enrollees from these nine new medical education programs for the 2012–13 academic year.

Projected Medical School Enrollment in 2012–13

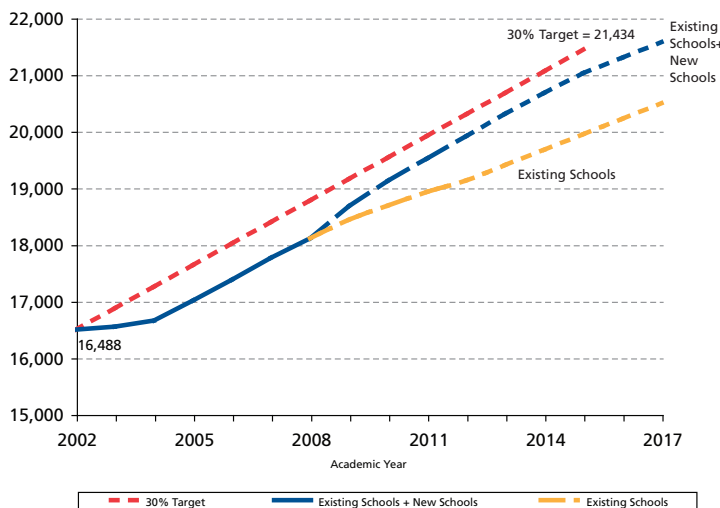
Including students at both existing and new schools, total planned first-

year enrollment for the 2012–13 academic year is 19,909 (Figure 2). This is an increase of 3,421 (20.8 percent) in first-year enrollment compared to the total baseline first-year enrollment for the 2002–03 academic year. Projecting the enrollment data out beyond 2012 using average forecasted increases for existing schools and proposed enrollment figures for anticipated schools suggests that the targeted 30 percent growth in first-year enrollment will be reached by 2017.

Conclusion

U.S. medical schools continue to respond to existing and expected physician shortages. Over 85 percent of existing medical schools have either already expanded their first-year enrollment or plan to expand within the next five years. Many schools have targeted enrollment increases for specific population groups, including minority groups currently underrepresented in medicine. In addition, a number of new medical schools plan to matriculate their first classes in the coming years, furthering enrollment gains. These efforts appear to fall just short of the AAMC’s call for a 30 percent increase in first-year enrollment by 2015; however, further projections indicate that this goal will be reached by 2017.

Figure 2. Projected Number of Medical School Matriculants in 2012 and Beyond



This AIB is excerpted from “Medical School Enrollment Plans: Analysis of the 2007 AAMC Survey.” www.aamc.org/workforce

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