



IS AMERICA'S APPROACH TO HEALTH BROKEN?

WE HAVE A PLAN TO MAKE AMERICA HEALTHIER.

A close-up, profile photograph of a woman with dark, curly hair. She is wearing a light blue t-shirt and is looking off to the right with a contemplative expression. The background is a soft-focus gradient of blue and red.

A Healthier Future for All

The AAMC Strategic Plan

OCTOBER 2020

“A healthier future starts here and now. From gaping health disparities to uneven access to care, the challenges ahead are daunting. But amid the novel coronavirus pandemic and growing public outrage over systemic racism, a renewed sense of urgency offers an unprecedented opportunity for change. In partnership with America's medical schools, teaching hospitals and health systems, academic medical societies, and the people of academic medicine, the AAMC is poised to lead the change that will improve the health of people everywhere.

David J. Skorton, MD
AAMC President and CEO



PREAMBLE

In September 2019, the AAMC launched a strategic planning effort to respond to the rapidly changing worlds of medical education, health care, and medical research. With extensive input from the broad community of academic medicine and AAMC staff, we comprehensively studied the environment and identified the challenges and opportunities facing society at large; patients, families, and communities; health care and academic medicine; associations and nonprofits; and the AAMC itself. In an era of great frustration with some aspects of health care, the environmental scan helped us focus on specific areas of needed disruption relevant to the AAMC's mission, vision, expertise, and influence. Building on that analysis, the AAMC Leadership Team and Board of Directors developed 10 bold plans for action to better fulfill the AAMC's four areas of mission focus and expertise: learning, discovery, health care, and community collaborations.

During the development of the strategic plan, the COVID-19 pandemic struck. In emergency departments and intensive care units, the people of academic medicine struck back. In research labs, they struck back. In online classrooms, they struck back. In rapid response teams, in collaboration with government officials and local and state communities, and in the media – they struck back.

“ Through leading, serving, and advocating for academic medicine, and through decisive plans for action, we will tackle barriers to better health for people everywhere.

So did the AAMC. We were intimately involved in all major aspects of discovering, understanding, explaining, and responding to the myriad effects of the pandemic.

In that crisis response came clarity. The pandemic raised the stakes. But it also steeled our resolve to lead change and magnified the meaning of this work. Through leading, serving,

and advocating for academic medicine, and through decisive plans for action, we will tackle barriers to better health for people everywhere.

The COVID-19 pandemic will shape society for years to come, in ways known and still unknown. The AAMC strategic plan is informed by the crisis and transcends it. In this strategic plan, the AAMC both prepares for the immediate post-pandemic world and works to improve learning, discovery, health care, and community collaborations to better prepare academic medicine and health care for whatever the future may bring.

The background of the slide is a black and white aerial photograph of a large park. Numerous people are scattered across the grassy areas, some in small groups and others alone, sitting or lying down. There are also several trees and a paved path visible.

MISSION

The AAMC leads and serves academic medicine
to improve the health of people everywhere.

VISION

A healthier future through learning, discovery,
health care, and community collaborations.

As part of the strategic planning process, the AAMC sought to gain a comprehensive, clear-eyed view of the environment surrounding academic medicine and the AAMC. The following is a summary of the top findings that emerged before the COVID-19 pandemic began. Refer to the full environmental scan at aamc.org/environmentalscan.

Macro/Societal Trends

- U.S. demographics are profoundly affecting society and social policy.
- A technological revolution is changing education, research, and clinical care.
- Rising health care costs are unsustainable.
- Globalization will increasingly affect academic medicine.

The Environment for Patients, Families, and Communities

- The cost of health care access is too high, and deficits persist in access and coverage.
- Health inequities are increasing; racism and bias are major factors.
- Health care institutions are not sufficiently diverse.
- Patient, family, and community perspectives and engagement contribute to innovation; partnerships with these groups are increasing across all academic medicine missions.
- Social risks and determinants of health cannot be ignored.
- Gun violence, maternal and infant mortality inequities, the opioid epidemic, and the lack of mental health parity are national crises.
- Patients and families want access to and interoperability of medical records.

The Environment of Academic Medicine and Health Care

- Changing health care delivery systems are the new norm.
- Academic medicine remains dependent on financial resources generated by the clinical mission.
- Changes and challenges in medical education are rampant.
- The health care workforce is not sufficiently large nor diverse.
- Biomedical research and innovation require collaboration and advocacy.
- Academic health centers are focusing on community vitality.

The Environment of Associations and Professional Organizations

- Members are demanding that associations deliver increasing value.
- Successful engagement extends beyond membership.
- Online communities are driving engagement and transforming organizations.
- Associations are providing lifelong learning that is relevant, timely, and cost-effective.
- Demographic shifts are driving a need for new communication models.
- Associations are facing critical challenges in managing, benefiting from, and securing data.

The Environment for the AAMC

- The AAMC faces competition across the enterprise.
- The AAMC needs a shared internal approach and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- The AAMC maintains legacy technology systems.

STRATEGIC THEMES

Building on the environmental scan, the AAMC identified four overarching themes to guide the development of the strategic plan:

The AAMC will catalyze solutions for the biggest challenges facing medical schools, teaching hospitals and health systems, and the people and communities they serve.

The AAMC will be the voice of academic medicine.

The AAMC will shape the workforce and develop the people of academic medicine to lead and thrive in a changing health care environment.

The AAMC will be a high-performing, diverse, and inclusive organization to support our mission.

The AAMC next solicited suggestions from the academic medicine community and AAMC staff about specific actions to address the biggest challenges facing learning, discovery, health care, and the patients and communities we serve and to position the AAMC to lead and serve academic medicine more effectively.

From the more than 600 ideas offered, the AAMC Board of Directors and Leadership Team identified 10 bold actions to achieve our vision of a healthier future through learning, discovery, health care, and community collaborations.



10 PLANS FOR ACTION

No. 1

Strengthen the Medical Education Continuum for Transformed Health Care and Learning Environments

No. 2

Extend the AAMC's Leadership Role in Helping Students Progress Through Their Medical Professional Journey

No. 3

Equip Medical Schools and Teaching Hospitals and Health Systems to Become More Inclusive, Equitable Organizations

No. 4

Increase Significantly the Number of Diverse Medical School Applicants and Matriculants

No. 5

Strengthen the Nation's Commitment to Medical Research and the Research Community

No. 6

Enhance the Skills and Capacity of People in Academic Medicine

No. 7

Improve Access to Health Care for All

No. 8

Advance Knowledge Through the AAMC Research and Action Institute

No. 9

Launch the AAMC as a National Leader in Health Equity and Health Justice

No. 10

Adapt the AAMC to the Changing Needs of Academic Medicine

No. 1

STRENGTHEN THE MEDICAL EDUCATION CONTINUUM FOR TRANSFORMED HEALTH CARE AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted and forced change in medical education and health care. During a time of tremendous upheaval, the strength and resilience of medical educators and learners shone through. The AAMC will continue to foster innovation in medical education and support efforts to promote positive clinical learning environments. Individual and community health outcomes must be front and center in medical education.

This action plan will seek to better align educational outcomes across medical schools and their clinical partners, and across the entire continuum of medical education (undergraduate, graduate, and continuing medical education), to improve patient-level and system-level outcomes. The result will be a cadre of current and future physicians engaged in a lifetime of learning for the benefit of patients and their families and communities.

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No. 2

EXTEND THE AAMC'S LEADERSHIP ROLE IN HELPING STUDENTS PROGRESS THROUGH THEIR MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

Medical students and residents have demonstrated commitment, energy, and adaptability during the COVID-19 crisis. As they progress through their medical education journey, learners encounter complicated, ambiguous, and costly processes. Learners need an integrated system of knowledge, guidance, direction, and support to enable them to explore and make confident choices in their journeys, which will ease their anxiety and help them focus on serving patients and communities.

The need for solutions in the transition to residency is especially acute. The system by which prospective residents secure positions to enter graduate medical education (GME) in the United States does not work well. As the United States Medical Licensing Examination® Step 1 moves to a pass-fail scale, program directors will need to differentiate among a high volume of applicants but will have fewer measures by which to compare students.

As a leader in the research and development of assessments designed to measure a broad range of competencies along the medical education continuum, the AAMC will lead a coalition of collaborators to implement effective solutions to ensure the GME trainee selection process is fair, equitable, and feasible.



No. 3

EQUIP MEDICAL SCHOOLS AND TEACHING HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS TO BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, front-line health care providers, patients, families, and the public have displayed countless acts of unity. We have been “in this together.” And yet, in other ways, we have not been. The pandemic struck Black and Native American communities and other marginalized and vulnerable groups especially hard. Then the brutal deaths of George Floyd and other Black Americans threw the country into turmoil as nationwide protests erupted, laying bare many inequities and reigniting the struggle for racial equality.

For years, women and members of marginalized groups in academic medicine have faced systemic problems such as racism, microaggressions, bias, harassment, disrespect, inadequate mentoring, salary inequities, and isolation, which have harmed their sense of belonging.

To accelerate discovery and improve health, academic medicine needs to create equitable and inclusive environments in which all faculty, staff, administrators, trainees, and learners feel welcome, safe, valued, and a sense of belonging and can pursue successful science and medicine careers. Such environments are key to attracting and advancing a diverse workforce and improving the health of all people.

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No. 4

INCREASE SIGNIFICANTLY THE NUMBER OF DIVERSE MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICANTS AND MATRICULANTS

Despite much talk and action, the academic medicine community has made minimal progress in increasing the number of physicians from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. We need more assertive efforts to cultivate a more diverse and culturally prepared workforce. We need to better understand how systemic barriers such as racism and inconsistent access to quality education, beginning with pre-K, negatively affect diversity in academic medicine. And we must design bolder interventions to address the growing absence of Black men and the invisibility of American Indians and Alaska Natives in medical school and the physician workforce, which are national crises.

In this action plan, the AAMC will take a multitiered approach that will require sustained investment, collaboration, and attention over time to significantly increase the diversity of medical students.

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No. 5

STRENGTHEN THE NATION'S COMMITMENT TO MEDICAL RESEARCH AND THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded the world that research innovation and discoveries save lives. Biomedical research allows us to understand the mechanisms underlying health and disease, from the molecular level to population and community factors. For decades, the academic medicine community has delivered the promise of medical advances for the betterment of humankind.

But we need to do more. To improve health and quality of life and eradicate disease, we must continually advance medical research and develop new and more effective treatments. Yet many analyses predict that the future of basic science is at risk. We need to better support diverse learners who will become the next generation of scientists, physician-scientists, and other professionals in the biomedical research enterprise. We must work with the academic medicine community, government agencies, and other organizations to foster an optimal environment for discovery. This action plan will work to sustain America's commitment to biomedical research and support and diversify its workforce to advance health.

No. 6

ENHANCE THE SKILLS AND CAPACITY OF PEOPLE IN ACADEMIC MEDICINE

As the response to the COVID-19 pandemic showed, the strength of America's health care system depends on its people: the institutional and health care system leaders whose decisions protected the public, patients, and employees; the faculty and staff who met the evolving needs of learners with dedication and resolve; the front-line health care professionals and researchers whose leadership, courage, skill, and dedication saved countless lives; and student and resident leaders who stepped up, ready to serve, with creativity and impact.

Through this action plan, the AAMC will build on this leadership talent to ensure academic medicine will continue to be "leader-ready" for any challenge by focusing on:

- Creating and delivering learning experiences that dive deeply into the knowledge and skills that the people of academic medicine need to lead and effect change in complex systems.
- Taking an integrated, innovative, and unified approach to leadership development.
- Making leadership training more widely accessible, including to professional staff and faculty.

“The strength of America's health care system depends on its people.

No. 7

IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the leadership role the nation's academic medicine community plays in clinical care, innovation, and crisis response. It also underscored the many fissures in the nation's system of care, including health care access. The academic medicine community can lead the nation in identifying, implementing, and advocating for solutions to improve access to health care for all through its mission areas, commitment to evidence-based care, and community collaborations.

This action plan will focus attention and effort on improving access to care for people in medically underserved and otherwise marginalized communities. We will seek to identify and advance innovative, effective, and evidence-based strategies that enhance health care access for patients and promote health care equity while supporting high-value care.

No. 8

A close-up photograph of a woman with voluminous, curly, light brown hair. She is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and is looking down at a laptop computer. Her expression is focused. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an office or library setting.

ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE THROUGH THE AAMC RESEARCH AND ACTION INSTITUTE

The academic medicine community, policymakers, and others turn to the AAMC for information, data, and advice on countless issues. This is especially true in times of national and international crises. AAMC research and analyses inform policy and practice across the missions and institutions of academic medicine.

The AAMC will elevate our leadership role in research and policy analysis through the creation of the AAMC Research and Action Institute. The institute will coalesce an interdisciplinary team of AAMC researchers, analysts, national experts, and fellows to study and understand the most critical issues affecting the missions and institutions of academic medicine and harness those institutions to test, validate, promote, and scale effective change.

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No. 9

LAUNCH THE AAMC AS A NATIONAL LEADER IN HEALTH EQUITY AND HEALTH JUSTICE

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare existing health inequities, taking a disproportionate toll on marginalized communities throughout the world. It has also mobilized renewed calls to focus further “upstream” to improve health. Emerging from this crisis, the AAMC has an opportunity and an obligation to unify our approach and thought leadership and develop evidence to support health and social justice.

Building on the AAMC’s expertise in this area, this action plan will establish the AAMC Center for Health Justice to focus on the intersection of population health, community health, and health equity. The new center will become a source of national expertise for the academic medicine community and the public and will work on initiatives in clinical, education, research, and community engagement that advance the moral, financial, and societal imperative of health justice.

“The AAMC will take a fresh look at our membership model to broaden and deepen our involvement with people in, and even beyond, academic medicine to achieve our mission.

No. 10

ADAPT THE AAMC TO THE CHANGING NEEDS OF ACADEMIC MEDICINE

Rapid systemic change is occurring throughout academic medicine and health care. And the AAMC will change with it.

The evolving operations and structure of systems in academic medicine pose opportunities for the AAMC to reexamine our current membership model and the ways we convene individuals from medical schools, teaching hospitals and health systems, and academic societies. When the people of academic medicine convene, they share challenges, expertise, inspiration, and support with one another that drives resilience and professional development, builds institutional capacity, and strengthens our collective voice.

As part of this action plan, the AAMC will take a fresh look at our membership model and structures for engaging with our community to determine how the AAMC can broaden and deepen our involvement with people in, and even beyond, academic medicine to achieve our mission.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

Integrity

We do the right thing. We honor our word. We do what's best for the health of people everywhere.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We are better because of our diversity. We honor and respect each other's perspectives, experiences, talents, and potential. We strive for a culture where we can be our authentic selves, where we are validated for who we are and valued for what we contribute.

Collaboration

We help each other succeed. We act with empathy. We work together with our members and the communities and people we serve.

Innovation and Discovery

We recognize, investigate, understand, and solve new challenges and tough problems. We are a top-of-class innovative association. We are future-focused and learn from our successes and failures.

Excellence

We push ourselves to be our best. We deliver results. We continually strive for higher levels of quality, service, and impact.



BETTER HEALTH
FOR EVERYONE
IS ON THE
HORIZON.



AAMC

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