



Emerging Legislative and Policy Initiatives

2010-2011

The Association of Academic Health Centers is a non-profit association representing more than one hundred of the nation's academic health centers. As part of the system of higher education and located within universities, academic health centers have critical responsibilities that extend beyond those of traditional academia, including:

- *Educating the nation's health workforce* through schools of medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, allied health, public health, and veterinary medicine;
- *Conducting cutting-edge biomedical and clinical research* that leads to breakthroughs in the diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions; and
- *Providing comprehensive patient care* from the basic to the most advanced services.

In addition to the mission of *advancing and applying knowledge to improve health and well-being*, academic health centers are major contributors to economic growth and development and are among their region's largest employers.

Develop policies ensuring an adequate health workforce is trained to provide care that meets the public's needs

Increasing the percentage of Americans with health insurance is insufficient alone for improved access to health care without an adequate health professions workforce. As the baby boomer generation ages and more people who have previously been uninsured present for care, the health workforce must have the skills to provide safe, high-quality, and effective care for patients in an inter-professional, inter-disciplinary, collaborative environment. The AAHC has long called for a new, coordinated, national health workforce planning initiative and is pleased that Congress demonstrated its commitment to resolving these issues on a federal level by authorizing the National Health Care Workforce Commission. However, we urge Congress to appropriate adequate funding for the Commission as soon as possible. Furthermore, the AAHC is committed to working with all concerned stakeholders to develop a reasonable, feasible, and fiscally responsible plan to develop a graduate medical education (GME) policy that will promote a health professions workforce of the size, specialty-mix, and distribution necessary to meet the needs of the American public. The AAHC calls upon Congress to consider expert recommendations and tackle GME policy reform in the 112th Congress.

Encourage and support efforts to innovate the health care delivery system

Innovations in health care delivery can contribute to significant progress in health care quality and patient safety, as well as decrease health care costs through a reduction in unnecessary and duplicative tests and treatment. As multidisciplinary institutions that incorporate patient care with education and research, academic health centers are a natural laboratory for the development and analysis of these innovations. Congress and the Department of Health and Human Services have established various programs and demonstration projects designed to foster this type of innovation. The success of these projects is reliant upon not just the innovators themselves, but also upon the continued support and involvement of those who pay for care, including the federal and state governments. The AAHC is committed to working

collaboratively with Congress and the appropriate federal agencies to maximize the potential of these initiatives, given the far-reaching capabilities of our members in these areas.

Coordinate and harmonize regulations governing the academic health center community to maximize efficiency and impact

The academic health center community represents one of the most regulated industries in the United States. Regulations that govern the three function areas of education, research, and patient care are numerous and continue to expand. The AAHC supports the federal government's interest in protecting the health, safety, and privacy of patients and research participants. However, there are several areas where federal regulations have unnecessarily inhibited the research enterprise, including, but not limited to, privacy protections and clinical trials policy. The AAHC is committed to working with the agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services to streamline existing regulations and provide expert advice for upcoming rulemaking.