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Academic health centers must become multinational, says AAHC President Wartman

Serving global community together must be defining identity for future

WASHINGTON, March 29--As agents of change academic health centers are among the critical forces shaping the 21st century global economy, Steven A. Wartman, MD, PhD, president of the Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC) told academic health center leaders in Washington this week. Playing host to the AAHC's First International Forum with distinguished government and health leaders from India and Singapore, Wartman said that serving the global community must be the defining signature for academic health centers for the future. Economic and technological advances coupled with health needs worldwide are convincing evidence for creating a new entity—the multinational academic health center—which can be the defining multinational corporation for the public good of the 21st century.

The core of the academic health center is its human and intellectual capital, according to Wartman. While U.S. firms compete with rivals from other technologically sophisticated countries in the global market, U.S. academic health centers retain their preeminence because of their knowledge workers, which include an array of researchers, scientists, and health professionals. "U.S. academic health centers are especially strong because of the creative, out-of-the-box thinking that emerges from these institutions; it is a very critical asset in high demand around the world," said Wartman, adding, "It is one of the most vital ingredients for sustained economic growth and will power U.S. innovation for the future."

Wartman cautioned, however, that "knowledge workers do not always come to America and, in fact, some Americans are leaving" for better opportunities abroad. "We are in an era where there is an unprecedented flow of knowledge workers across international boundaries," said Wartman, concluding that the ramifications of this phenomenon must be addressed by working together on an international scale.

Wartman called on academic health center leaders to consider the global market as a priority issue for the future, to reorient academic health center structures as multinational institutions, and to work collectively to form international alliances and partnerships that can enhance health and well being throughout the world.

Wartman recommended that the Association of Academic Health Centers and academic health center leaders work together with policymakers both here and abroad to build and implement the vision of the multinational academic health center.

The Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC) is a national, non-profit organization that seeks to improve health and well-being through vigorous leadership of the nation's academic health centers.

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