

AOA Strategic Plan 2008-10

“The AOA: A G.R.E.A.T. Family of DOs”

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AOA Mission Statement

The AOA's mission is to advance the philosophy and practice of osteopathic medicine by promoting excellence in education, research, accreditation, and the delivery of quality, cost-effective health care within a distinct, unified profession.

AOA Vision Statement

The AOA will be the premier professional home of all DOs and osteopathic medical students who:

- Advocate our distinctive philosophy to ensure that osteopathic principles will be at the forefront of global efforts to provide quality health care as DOs take their rightful place as the most completely trained physicians in the world.

AOA Strategic Goals

The AOA stands for the following universal principles:

1. Ensuring the quality and continuum of osteopathic medical education;
2. Enhancing the value of AOA membership;
3. Protecting and promoting the rights of all members of the osteopathic family;
4. Accentuating the distinctiveness of osteopathic principles;
5. Advancing DOs' efforts to provide quality, cost-effective health care to all patients;
6. Collaborating with other entities to advance osteopathic medicine;
7. Supporting the culture of osteopathic research within the osteopathic family; and
8. Taking our rightful place as the most completely trained physician at taking care of patients.

Through these goals we will promote the distinctiveness of osteopathic medicine and the diversity of the profession.

“Let your light so shine before men that the world will know you are an Osteopath pure and simple, and that no prouder title can follow a human name.”

--Andrew Taylor Still, MD, DO

The GREAT Strategic Pathways

The AOA focuses its efforts and resources along “*Strategic Pathways.*” A Strategic Pathway is an area of concentration through which the AOA emphasizes the development and enhancement of programs and services across departments and all parts of the Association. The 2008-10 Strategic Pathways are: 1) Governance; 2) Research; 3) Education; 4) Advocacy; 5) Teamwork; and 6) Family. To achieve our mission, vision and strategic goals, the 2008-10 Strategic Plan demands a renewed pledge of commitment by AOA members, leadership and staff.

G R E A T

Governance

Successful, autonomous associations rely on a great organizational infrastructure to direct their daily operations as well as their long-range plans. As the AOA moves from good to great, effective governance requires consistent analysis, evaluation, and adaptation by our House of Delegates, Board of Trustees, and staff to meet our members’ needs. Transparency in governance is necessary in today’s world. This new strategic path reflects our willingness to change ourselves to respond to our ever-evolving membership and the recognition that infrastructure is a constantly developing facet of our guiding Strategic Plan.

Proper attention to governance ensures that the AOA remains professionally and fiscally strong, has the right tools in place to attain its goals, develops policies and procedures to guide it into the future, and ultimately becomes great. It allows the AOA to streamline efficiency in daily operations, ensure continuity, and create transparency through the IT network and greater use of electronic technology. Because of this accountability, key stakeholders will understand and trust that the strategic pathways will be accomplished. Governance also encompasses activities dedicated to ensuring and improving the AOA’s financial and structural resilience and its ability to accomplish the goals identified for each of the other five paths.

The AOA Constitution and Bylaws lay the groundwork for governance, yet they are living documents that constantly evolve and lead to the development of new strategies to meet the challenges they entail. As part of this Strategic Plan, the AOA will strive to utilize existing revenues efficiently, develop additional sources of revenues, instill policies that promote the osteopathic philosophy, and continue to ensure the strength and integrity of our organization. The structure and responsibilities of staff is reviewed annually and, as needed, to ensure the AOA has “the right people on the bus.”

The AOA has dedicated a great amount of energy over the last three years in creating and adapting resources to meet the needs of its members and their patients, other osteopathic medical associations, and the rest of the osteopathic medical community. Paying off the mortgage of the AOA headquarters established a secure home for the profession at 142 E. Ontario Street in Chicago. Attracting other osteopathic medical organizations to locate in this home will enable the osteopathic medical family to more efficiently govern itself and pool its resources on behalf of the entire profession.

Being fiscally sound and having a solid infrastructure has allowed us to expand programs and services for our members, devote more resources to educational development, develop a greater focus on advocacy, and contribute more to osteopathic medical research. Thus, the strategic path of governance is the road leading us to the five other strategic paths.

G R E A T

Research

The efficacy and distinctiveness of osteopathic medicine and the diversity of the profession is evidenced by research. Accordingly, research is a primary responsibility of the AOA. The AOA will conduct, support, and expand education, public health, health services, basic science, clinical and market research that enhance the quality of osteopathic care and the needs of its members. The AOA will also research national health problems, such as obesity or smoking cessation, to promote healthy lifestyles. Just as “DOs treat people, not just symptoms,” our research will fully encompass all aspects of osteopathic medicine, not just Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT).

Conducting evidence-based research on the effectiveness of OMT and promoting the practice of osteopathic physicians remain the AOA’s top priorities. Encouraging researchers to publish their scientific findings in *JAOA--The Journal of the American Osteopathic Association* and other peer-reviewed journals will advance osteopathic medicine and show its prominence from a clinical perspective. The AOA will expand opportunities to conduct evidence-based research by awarding research grants through the Osteopathic Research Development Fund (ORDF). Ensuring additional development of research on the practice of osteopathic medicine may include collaboration with other organizations to obtain research funding. Above all, the AOA will seek to bolster osteopathic medicine’s current and future standing in the health care delivery system through these future and other research efforts.

The AOA will support Osteopathic Research Centers in their efforts to direct collaborative studies in osteopathic medical research; we will host the AOA’s Annual Research Conference and help to sponsor other osteopathic research conferences; we will support evidence-based outcomes studies; we will expand the Clinical Assessment Program (CAP) and develop other quality initiatives; we will promote access to print and electronic osteopathic medical journals; and we will support grants development.

With regard to market research, we will employ all appropriate research methods to ensure our services encompass fully our members’ needs, represent the scope of their practices, promote public awareness of osteopathic physicians, and duly honor their innovation. By strategically surveying segments of AOA members, we will determine the needs and preferences of members and enrich our information on current and future DOs. In addition, we will enhance the AOA membership database to ensure that our information on members is timely and accurate, allowing us to efficiently solicit feedback.

To further develop and promote best practices, particularly in women's health, minority health and palliative care, the AOA will continue to expand the CAP program through residency programs and physician offices, as well as conduct environmental analyses to identify health, patient population, and governmental trends, and all other issues affecting the education and practice of osteopathic medicine.

G R E A T

Education

Producing top-quality DOs through the continuum of osteopathic medical education is the foundation upon which the osteopathic medical profession is built. Education, therefore, serves as the greatest means of enhancing the AOA's future greatness and preserving the distinctiveness and sustainability of the osteopathic medical profession.

The osteopathic medical profession relies on the AOA to accomplish these goals, making us the standard-bearers of education. Thus we will assume new roles in the osteopathic medical education continuum to enhance quality and choices for osteopathic medical students and build an ever-stronger foundation for teaching how to better understand and employ the tenets of osteopathic medicine. Chief among our efforts is overseeing the *Foundations of Osteopathic Medicine* textbook, advocating for including osteopathic medicine's core competencies in the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation's standards, analyzing trend data on educational needs, and implementing policies based on recommendations from Osteopathic Medical Education Summits.

The AOA supports the responsible growth of the profession to meet patient demands. Through a series of Summit meetings, the AOA will work with AACOM to examine the responsible growth of the profession to ensure that the entire educational continuum is efficient and effective to serve the nation's needs.

Discrimination against osteopathic students appears to be on the rise. A quality education requires quality 3rd and 4th year clinical rotations wherever they are located. The AOA will address the seeming recent prohibition of osteopathic students from participating in such rotations at selected allopathic institutions. The AOA will also focus on growing the number of osteopathic graduate medical education positions in response to comments by allopathic leaders stating that, as they increase their class sizes, osteopathic trainees will be excluded from allopathic training programs.

The AOA will encourage continuing development of quality osteopathic faculty, staff, and preceptors to mentor students. We will work to build confidence in the quality, opportunities and credibility of osteopathic training and certification in primary care and every other specialty. The AOA will enhance its research efforts to evaluate the quality outcomes of osteopathic medicine's education process. In turn, we advocate for responsible growth of the profession through expansion of osteopathic graduate medical education programs, establishing a balance between the physician workforce and underserved regions, and continuing to develop joint residency programs that meet the distinct needs of osteopathic residents.

The AOA will maintain its leadership role in developing policies and making recommendations about continuing medical education (CME) nationwide. The AOA will strategically leverage its representation on appropriate collaborative committees to improve the quality of CME for DOs and MDs. The AOA will continue to place more emphasis on providing "outcome-based" CME. We will monitor and revise CME policies for DOs who obtain their board certification through non-AOA certifying boards. Utilizing technology to facilitate CME offerings will also be a priority.

The AOA will demonstrate the quality and distinctiveness of the DO degree at all levels of government and in the public and private sectors of our society through support of the NBOME COMLEX examination and quality osteopathic board certification. The AOA will advocate and use the Clinical Assessment Program as a measurement for continuous certification. In addition, we will educate the public about the value of a DO degree both to promote the osteopathic approach to medicine and attract additional qualified applicants to colleges of osteopathic medicine. We will maintain strong and robust publications devoted to exploring and debating the discipline of osteopathic medicine. We will enhance the online presence of our publications to provide additional content and to provide an expedient way to access published archives.

Investing in the Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program (HFAP) is viewed as a pathway to create educational opportunities and to enhance quality of osteopathic care. Hospital accreditation activities have the potential to generate sites for 3rd and 4th year rotations as well as possible graduate medical education opportunities. The HFAP is the only health facility accreditation body that has specific criteria for the provision of quality osteopathic services.

The AOA will expand its role in international osteopathic medical education by monitoring, advising, and working with foreign entities that are educating health care professionals in osteopathic principles and practice. The AOA will promote the US model of osteopathic medical education while exploring options to accredit foreign osteopathic medical colleges. The AOA's commitment to these objectives will not only make osteopathic medical education more prominent, but also will make the profession world-renowned for its excellence.

G R E A T

Advocacy

The AOA stands as the overarching, comprehensive, and unifying voice of osteopathic medicine to protect and promote the rights of all osteopathic physicians and their patients. This voice is heard primarily on legislative and regulatory issues as we seek to enhance patients' health by advancing osteopathic physicians' practice rights, professional liability insurance reform, graduate medical education training opportunities, physician payment reform, and patient safety. We will be poised to respond to emerging health care issues, such as health system reform, pay for performance, and the "patient-centered medical home" concept. Our advocacy extends beyond the governmental realm into the public and private spheres of our society, aiming to increase the awareness, recognition, and authority of the osteopathic medical profession.

The AOA plans to increase its political influence in Washington, D.C., in the state capitals and worldwide through strategic partnerships. Providing osteopathic medicine with more channels through which to inform and influence policy-making bodies will enhance the profession's ability to effect change at both the federal and state levels. In turn, grassroots communications will inform the members of the profession about these advances and solicit their active participation through AOA media.

A number of allopathic institutions have decided to charge osteopathic students large fees for clinical rotations. Other institutions have decided that osteopathic students are not welcome on clinical rotations at any price. The AOA will advocate on the behalf of osteopathic students and colleges of osteopathic medicine so that they can obtain quality rotations without discrimination.

State and specialty osteopathic medical associations are strategic partners of the AOA for state and federal advocacy. As the profession's umbrella organization, the AOA will assume the position of "battle commander," organizing and informing the osteopathic medical profession in the fight to protect patients' rights and DOs' rights to practice through health system reform. We will help our state and specialty associations protect their scope of practice and promote patient education and responsibility regarding appropriate utilization of nonphysician health care professionals. We will constantly respond to the continuously changing political arena in our progress toward greatness through AOA media and otherwise.

The socioeconomic needs of our members affect their ability to practice medicine and depend heavily on the success of the profession's advocacy efforts. Our goal is adequate and fair physician reimbursement from government programs, including Medicare, Medicaid and private insurers, including managed care organizations. We seek also to minimize student loan burdens and obtain subsidies to help reduce education costs for osteopathic medical students. We will also continue to fight discrimination through advocacy directed at managed care organizations, other insurers, and health care facilities until it is eradicated. As such, we will increase practice management education to enable osteopathic physicians to maximize the efficiency and profitability of their practices.

To assist DOs who seek to practice internationally, the AOA will advocate for the worldwide portability of U.S. osteopathic medical licenses. The AOA is building relations with the

International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities to assist U.S. DOs who wish to practice abroad.

As the primary advocate for the osteopathic community, the AOA will further seek to increase public awareness of osteopathic medicine and ensure that osteopathic medicine and the interests of DOs are accurately represented in the media and all other public forums. One use of the Greatness Fund may be to create a multimillion dollar public awareness campaign on osteopathic medicine. Establishing and activating a Greatness Corps of motivated AOA members will assist us in becoming great advocates on all levels of the public and private spheres.

G R E A T

Teamwork

Today's health care environment demands teamwork among all private and public entities in order for organizations like the AOA to successfully and effectively represent their members and the patients we serve. Identifying and actively pursuing collaborative opportunities within the health care arena unites strong organizations with the AOA in pursuit of joint goals that further the strategic paths of this Strategic Plan.

Partnering with the right health care groups enhances the visibility, credibility and awareness of osteopathic medicine and the AOA. Such partnerships include physician organizations, such as the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Family Physicians, health care facilities, insurance plans, and licensure authorities. When necessary to advance issues of mutual concern or benefit, the AOA will initiate additional partnerships with pharmaceutical, insurance and other business entities, as well as with philanthropies.

The AOA aims to strengthen the AOA family by communicating and working with all other osteopathic medical organizations and by sharing with these family members the benefits of our investments, other resources, and commitment to electronic technology. To this end, the AOA will partner with state associations, particularly through our management staff, to secure their membership and ensure their financial stability, as well as to explore new relationships like regionalization.

Creative, collaborative strategies with osteopathic specialty colleges and osteopathic certifying boards will be employed to strengthen osteopathic medicine's family and its organizational structure. The AOA will continue to work with osteopathic medical organizations and other entities to ensure the long-term viability of osteopathic graduate medical education and board certification. Just as the Campaign for Osteopathic Unity brought together many facets of the osteopathic medical profession, the AOA will seek to host Unified Conventions in 2010 and annually thereafter to unite all branches of our family under one roof.

Globalization affects the osteopathic medical profession's interests as more osteopathic physicians seek practice rights and participate in mission work around the world. AOA collaboration with the World Health Organization, the World Health Assembly, and the International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities advances these goals. Collaboration with the Osteopathic International Alliance (OIA), for which the AOA is secretariat, and other international entities, enables the AOA to work for global osteopathic unity and to seek high-quality osteopathic health care worldwide. The AOA will also continue to collaborate with DOCARE International and Heart to Heart International missions to improve world health.

Family

Family is the AOA's brand name for membership. If we are truly to become a GREAT association, every DO should want to become a member of the AOA family. To achieve this goal we will provide distinct and valuable member benefits, as well as excellence in member services through every pathway of this Strategic Plan.

Helping osteopathic physicians maintain competency and quality practices through board certification, outcomes assessment, life-long learning opportunities, and ongoing clinical and practice management education, the AOA has the obligation to ensure that all DOs remain connected to the AOA professional family. Membership retention begins by cultivating a relationship with osteopathic medical students from their first day of school and staying in touch with them throughout their careers so that communication channels within the AOA family remain open. As part of this effort, we will enhance our member database by collecting valid contact information for all members of the osteopathic family in order to conduct research on the needs of every segment of our membership – students, interns/residents, practicing physicians, educators, and retired DOs. The AOA will continue its efforts to welcome ACGME-trained DOs into AOA membership.

Print and online communication provides an efficient and effective way to help DOs and osteopathic medical students stay connected to the AOA family and vice-versa. Further development of AOA member benefits will usher in a technological age that will include expanded information resources, easy-to-navigate Web sites, and distinct online services for all members of the profession.

Through excellence in member programs and services, the AOA will also seek to maintain and strengthen every DO's pride in the osteopathic medical profession. Our AOA brand symbolizes the osteopathic medical profession as a family and honors our pledge to "C.A.R.E. about Members." The 2005-2007 Strategic Plan was titled, "We C.A.R.E. about Members," in which the acronym CARE stood for Collaboration, Advocacy, Research, and Education. We promote pride in and loyalty to the profession by encouraging DOs and osteopathic medical students to be part of the Greatness Corps so that they have an active voice in AOA policy development and representation. In addition, we encourage all members to contribute to the Greatness Fund to help promote public awareness of osteopathic medicine through a national advertising campaign and other initiatives. Chronicling the careers of Great Pioneers will reinforce these goals by reminding all DOs of the threats and other challenges our forefathers overcame by working to unify the profession.

For pride and loyalty to permeate the profession, the osteopathic profession will take its rightful place as the most completely trained physicians in the world. It is essential that the AOA continue to work closely with all osteopathic medical organizations, especially the Advocates for the American Osteopathic Association, the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, and the American Osteopathic Foundation, to promote all membership aspects of our family. *Semper fidelis* requires no less; becoming the light that shines throughout the world requires this evermore.

AOA Ultimate Goals

These goals are the outcomes measures for the 2008-10 Strategic Plan. They will be translated into the AOA Business Plan. Periodic progress reports toward the goals will be presented to the AOA Board of Trustees and House of Delegates. Developed annually, the Business Plan describes the services and programs that the AOA plans to undertake each year.

2008-10 Goals

- 50% of AOA members participate in the CAP;
- 75% of AOA headquarters occupied by affiliate osteopathic association tenants;
- 80% membership by all osteopathic physicians;
- Advocate for 100% health insurance coverage for all Americans;
- Advocate for recognition or expand the current recognition of US osteopathic physicians in 30 international jurisdictions;
- All DOs would continuously strive to choose healthy lifestyles and behaviors to serve as mentors to their patients and the American public;
- Communicate the American standards of osteopathic medicine internationally;
- Identify the number of patients seeing DOs and raise that number by 50%;
- Physician payment reform, including equitable reimbursement based on comprehensive, continuous osteopathic patient care;
- Professional liability reform at the federal and state level;
- Provide the resources and framework for health care facilities to develop OGME training positions in all specialties;
- Recognize DOs as the most completely trained physician; and
- Unified Convention by 2010 and every year thereafter with a pledge from all osteopathic affiliates to participate in it.

Ultimate goals provide a sense of direction for a Strategic Plan. The AOA's ultimate goals are ambitious, but anything less is not worth pursuing during the next 3-year Strategic Plan and beyond. Accordingly, the AOA aspires to the following ultimate goals:

Long-Term Goals

- 20% of all patients in the United States go to DOs;
- 100% of all patients have health insurance coverage;
- 100% of AOA headquarters occupied by affiliate osteopathic association tenants;
- 100% membership by all osteopathic physicians;
- Every practicing DO participates in the AOA Clinical Assessment Program;
- Long-term financial prosperity based on existing and alternative sources of revenue;
- Osteopathic postdoctoral training positions for all COM graduates in all specialties;
- Progressive technology infrastructure to achieve AOA goals and member needs; and
- Unified convention every year.