



## **The Student National Medical Association Position on Diversity and Equity in Education**

In 1996, the case of *Hopwood v. University of Texas*, ruled that affirmative action programs in higher education were not justified based on the necessity to achieve diversity NOR on the premise of remedying past wrongs created by discrimination in elementary and secondary schools. Since that landmark ruling, ongoing challenges to equitable educational opportunities have swept through judicial and legislative sectors and have successfully managed to compromise diversity and equity in the American educational system. With the passage of legislation and initiatives across the country, including Proposition 209 (CA) and Initiative 200 (WA), both of which ruled against race-conscious admissions, the nation has become witness to disheartening decreases in minority applicants and matriculants at institutions of higher learning.

Such trends present a new challenge to organizations such as the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), whose Project 3000 by 2000 aimed to increase the representation of minority students in American medical schools – only to witness the tide of anti-affirmative action measures, amongst other variables, hinder the actualization of their goal. The organization, however, continues to support equity and diversity in education through ongoing programs such as the Minority Medical Education Program (MMEP), which serves to prepare underrepresented minority undergraduate students for health professional careers. The AAMC also leads the Health Professions Partnership Initiative, which includes 52 other organizations, which aims to enhance the academic achievement, as well as the preparedness for health professional education, of minority students, from grade school through professional school.

As it stands, underrepresented minority students in predominately minority pre-college educational systems (which ranges from about 66%-100% depending on geographical settings) are sixteen times more likely to attend a concentrated poverty school than students attending segregated white schools. Academic segregation by race and poverty has been consistently linked to poor educational outcomes and opportunities. These trends are incredibly concerning and have prompted the members of the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) to both express our concern about current circumstances and use our collective voice to influence these troubling tides in education.

We support efforts and programs in education that will *truly* lead more underrepresented minority students to the attainment of high school diplomas and, ultimately, higher level degrees. Thus, the onset of this new century comes with the challenge of lending force to this wind and combating institutionalized social constructs that ultimately discourage

potential minority applicants or abandon them along the educational pipeline leading from primary school through college and beyond.

As the largest independent organization representing the concerns of medical students of color, the SNMA, founded in 1964, is dedicated to fortification of the social and political ground upon which equitable educational and professional opportunities for underrepresented minorities can be established. Furthermore, we accept the challenge of not only attaining individual and collective successes in medicine, but also of ensuring enhanced opportunities for those to follow. Moreover, our stance extends beyond the halls of academia and the wards of hospitals to those whose competent, accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate care is in our hands.

We are active participants in the political process and our membership includes residents in your state. Thus we ask for your support of efforts to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities for underrepresented minorities.

We, the members of the Student National Medical Association:

1. Support equity and excellence in the education and professional preparation of underrepresented minority students from grades K-12.
2. Support the establishment of equitable access to the highest quality of educational opportunities for students of all ages, circumstances and origins.
3. Support the efforts of the AAMC that promote diversity and equity in medical education.
4. Support the development, funding, and strengthening of programs that enroll, retain, and graduate increased numbers of minority students.