

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: 309
(A-24)

Introduced by: Resident and Fellow Section

Subject: Disaffiliation from the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society due to Perpetuation of Racial Inequities in Medicine

Referred to: Reference Committee C

1 Whereas, founded in 1902, the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Honor Medical Society consists of
2 over 200,000 medical student and physician members across 135 chapters with a mission to
3 recognize high educational achievement¹; and
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5 Whereas, AOA membership is disproportionately White: a 2017 cohort study of 4,655 medical
6 students illustrated that AOA membership for White students was nearly 6 times greater than
7 that for Black students and nearly 2 times greater than that for Asian students²; and
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9 Whereas, Black medical students are significantly less likely to be inducted into AOA compared
10 to other groups, according to a 2019 cohort study that examined data from 11,781 ERAS
11 applications³; and
12

13 Whereas, exclusion from AOA membership also disproportionately impacts Hispanic/Latino,
14 American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students⁴; and
15

16 Whereas, these inequities are especially concerning given the differential access AOA
17 membership affords; AOA members are prioritized for interview invites and have greater odds of
18 matching into traditionally competitive specialties (i.e., dermatology, plastic surgery, orthopedic
19 surgery, urology, radiation oncology, and otolaryngology)⁵; and
20

21 Whereas, according to AOA's website, 75% of medical school deans are AOA members,
22 suggesting that membership can amplify success over the course of one's career¹; and
23

24 Whereas, entry into AOA relies heavily upon clerkship grades, which are subject to significant
25 biases, with studies showing students of color tend to receive lower clerkship grades compared
26 to their White counterparts, particularly those who are underrepresented in medicine (UIM),
27 even after controlling for test scores⁴; and
28

29 Whereas, in clinical evaluations, White medical students have a greater propensity to be
30 characterized by their professional attributes such as "knowledgeable," while Black students are
31 more likely to be described by personal characteristics like "pleasant"⁶; and
32

33 Whereas, UIM students face additional burdens and energy expenditures that non-UIM students
34 do not experience, such as activation via triggers, internal dialogue, and threat response, which
35 may negatively impact their clerkship grades; and
36

37 Whereas, UIM students additionally face difficulty finding peer support networks, trouble
38 establishing peer-working relationships, and experiences of racism while being expected to lead

1 uncompensated diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at their institutions, all of which can
2 detract from academic and clinical duties; and
3

4 Whereas, multiple institutions have disaffiliated from AOA due to racial inequities in
5 membership, including the University of San Francisco School of Medicine, the Yale School of
6 Medicine, and the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai⁷⁻⁹; and
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8 Whereas, in 2020, AOA evolved eligibility criteria to promote diversity by increasing the number
9 of members per class and by allowing chapters to develop their own metrics, although this
10 change has failed to address the structural issues perpetuated by AOA^{10,11}; and
11

12 Whereas, disaffiliation from AOA entails eliminating institutional ties to the AOA national
13 organization, and residency applicants select “no AOA chapter at my school” under the ERAS
14 awards section; and
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16 Whereas, disaffiliation from AOA is a critical step toward promoting equity in admissions and
17 medical education at large, and disaffiliation sends a compelling message that medical
18 education needs alternative, equitable mechanisms to recognize the excellence of trainees;
19 therefore be it
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21 RESOLVED, that our American Medical Association recognizes that the Alpha Omega Alpha
22 Honor Medical Society disproportionately benefits privileged trainees (New HOD Policy); and be
23 it further
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25 RESOLVED, that our AMA supports institutional disaffiliation from the Alpha Omega Alpha
26 Honor Medical Society due to its perpetuation of racial inequities in medicine (New HOD Policy);
27 and be it further
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29 RESOLVED, that our AMA recognizes that the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society
30 perpetuates and accentuates discrimination against trainees of color that is inherent in medical
31 training. (New HOD Policy)

Fiscal Note: Minimal - less than \$1,000

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