



Executive Summary

Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program

The *Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program* awards four-year post-residency grants to support the research and career development of physicians and dentists from historically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The program, a long-running initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), is designed to increase the number of such faculty who achieve senior rank in academic medicine and dentistry and to foster the development of succeeding classes of such physicians and dentists.

[Read the full report.](#)
[Learn more about the program here.](#)

CONTEXT

Racial and ethnic minorities have long been underrepresented in the medical profession. While the picture brightened slightly in the latter part of the 20th century, the gap between the proportion of minorities in the physician workforce and in the general population remained large. For example, the Hispanic population represents almost 17 percent of the U.S. population, but less than 5 percent of the nation's physician workforce, according to American Medical Association data for 2008.

Underrepresentation in the health care professions by racial and ethnic minorities and others from historically disadvantaged backgrounds is not just an issue of career opportunity. Lack of diversity also has an impact on the care that underserved populations receive. A more diverse physician and dentist workforce can be expected to improve the ability of underserved populations to get care—and, importantly, care that is culturally compatible.

Greater numbers of medical faculty from underrepresented groups also affects the medical education received by members of those groups who can see people like them in positions of influence and power. In addition, it results in greater diversity in medical

research, both in topics researched that may more significantly affect members of underrepresented groups (such as sickle cell anemia), and in the inclusion of more subjects from underrepresented groups in clinical trials.

THE PROGRAM

The *Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program* awards four-year post-residency grants to support the research and career development of physicians and dentists who are committed to:

- Pursuing an academic career
- Serving as a role model for students and faculty from historically disadvantaged backgrounds
- Improving the health status of underserved populations, and/or
- Furthering the understanding and elimination of health disparities

The program defines the term “historically disadvantaged” to mean challenges facing individuals because of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or similar factors.

Originally called the *Minority Medical Faculty Development Program*, the program was renamed in 2003 in honor of Harold Amos, PhD, the first African American to chair a department of the Harvard Medical School and one of the program’s founders.

The program, which selected its first cohort of scholars in 1983, initially admitted physicians focused on careers in biomedical research. RWJF subsequently expanded eligibility to physicians interested in clinical investigation and health services research and in 2012 opened the program to dentists.

“Ultimately,” says RWJF Senior Program Officer David M. Krol, MD, MPH, “we would like to see these individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds becoming full professors at prestigious institutions, putting out important, valuable work, looking at a variety of different issues—including how to decrease the disparities between rich and poor, majority and minority—while climbing the academic ladder.”

KEY RESULTS

- **As of 2012, 241 scholars had completed the four-year program, and more than three-quarters remained in academic medicine, including 57 professors, 76 associate professors, and 56 assistant professors.**
- **Many program alumni have earned professional honors and become influential leaders in the health care field.** For example, three direct institutes at the National Institutes of Health and 10 have been elected to the Institute of Medicine.

- **Alumni have received hundreds of awards and honors, including a MacArthur Fellowship “genius” award.**
- **Alumni have reached positions of influence in academia that enable them to help correct the underrepresentation of minorities in the health professions and address health disparities.** Former scholars are:
 - Members of admission, intern, and faculty selection committees
 - On review boards for clinical protocols and research studies
 - Officers of professional societies and on editorial boards of academic journals

FUNDING

RWJF has invested \$113.4 million in the program over 30 years. The current \$5 million authorization runs through June 2017.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

As the program moves ahead it faces a number of challenges.

- The future of the Amos program is integrally linked to the evolution of academic health centers. A decline in the number of centers committed to academic and intellectual pursuits could limit the pool of program candidates.

Academic health centers are dealing with significant changes in how care is paid for. The federal spending squeeze and its potential impact on research funding present another uncertainty. How these and other developments will affect academic health centers’ dedication to education and research is hard to predict.

- Expanding the program’s applicant pool while maintaining high standards for scholars and mentors is an ongoing challenge. The expansion of eligibility to physicians from all historically disadvantaged backgrounds, rather than exclusively underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, helped meet that challenge, but the pool of applicants interested in medical and dental research remains limited.

Program Management

National Program Office: Indiana University School of Medicine

Program Director: James R. Gavin III, MD, PhD
