

Conference Background

The Beyond Flexner 2012 conference served as the capstone to a W.K Kellogg Foundation-funded study at the Department of Health Policy of the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services. The study explored unintended consequences of the Flexner Report with a focus on innovative models of medical education that address social mission. The Beyond Flexner Study began with the development of an advisory committee consisting of sixteen leaders in medical education and health policy. The research team and advisory committee identified eight core modalities that stand out as essential elements in the social mission of education, and selected six medical schools with a strong social mission commitment for the study. The selected schools were: AT Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona, Morehouse School of Medicine, Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, University of New Mexico School of Medicine, and University of Oklahoma-Tulsa School of Community Medicine.

The conference was sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, George Kaiser Family Foundation, The George Washington University, University of Oklahoma School of Community Medicine, and The University of Tulsa. The purpose of the conference was four-fold. First, it served as a venue to announce and discuss the findings of the Beyond Flexner study. Second, it provided a valuable networking opportunity for major players in the social mission of medical education, including schools that participated in the Beyond Flexner study. Third, it provided an opportunity for the many schools and medical educators who have lacked a forum to explore social accountability and mission in medical education. Finally, it allowed participants to explore the experiences, challenges, and lessons learned with the implementation of social accountability in medical education

Conference Summary

On May 15-17, 2012, 200 medical educators, policy makers, students and residents met in Tulsa, Oklahoma at the inaugural Beyond Flexner Conference. We were joined by keynote speakers Drs. David Satcher, Jack Geiger, Fitzhugh Mullan, Karen DeSalvo, Pedro “Joe” Greer, and George Thibault who delivered

inspiring and informative addresses on the landscape of social mission throughout their careers. The breakout sessions created a forum for schools to discuss innovative methods to further the social mission using the modalities developed from the Beyond Flexner Study:

- School Mission
- Pipeline Cultivation
- Admissions
- Curriculum
- Location of Clinical Experience
- Mentoring
- Tuition Management
- Post Graduate Engagement

Over twenty schools with a strong social mission agenda presented during these sessions and shared successes and challenges of implementing these programs with conference participants.

The non-costal setting in Tulsa, OK made a statement about where much of the innovation in the social mission of medical education is taking place. Conference participants were able to learn about the history of Tulsa which included a visit to the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park which is a tribute to the reconciliation after the devastating race riots in 1921. Other Tulsa experiences included a Drillers baseball game and tour of the Gilcrease museum.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

A number of core principles relating to the social mission of medical education were reinforced during conference deliberations. They include:

- Increasing the commitment of medical schools to the social mission of medicine will be essential to achieve a fair and affordable health care system
- Diversity is a means to excellence in education and practice
- Geography matters. Medical schools need to identify communities (cities, regions, states) where they commit to educational and health care improvement

- Community engagement of medical schools remains an essential instrument of population health improvement
- Information technologies (such as the EMR and mapping capabilities) are an important tools for furthering the social mission in education
- Team based training is an essential precursor to interprofessional practice
- Core principles of public health should be incorporated into medical education

Participants agreed that social mission should be incorporated into the core functions of academic health centers on a level with education, research, and clinical service. In order to accomplish this, the ranks of educators and policy makers committed to social mission enhancement will need to be enlarged. This group can help interested schools develop improved social mission capacity and develop metrics to measure health outcome improvement. Social mission should be a central element of medical education with the intent of contributing to excellence and universality in health care delivery in the United States.

Substantial interest was expressed during the conference in retaining the momentum of the Beyond Flexner study and developing a network of social mission committed schools. Toward that end, the following was agreed:

- The Medical Education Futures Study will provide a virtual home for ongoing Beyond Flexner activities, using its website to maintain an electronic community for information exchange.
- The Beyond Flexner Conference Steering Committee will remain as an Executive Committee, leading activities designed to maintain the momentum of the Beyond Flexner movement. The Executive Committee will explore opportunities to present Beyond Flexner perspectives at other medical education forums.
- The Beyond Flexner GW team will write and place scholarly and general interest articles based on the study.
- The GW Team will seek support for a second Beyond Flexner meeting to occur within 18 months of the May, 2012 inaugural meeting.

- The GW Team will also explore funding possibilities for a Beyond Flexner Fellowship program which would enable selected faculty to visit other schools for study projects related to social mission program development.