

Undergraduate osteopathic medical education

CHRISTINE RAYMAN, MS

Assistant Director, Division of Predoctoral Education, AOA Department of Education

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) serves as the accrediting body for osteopathic medical education in the United States. All accreditation activities are conducted through the AOA Department of Education by the Bureau of Professional Education and its component groups. (For membership on these committees, see Appendix I, beginning on page 683).

The Bureau is recognized by the US Department of Education as the official accrediting agency for osteopathic medical education. It reports to the AOA Board of Trustees and to appropriate government and nongovernment agencies.

The Council on Predoctoral Education (CPE), a unit of the Bureau, is responsible for inspecting all colleges of osteopathic medicine (COMs). The CPE serves as the initial review level in the accreditation process. Based on the results of its reviews and on-site inspections, the CPE makes recommendations to the Bureau for approval or disapproval of accreditation status. It also serves as a consulting body should a college request advice on accreditation matters or educational management and policy.

The Bureau serves as the final authority in accreditation matters. In cases where a college may not agree with a recommendation, the accreditation appeal panel serves as a final court of appeal.

The accreditation process involves the examination and evaluation of all aspects of a COM, including organization, administration, and finance; faculty and instruction; student admissions; evaluation and services; curriculum organization, and the nature of the COM's facilities.

Once accredited, a COM must undergo full reevaluation approximately every 7 years to maintain its accredited status.

Copies of the *Standards for Accreditation of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine*, 1996 are available from the AOA Department of Education.

Currently, 16 fully accredited COMs and 3 provisionally accredited COMs educate future osteopathic physicians. Two of the provisionally accredited COMs, the Pikeville College School of Osteopathic Medicine and the San Francisco College of Osteopathic Medicine of Touro University, first admitted students this fall. (See Appendix II, page 684).

The information presented herein has been adapted from the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM)/AOA Annual Osteopathic Medical School Questionnaire for 1996-1997 academic year and fiscal year (FY) 1996 as well as the 1997 AACOM Annual Statistical Report.

Faculty

The 17 COMs had 9,167 faculty members in 1996-1997. These numbers include full-time, part-time, and volunteer faculty. (Because the provisionally accredited Arizona College of Osteopathic

Medicine [AZCOM] is now in its second year of instructing osteopathic medical students, data are available for that college. Thus AZCOM data are included in the information presented throughout this article.) Most of the full-time faculty serving the COMs (54.8%) could be found teaching the clinical sciences, with the remainder in basic sciences.

The number of volunteer faculty staffing the 17 COMs continued to be stable, with 74% of the faculty classified as volunteer. Full-time faculty made up 14% of the staff, with part-time faculty comprising 13%. As Table 1 illustrates, Family Medicine continues as the discipline that full-time academicians teach most frequently: 17% of the full-time faculty were assigned to this specialty.

Osteopathic medical students Applicants

The number of applicants for the 1996-1997 entering class increased by 568 applicants from 10,213. The American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS) tallied 10,781 applicants for the 1996-1997 entering class (Table 2).

The number of underrepresented minority applicants decreased somewhat in academic year 1996-1997 to 947 applicants, down from 964 applicants in academic year 1995-1996 (Figure 1).

With 5,846 applications, the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine received the most applications. Rounding out the top five colleges with the most applications received were: Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Arizona College of Osteopathic

Correspondence to Christine Rayman, Predoctoral Education Division, AOA Department of Education, 142 E Ontario St, Chicago, IL 60611-2864.

Table 1
Full-time Faculty Assignments by Discipline*

Discipline	% of Faculty Assigned	
	1995-1996	1996-1997
Anatomy	8.7	8.7
Biochemistry	5.0	5.0
Emergency medicine	2.8	3.0
General practice/ family practice	18.2	17.1
Geriatrics	1.0	1.4
Internal medicine	10.2	10.0
Microbiology	8.0	8.4
Obstetrics/gynecology	2.4	2.6
Osteopathic principles	4.4	4.5
Pathology	3.6	3.4
Pediatrics	3.8	4.0
Pharmacology	5.4	4.9
Physiology	5.3	5.3
Psychiatry	5.2	4.9
Radiology	2.1	2.4
Surgery (general)	3.9	3.9
Other†	8.5	9.5
Physical medicine/ Rehabilitation medicine	...	1.0

*Source: AACOM 1996, 1997 Annual Statistical Reports.

†Includes Anesthesiology, Dermatology, Neurology, Ophthalmology, Orthopedic Surgery, Otolaryngology, Preventive Medicine/Public Health, and Urology.

Medicine, Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine, University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine, and Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (Table 3).

Enrollment

The freshman enrollment of 2,535 in 1996-1997 again surpassed the previous first-year's enrollment of 2,274, recorded in 1995-1996 (Figure 2).

Minorities

Table 4 indicates that the number of ethnic minorities (African-American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American students) increased slightly in 1996-1997. The 17 COMs reported 791 underrepresented minority students among their enrollment. Asian/Pacific Islanders continue to make up a large population, with 1,022 such students attending the COMs during academic year 1996-1997.

Women

The number of female osteopathic medical students enrolled at the COMs in 1996-1997 totaled 3,308, or 36.9% of all students (Table 5).

Table 2
Applicants to Osteopathic Medical Schools Participating in the AACOM Application Service
Ethnic Groups and Women by Entering Year*

Group	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
African-American	294	325	401	439	434
Hispanic	233	305	390	407	448
Native American	49	59	84	118	102
Total underrepresented minority	576	689	875	964	984
Percent underrepresented minority	10.0	9.2	9.4	9.4	9.1
White, non-Hispanic	4,240	5,461	6,605	7,063	7,224
Asian American/Pacific Islander	768	1,083	1,496	1,755	2,107
Other and unknown	168	273	360	431	449
Total all groups	5,752	7,506	9,336	10,213	10,764
No. of women among total applicants	2,017	2,753	3,494	3,826	4,293
Percent women	35.1	36.7	37.4	37.5	39.9

*Source: AACOM Annual Statistical Report. Figures reported here do not include applicants who applied directly to osteopathic medical colleges.

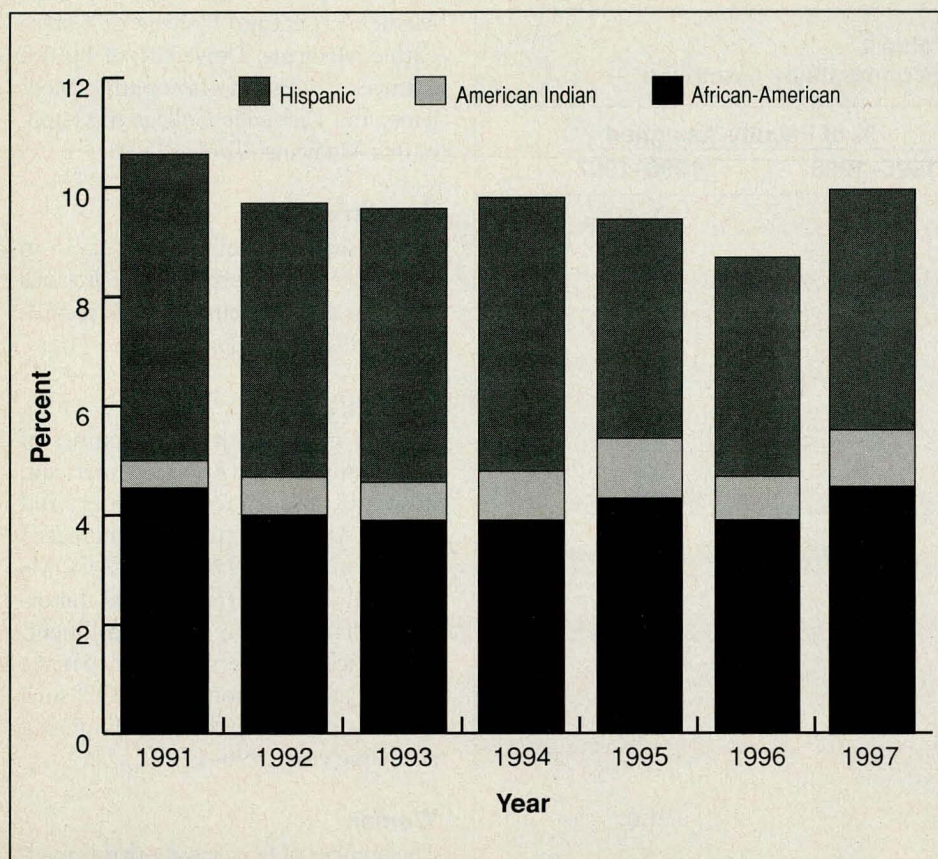


Figure 1. Percentage of ethnic applicants. (Data from AACOMAS, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service)

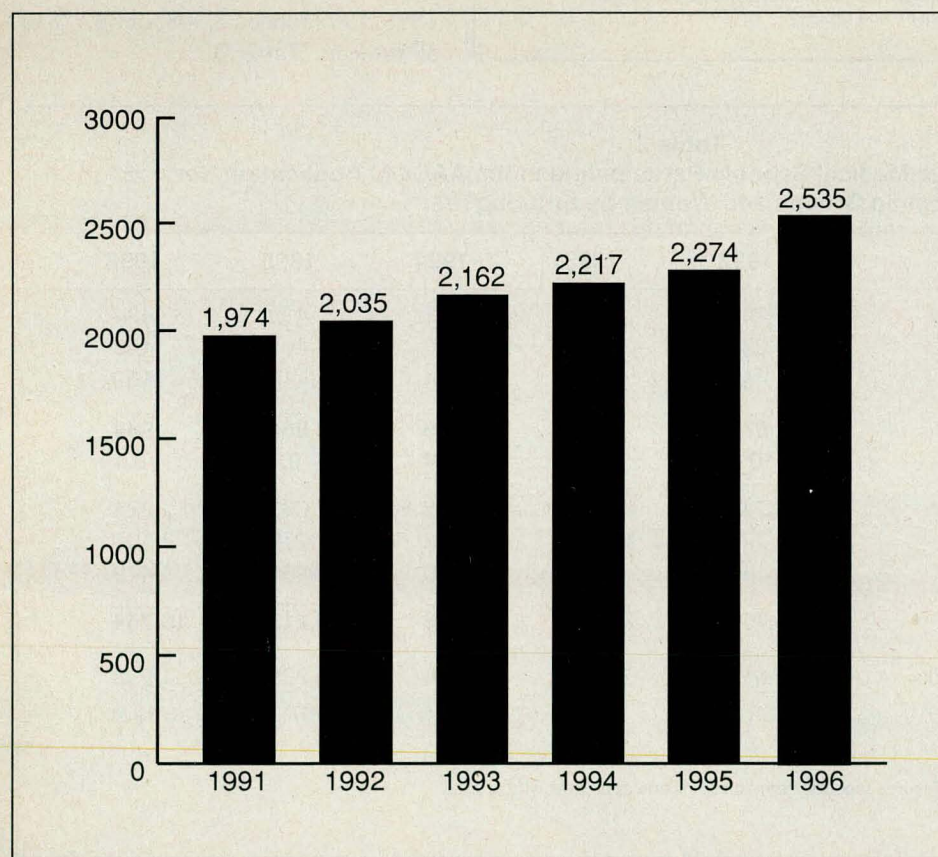


Figure 2. Freshmen enrollment. (Data from AACOM/AOA, Annual Osteopathic Medical School Questionnaire and the 1997 AACOM Annual Statistical Report.)

Table 3
Number of Applications Received, First-Year Enrollment,
and Total Enrollment by School*

School	No. of applications†		First-year enrollment		Total enrollment	
	1995-1996	1996-1997	1995-1996	1996-1997	1995-1996	1996-1997
AZCOM‡	...	...‡	...	103	...	103
CCOM‡	5,034	5,339‡	175	158	628	638
KCOM	4,673	4,517	152	147	564	570
LECOM	3,835	4,128	105	115	217	325
MSU-COM	2,954	3,082	127	126	526	522
NSU-COM	3,656	3,716	152	152	530	554
NYCOM	4,376	4,508	185	275	823	897
OSU-COM	2,245	2,321	88	91	347	349
OUCOM	3,976	3,557	108	121	419	421
PCOM	5,484	5,846	251	259	937	973
UHS-COM	4,695	4,809	187	223	683	748
UMDNJ-SOM	3,074	3,211	82	77	283	293
UNECOM	3,063	3,163	90	115	337	366
UNTHSC	2,049	2,199	117	118	436	435
UOMHS/COMS	4,424	4,490	210	214	804	812
Western U/COMP	3,980	4,294	178	176	681	694
WVSOM	2,407	2,423	67	65	260	261
Total	59,925	61,603	2,274	2,535	8,475	8,961

*Source: AACOM 1996, 1997 Annual Statistical Reports.

†The number of applications indicated above is not an unduplicated count of applicants as in Table 2. The same applicant reported here may be listed by several schools.

‡ This total (5,339) reflects the number of applications submitted to the osteopathic medical colleges of Midwestern University, which is the parent university of both AZCOM and CCOM.

Geographic source of first-year students

The trend to seek a medical education in their home state persists among first-year osteopathic medical students. Of the 2,534 first-year students enrolled at the 17 COMs during 1996-1997, 59% hailed from the state in which the COM

is located. The New York College of Osteopathic Medicine drew the highest percentage of in-state students for 1996-1997 (Table 6). Conversely, the University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery in Kansas City, Missouri, drew the most students from out-of-state (Table 6).

Students admitted with advanced standing

Again, the baccalaureate degree was the most common advanced degree held by incoming freshmen in 1996-1997: 86.6% of the entering class that year had earned this degree, up from 81.2% in 1995-1996.

Table 4
Total Enrollment of Minority Ethnic Groups*
by School†

School	Minority			
	1995–1996		1996–1997	
	No.	%	No.	%
AZCOM	...	...	19	18.45
CCOM	132	21.02	150	23.51
KCOM	112	19.86	117	20.53
LECOM	24	11.06	39	12.00
MSU-COM	131	24.90	140	26.82
NSU-COM	129	24.34	139	25.09
NYCOM	222	26.97	241	26.87
OSU-COM	58	16.71	66	18.91
OUCOM	82	19.57	90	21.38
PCOM	106	11.31	112	11.51
UHS-COM	97	14.20	90	12.03
UMDNJ-SOM	74	26.15	95	32.42
UNECOM	37	10.98	30	8.20
UNTHSC	140	32.11	155	35.63
UOMHS/COMS	84	10.45	80	9.58
Western U/COMP	220	32.31	231	33.29
WVSOM	19	7.31	19	7.28
All schools	1,667	19.67	1,813	20.25

*Minority ethnic groups include African-Americans, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American students.

†Source: AACOM 1996, 1997 Annual Statistical Reports.

A slight increase was noted in the number of master's degrees already earned by the incoming freshmen of 1996–1997: 10.6% of the incoming class held this degree, compared with 8.0% in 1995–1996. The percentage of freshmen with a doctorate degree remained steady at 1.45% for the past 2 academic years.

College record of freshmen

Incoming freshmen for 1996–1997 had a mean grade point average (GPA) of 3.33 in 1996–1997.

Mean MCAT scores for students

entering in 1996–1997 were as follows: biology, 8.47; physical science, 8.09; verbal reasoning, 8.31.

Student evaluation

The National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners examinations are still used to determine student advancement and graduation in some COMs, as are comprehensive examinations. Other means of evaluating student achievement and the adequacy of the education program (or both) are committee evaluations, exit interviews with graduating seniors, and student evaluation of courses.

The AACOM reports that only 1.8% of all enrolled students withdrew or were dismissed from the 17 COMs during the 1996–1997 academic year.

Osteopathic medical curriculum

Preparing the physicians of tomorrow for the general practice of osteopathic medicine remains the colleges' primary goal. However, no COM overlooks training in areas of special interest. More students are being trained in patient health education, preventive and health maintenance, substance abuse, AIDS, adolescent medicine and doctor-patient relationships.

The DO degree is awarded after completion of a 4-year curriculum. During the first 2 years of the curriculum (pre-clinical instruction) an emphasis is placed on lecture and laboratory work in the basic medical sciences, which includes anatomy, biochemistry, histology, physiology, and microbiology.

The last 2 years of undergraduate training involve clinical clerkships. Osteopathic medical students devote most of their clerkship time in the areas of family/community medicine, internal medicine, surgery, electives, pediatrics, and obstetrics and gynecology.

Table 5
Enrollment of Women at Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine*

Entering Year	Total enrollment			Graduates		
	Total	No. of women	% women	Total	No. of women	% women
1985	6,608	1,799	27.2	1,560	392	25.1
1986	6,640	1,853	27.9	1,593	395	24.8
1987	6,586	1,904	28.9	1,572	438	27.9
1988	6,614	1,986	30.0	1,609	491	30.5
1989	6,615	2,056	31.1	1,529	431	28.2
1990	6,792	2,221	32.7	1,534	458	29.9
1991	7,012	2,340	33.4	1,532	501	32.7
1992	7,375	2,512	34.1	1,606	533	33.2
1993†	7,822	2,714	34.7	1,752	602	34.4
1994	8,146	2,870	35.2	1,843	615	33.4
1995	8,475	3,075	36.3	1,932	690	35.7
1996	8,961	3,308	36.9	2,020‡	709‡	35.1‡

*Source: AACOM 1995, 1996, 1997 Annual Statistical Reports.

† Data include LECOM, which enrolled its first class of 61 students in 1993, 17 of whom were women.

‡ Data include the Accelerated Program for Emigré Physicians (APEP) at NYCOM and AZCOM's first class of 103, including 33 women.

Table 6
Number of State Residents and Nonresidents Enrolled in Freshman Year by School*

College	1995-1996			1996-1997		
	No. of residents	No. of nonresidents	Total No.	No. of residents	No. of nonresidents	Total No.
AZCOM	...	...	...	34	69	103
CCOM	94	81	175	62	96	158
KCOM	18	134	152	22	123	145
LECOM	68	37	105	71	44	115
MSU-COM	108	19	127	108	18	126
NSU-COM	80	72	152	91	61	152
NYCOM	163	18	181	231	44	275
OSU-COM	75	13	88	74	17	91
OUCOM	88	32	120	107	14	121
PCOM	173	67	240	175	84	259
UHS-COM	27	154	181	54	169	223
UMDNJ-SOM	68	7	75	66	11	77
UNECOM	16	67	83	75	39	114
UNTHSC	109	10	119	111	7	118
UOMHS/COMS	34	180	214	46	168	215
Western U/COMP	126	50	176	112	64	176
WVSOM	55	12	67	45	20	65
Total	1,235	982	2,217	1,484	1,048	2,532

*Source: AACOM 1996 and 1997 Statistical Reports.