



PROJECT FUTURE

Introduction

The American Osteopathic Foundation (AOF) launched the Project Future Initiative (PFI) as part of its strategic planning process to help define the vision and role of the Osteopathic Medical Profession in a rapidly evolving medical landscape.

The initiative recognizes enduring challenges within the American system about **access**, as characterized by limited-service availability in underserved and rural areas, an ongoing shortage of medical professionals, and a reliance on international medical graduates to address workforce needs. Additionally, it acknowledges the issue of high healthcare **costs**, noting the U.S. per capita expenditure leads globally despite the nation's population health ranking below other developed countries. **Quality** concerns, as well as persistent and increasing health disparities in specific populations and communities over decades, were also noted.

The ultimate purpose of Project Future is to establish a vision for the Osteopathic Profession. A vision that is supported by strategies that confidently engage and address the current healthcare system challenges and future system evolution. The vision will embrace the profession's distinctive human-centered clinical practice philosophy to build a better future for (American) healthcare and population health.

Project Future Forums

The Project Future Initiative (PFI) involves Subject Matter Experts delivering observations on contemporary issues in healthcare, the current impact of Osteopathic medicine on the populations served, best practices delivered by the profession, documentation with data on the profession's contributions to healthcare, and current changes that the healthcare system is undergoing. Thought Leaders, with applicable experience and expertise, have been convened to review those observations and then participate in thoughtful group dialog to coalesce recommendations and opportunities and identify a vision for the Osteopathic profession.

Forum Schedule

Professional Identity	Held April 13, 2023
Medical Education	Held September 19, 2023
Clinical Practice	TBD Summer 2024
Research	TBD Fall 2024

Coming Together: Professional Identity Forum

The American Osteopathic Foundation convened the first Project Future Forum to discuss our Osteopathic practitioner *Identity*—specifically, the opportunities and challenges to consider in shaping our professional identity of the future.

Indeed, we believe that understanding, developing, and communicating our identity within and outside Osteopathic medicine is the most important issue we face as a collective, encompassing our education, practice, livelihood, and impact.

In this effort, we believe it is important to take a “high-ground” approach: one that’s future-oriented and forward-looking. What can we do to create and capture opportunities going forward considering the multiple generations the field represents, along with current challenges, as guided by our enduring core philosophy of human-centered healthcare?

Thus, we came together with the explicit goal of establishing an insight-driven vision with actionable ideas for how to move towards engaging our futures.

Shaping Our Professional Identity: Insights and Recommendations

The forum yielded key insights and related recommendations including the mutually reinforcing ones below.

1. **BRANDING:** The history of the Osteopathic profession is foundational for establishing a contemporary Osteopathic brand. A brand that aligns with the opportunities to provide Osteopathic professional leadership in and for the future of American Medicine. As a nation, we continue to experience population health crises related to access, cost, and quality of care delivered.

The Osteopathic profession, throughout its history, has exhibited its strength in engaging public health, wellness, and disease by: 1) surviving after the Flexner Report, 2) thriving through the provision of healthcare to underserved, rural, urban and minority populations for decades, and 3) achieving parity in medical practice with allopathic colleagues through licensure, educational accreditation, access to public service in the military, and ability to compete for extramural funding (private and governmental). Osteopathic medicine’s past success positions the professional to use the skilled hands-on approach in the delivery of medical care. And, to use its effectiveness in incorporating evolving scientific advances, technology, and artificial intelligence, to LEAD MEDICINE in the future.

Effective branding will highlight our unique strengths, emphasize the broad and lasting impact we have had in the past, and will continue to have in the future, and will promote the value of the Osteopathic philosophy and practice for the benefit of the public's health.

2. **CREATE A BIG TENT:** As we form our collective professional identity, we must think broadly. While our longstanding strength has been in the primary care disciplines of Family Medicine, General Internal Medicine, Geriatrics, Pediatrics, Preventive Medicine, and Obstetrics & Gynecology, we can effectively apply our wholistic philosophy and clinical approach to all medical specialties. We should promote 'health' comprehensively, no matter our specialty, as all DOs are trained to use their hands to communicate caring, build trust, promote accuracy of diagnoses, and treat wholistically.
3. **THE ROLE OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION:** Osteopathic identity begins in the pathway to medical school and delivered in Osteopathic medical school. This means that we must understand and communicate the 'value' proposition that we offer students and future Osteopathic physicians. Recruitment efforts should be broad and inclusive to incorporate diverse community perspectives. This could be achieved by the development of a meaningful and inspiring identity that is actively embraced by the entire Osteopathic medical community in a dynamic fashion. Research is pivotal to our Osteopathic Identity. Studies that document Osteopathic health impact include 1) the value of the doctor patient relationship to health outcomes, 2) the impact of the wholistic philosophy on patient trust, and 3) the impact of the profession's growth on access, cost, and quality of care. These are just a few research areas vital to documenting Osteopathic Identity.
4. **ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION WITHIN THE PROFESSION TO EMPOWER OSTEOPATHIC IDENTITY:** Our collective vision and shared experiences should be used to promote a greater sense of cohesiveness within our community and the broader society, including those that we serve. This will require identification and appointment of Communication Ambassadors who work together across the entire profession to deliver consistency of messaging.
5. **USE EMERGING TECHNOLOGY AS OPPORTUNITY TO INCORPORATE WHOLE PERSON CARE:** Technology does and will play an increasing role in all of healthcare, including Osteopathic Medicine. With [billions of dollars](#) invested in medical technologies over the past decade, the future of technology in medicine is here. It will have a significant impact on our traditional hands-on approach.

We can, and must, support the idea of being [digitally hands-on](#), and incorporate the most valuable innovations that complement our practices into clinical work. Our core focus on the promotion of health will be elevated as we work with and assess the care delivered more comprehensively than other clinical practitioners.

6. **ECONOMIC INCENTIVE FOR OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE:** In the U.S., healthcare economics is particularly inefficient. We spend more on healthcare in this country without achieving better health outcomes. The Osteopathic profession has an opportunity to demonstrate that its focus on disease prevention and wellness can lower total health care costs while achieving greater health benefits for the populations served.

The Path Forward

This document represents an important beginning to shaping and communicating our professional identity—but it's still just the start.

With that in mind, let's distill our passion into specific action items and put our heads together about how best to execute these. As suggested by the earlier content, key priorities in this regard include:

- Determining how to promote our brand and identity widely most effectively.
- Understanding how best to inspire prospective students to go into Osteopathic Medicine, given our value proposition.
- Creating a supportive, active Osteopathic community across academic institutions, healthcare facilities, payors, and others.
- Recruiting and supporting strong Osteopathic ambassadors for every career stage.
- Finding research and data to back up key parts of our platform.

We are excited to share these ideas, insights, and recommendations with you, and inspired to chart the Osteopathic Medicine course for the future, built upon a shared identity we can rally around to maximize our impact for every stakeholder group.

Professional Identity Subject Matter Experts

Nicole Bixler, DO, MBA, FACOFP - Past president of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP), the Florida Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP), and the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA)

Humayun "Hank" Chaudhry, DO, MS, MACP, MACOI, FRCP - President and Chief Executive Officer of the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) of the United States

Scott Cyrus, DO, FACOP - Past president of the Tulsa Osteopathic Medical Society, the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association, and the American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians (ACOP); Associate Professor and Founding Chief of the Division of Pediatric Department at the Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine

Jeff Heatherington, LHD (hon) - President of the Heatherington Foundation for Innovation and Education in Health Care, based in Portland, Oregon. Former President and CEO FamilyCare, Inc.; former executive director of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons of Oregon; AOF Board member

Professional Identity Forum Thought Leaders

Carisa Champion, DO

Tyler Cymet, DO

Maureen Doyle-Scharff, PhD

Jill Helenbrook

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Cole Zanetti, DO

Project Future Professional Identity Forum was held on April 13, 2023 via Zoom

Facilitated by AOF Leadership

Dawn Tartaglione, DO, President (2023)

Barbara Ross-Lee, DO, Immediate Past President (2023), Project Future Chair

Rita Forden, CEO

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Coming Together: Osteopathic Medical Education Forum

The Education Forum was designed to cover the functional areas of Osteopathic Medical education including Pre-matriculation and medical school admissions; Undergraduate Medical Education; Graduate Medical Education; and Continuing Medical Education.

Several areas of opportunity related to the continuum of Osteopathic Medical education, mentioned above, were identified by the Thought Leaders utilizing the Subject Matter Expert presentations. The Thought Leaders identified the following recommendations as educational opportunities for the Osteopathic Profession in the Future.

Shaping Osteopathic Medical Education: Insights and Recommendations

1. **PATHWAY PROGRAMS:** Establishment of Undergraduate pathway programs and a holistic admissions process to identify future Osteopathic students with the personal characteristics needed to deliver on the Art as well as the Science of medicine.
2. **DIVERSITY:** Emphasize and incorporate diverse perspectives of Students and faculty to achieve academic and health service excellence necessary in the delivery of quality healthcare in an increasingly diverse society.
3. **SERVICE:** Document and utilize the Economic benefits and positive service impact of Osteopathic Medicine as a worthy rationale for the expansion of Osteopathic Education in underserved and marginalized communities.
4. **PHYSICIAN SHORTAGES:** Align Osteopathic Professional growth with the increasing health professional shortages.
5. **COMMUNITY:** Secure community education opportunities to ensure an Osteopathic physician product that is competent to deliver healthcare in community settings.
6. **INTERNATIONAL DO/MD PARITY:** Develop and implement medical education strategies designed to promote and achieve international parity of the DO degree with the MD degree, including experiential learning for students, faculty exchanges, and the establishment of international osteopathic academic campuses.
7. **REQUIRED FACULTY DEVELOPMENT:** COMs deliver required CME in AI, Precision Medicine, Social Determinants of Health, Systemic biases impacting health outcomes related to

religion, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental health, and substance abuse for maintenance of appointments of faculty appointments as full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty.

8. **OSTEOPATHIC PRINCIPLES:** Extend and require education related to the Osteopathic Philosophy and Tenets, the inter-relatedness of systems, and manual neuro-musculoskeletal skills into all clinical training sites for UGME and GME.
9. **RESEARCH:** Deliver and assess a basic research knowledge and skills course, required for all UGME students, as a foundational step for the enhancement of osteopathic medicine research productivity.

The Path Forward

The Education Forum acted as a catalyst, and the recommendations together form a roadmap for the future of Osteopathic Medical Education. Moving ahead, it is our shared responsibility to advocate for these initiatives.

The next steps encompass the actualization and implementation of these insights and recommendations to foster the development of a resilient, inclusive, and globally influential Osteopathic medical community. This requires collaborative efforts by students, educators, practitioners, and organizations as well as a commitment to ongoing progress as we work towards realizing the goals brought to light in the Project Future Education Forum.

Education Subject Matter Experts

Robert Cain, DO, FACOI, FAODME - President & CEO, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM)

Tom Cavalieri, DO, MACOI, FACP, AGS - Inaugural Senior Vice Provost, Virtua Health College of Medicine and Life Sciences of Rowan University and CAO of Virtua Health

John Gimpel, DO, MEd, FACOFP, FAAFP - President & CEO, National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME)

Brooke Laurent, DO - Chair, Department of Clinical Medicine at NYITCOM - Arkansas State University; Director, Delta Public Health Institute (DPHI).

William McDade, MD, PhD - Chief D&I Officer, Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)

Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, DO, FACOFP - President & Provost/Founding Dean, Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM)

Paul Umbach, MA - Founder and President, Tripp Umbach

Education Forum Thought Leaders

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