



**Statement by the Association of American Medical Colleges
on Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Academic Affiliations
with U.S. Medical Schools and Teaching Hospitals
and their Importance to Veteran Health Care
May 11, 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to reiterate the importance of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) partnerships with U.S. medical schools and teaching hospitals. The long-standing relationships between the VA and academic medicine through our shared and integrated missions of patient care, education, research, and community collaboration improve the health of Veterans and all Americans.

The AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) is a nonprofit association dedicated to improving the health of people everywhere through medical education, health care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members comprise all 155 accredited U.S. and 16 accredited Canadian medical schools; approximately 400 teaching hospitals and health systems, including Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 70 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and the millions of individuals employed across academic medicine, including more than 191,000 full-time faculty members, 95,000 medical students, 149,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences. In 2022, the Association of Academic Health Centers and the Association of Academic Health Centers International merged into the AAMC, broadening the AAMC's U.S. membership and expanding its reach to international academic health centers.

The VA is an irreplaceable component of the U.S. medical education and research enterprises. The more than 75-year-old relationship between the VA and academic medicine dates back to the end of World War II when the VA faced a severe shortage of physicians as nearly 16 million men and women returned from overseas. At the same time, many physicians were returning from the war without having completed residency training. What started as a simple idea in a time of great need has developed into an unprecedented public-private partnership. Today, 99% of medical schools are affiliated with a VA medical center and training programs are available at 90% of VA facilities. Through these affiliations, the VA provides clinical experiences to approximately 75,000 medical students and residents each year.

The AAMC and our members are closely monitoring the VA Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission recommendations to modernize and realign the VA health care system. As the Administration and Congress consider reforms and funding allocations for the agency, it is critical to strike an appropriate balance that ensures a robust VA health care system and infrastructure, while preserving relationships with academic medical centers in the community. VA's partnerships with U.S. medical schools and teaching hospitals improve Veterans' health care through shared faculty and clinical providers, joint research initiatives, VA physician workforce development and recruitment, and Veterans' access to the most complex clinical services at academic medical centers.

The AAMC applauds VA's recent efforts to expand graduate medical education (GME) and clinical training opportunities within the VA and supports Congress's proposal to provide \$268 million in the Build Back Better Act for 500 new VA GME positions over 7 years. Academic partnerships between VA institutions and academic medical centers facilitate the joint recruitment of faculty to provide care at both sites. VA GME programs also train physicians on how to best care for Veterans (inside and outside the VA), and help recruit residents to the VA after they complete their training. Nearly all VA residency programs are sponsored by an academic affiliate and rely upon the existing administrative and training infrastructure maintained by the nation's medical schools and teaching hospitals. We urge Congress and the VA to help ensure a seamless integration of medical faculty and trainees through VA employee policies, including those impacting the timely and efficient reimbursement of affiliates for GME.

The combination of education, research, patient care, and community collaboration that occurs because of the close relationships between VA institutions and academic medical centers cultivates a culture of curiosity and innovation. Medical faculty must be skilled in the latest clinical innovations to train the next generation of physicians and state-of-the-art technology and groundbreaking treatments jump quickly from the research bench to the bedside, enhancing the quality of care provided to Veterans. The AAMC supports the [Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research \(FOVA\) recommendation](#) of \$980 million for the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program in FY 2023, including an additional \$100 million for physical infrastructure and at least \$22 million for information technology infrastructure within the VA research program. Furthermore, FOVA and the AAMC [urge swift passage](#) of the VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research (VIPER) Act of 2021 (H.R. 5721), which among other improvements, would ensure VA researchers can be paid by academic affiliates for joint research initiatives.

Thank you again for your continued efforts to ensure timely and quality health care for those who have served our nation. The AAMC and our member institutions will continue to work with Congress and the VA to address the challenges and opportunities to improve care for Veterans and all Americans.