



Public Service and the Future Physician Workforce

AACOM believes that investing in loan repayment and forgiveness programs that promote public service is integral to addressing educational debt while expanding access to patient care in high-need areas across the country.

Student Loan Repayment and Forgiveness Programs

AACOM strongly supports an investment in and expansion of current federal programs that require a service component for loan repayment and forgiveness.

A majority of students entering medical school have already amassed high debt from their undergraduate education. At the same time, as students graduate with burgeoning debt loads, the nation faces a critical physician workforce shortage, particularly in rural and/or underserved areas. These debt loads are further exacerbated by federal policies that could better support medical students.

Recent graduates of the nation's osteopathic medical schools reported mean debt levels of \$229,934 for their medical education. A high percent of osteopathic medical students express their intent to practice in primary care. Primary care physicians are vital, especially in health professional shortage areas, as they play a key role as the first line of contact in providing essential health care across the nation.

AACOM strongly supports the equity and consistency of federal policies between graduate/professional and undergraduate federal student loan repayment programs, including that of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program, which encourages physicians, health care, and other professionals to work full-time in public service.

According to the [AACOM 2014-2015 Survey of Graduating Seniors](#), 55 percent of graduating osteopathic medical students expressed their intent to enter the PSLF Program. In recent years, medical and other graduate and professional students have been negatively impacted by a number of federal policies that have further escalated the cost of their education. For example, the *Revised Pay As You Earn (REPAYE) Plan*, an income-contingent repayment plan, requires that undergraduate loan debt be forgiven after 20 years of payments, whereas, graduate loan debt will be forgiven after 25 years of payments. Given that graduate students already have more than double the average debt of undergraduate students, these policies may deter individuals from seeking advanced degrees in the future.

For further information, please contact info@edtomed.com.