

**NYSOMS' STRATEGIC PLAN WHITE PAPER, 2016**  
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*The New York State Osteopathic Medical Society (NYSOMS) is a professional society representing the interests of osteopathic physicians within the State of New York. It is the sole organization providing osteopathic physicians with a collective voice in the legislative offices in Albany. The mission of NYSOMS is to foster individual and public health through the art, science, philosophy and practice of osteopathic medicine; to advocate on behalf of osteopathic physicians; to serve the medical community by providing continuing medical education programs and other member benefits; to enhance patient-physician relationships; and to ensure the maintenance of professional standards.*

## **SUMMARY**

NYSOMS has a distinguished history of service to the community of osteopathic physicians. Founded in 1899, the New York Osteopathic Society was a branch of the national American Association for the Advancement of Osteopathy (now the American Osteopathic Association, or AOA). The New York State society was organized as a not-for-profit organization in 1901. Its current name was adopted in 1978. Since its founding, NYSOMS has overseen licensure, scope of practice and hospital privileges issues, while actively advancing osteopathic medicine. Organization advocacy in the New York State Legislature from 1939 through 1946 won for doctors of osteopathy (DOs) all the rights of medical practice enjoyed by allopathic doctors (MDs). A late 1960s legal battle by a NYSOMS member in Long Island established in New York courts the equal status of D.O. credentials with allopathic M.D. credentials. The society was a catalyst in the establishment of the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYCOM) in 1977. During a period of financial uncertainty beginning in 1999, NYSOMS was administered by the national AOA. Strategic and operational planning in 2001 set a fresh direction for the society and led NYSOMS to regain its independence from the AOA by late 2003. Through the generous assistance of Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee, former Dean of NYCOM at the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT), the revitalized NYSOMS secured office space within the NYIT campus on Broadway in New York City.

The forward-thinking of NYSOMS planners in 2001 has served as a beneficial guide for the society for more than a decade. It has inspired the Strategic Planning Committee to set to the tasks of assessing today's organizational assets, obstacles, opportunities and threats and devising a comprehensive plan to ensure the vitality of NYSOMS into the future.

The committee detected substantial organizational strengths, including:

- Location stability
- Financial security
- Responsiveness and flexibility in addressing changing membership needs
- Competitive membership pricing
- Ongoing membership drives
- Outreach programs to young DOs.
- Collaborative relationship with the Medical Society of the State of New York.

Through a frank assessment of weaknesses, the committee noted several shortcomings:

- Regional under-representation
- Overreliance on annual convention as sole fundraiser
- Inconsistent marketing efforts
- Lack of data on outreach program performance
- Failure to utilize veteran members as resources in under-represented regions.

The committee focused its attention on several exciting opportunities for NYSOMS:

- Unprecedented growth in the numbers of recent DO graduates in New York State
- Superior numbers of female DO graduates through the past decade.
- ACGME adoption of common internship/residency requirements for DOs and MDs.
- Technological advancements facilitating data analysis, communication and education.

Threats and challenges identified by the committee include:

- Limited financial resources of prospective members
- Interest of DOs in traditionally MD-oriented professional societies
- Difficulty of effectively making and delivering to DOs the case for NYSOMS as their best professional society option.

The Strategic Planning Committee has recommended the following core goals for NYSOMS as the best means of building on strengths, addressing weaknesses, capitalizing on opportunities and navigating around existing threats:

- Expand CME offerings.
- Employ technology to improve data analysis, CME programs and communication.
- Strengthen advocacy services.
- Grow our membership.

## **BACKGROUND**

NYSOMS Strategic Planning Committee members utilized knowledge of market trends. The Committee acquired detailed information on similar professional organizations and the benefit packages they offer to their memberships. Using a traditional "SWOT" matrix, the gathered data was categorized into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The Committee assembled for a series of meetings to review the data and the SWOT matrix. Committee members and guests conducted brainstorming sessions to generate a collection of potential planning goals. These were then considered against the SWOT in order to identify achievable goals that would best utilize organization strengths and take advantage of current opportunities, while minimizing weak areas and addressing competitive threat concerns.

### **Our opportunities:**

The analysis coincided with an explosion of opportunity for the organization and others like it. Osteopathic medicine is experiencing a period of unprecedented growth in New York State and across the United States. Within the State, the total number of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine graduates, which had never exceeded three hundred, finally broke that numeric barrier in the 2010-11 academic year, when the Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine (TouroCOM)-NY, in Harlem, graduated its first class. It then took only one additional year for the number of graduates to exceed four hundred. In 2017 TouroCOM-NY in Middletown will graduate its first class, which will further increase the number of graduating DOs. Women graduates have fairly consistently outnumbered their male counterparts since 2003-04. In the 2013-14 academic year, women comprised nearly fifty-six percent of graduates.

The dramatically increasing number of DOs represents a growing marketplace for the advocacy and membership services offered by NYSOMS. Awareness of the recent gender trend among DO graduates

provides an opportunity for NYSOMS to focus its activities for the benefit of DO members and their spouses or significant others. While additional research is needed into the effects of the changing demographics, there are indications that this gender shift has contributed to reduced interest in such events as the annual golf outing and to greater interest in the availability of family activities and childcare services at NYSOMS events.

Further opportunity is presented through the adoption by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), through agreement with the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), of a single graduate medical education accreditation system, allowing a common set of internship/residency requirements for graduates of osteopathic medical schools and allopathic medical schools. The emerging single ACGME system is anticipated to provide for common use of continuing medical education programs among osteopathic and allopathic physicians.

The technology revolution provides enhanced opportunities for communicating with NYSOMS members, prospective members, legislative and press contacts, and the general public, and for generating and delivering multimedia forms of continuing medical education programs.

### **Organizational strengths:**

The society is secure in its physical location and its finances for the foreseeable future. A long-term commitment ensures the continued availability of NYSOMS headquarters in the New York Institute of Technology building, Broadway, New York City. The solid and increasing attendance noted at the society's annual convention, the major organizational fundraiser, provides adequate income for existing programs and anticipated growth. The Board's fiduciary stewardship and outward facing efforts of additional fund raising and member engagement activities, contribute to this stability.

NYSOMS has exhibited responsiveness and flexibility in addressing the changing needs of members. The desire of New York State DOs to obtain continuing medical education appropriate for maintenance of Florida state medical licensing was satisfied by providing lectures in Florida-specific laws and regulations through Florida-licensed attorneys. NYSOMS plans to follow applicable educational cycling to fill this educational need on an ongoing basis. CMEs also have been expanded in response to requests for offerings on the transition to ICD-10 coding, and evidence-based mindfulness training for stress reduction.

Membership pricing has been maintained at competitive levels, and will be found at or lower than the costs of comparable osteopathic and allopathic professional organizations.

A drive for new members recently was undertaken by the society's vice president, president, past president, and contracted political advocate. Current plans call for the continuation of membership drives, the addition of smaller CME events during each year and the location of some events within under-represented regions in the state. NYSOMS' political advocate reached out to potential and current members in Albany to induce a more robust advocacy initiative.

NYSOMS also benefits from a collegial and collaborative relationship with the Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY), which supports a political action committee, (or PAC) for the interests of New York physicians.

### **Organizational weaknesses:**

The society's existing relationships with DOs and with New York State hospitals hosting residency programs appear generally to be in the range of fair to good. However, these relationships are noticeably weak in certain regions of the state; there is no specific plan to improve or to grow the relationships. NYSOMS could benefit from an active marketing program, perhaps through contract with an external marketing firm.

While the society contacts young DOs through regular networking and social outreach programs, monitoring of the programs remains inadequate to determine their effectiveness. These programs have included

annual expenditures for “Young Physicians “networking events. Such expenditures are justified through the belief that they foster a positive relationship with the new DO community. No mechanism currently exists for determining whether the expenditures impact NYSOMS membership numbers. Moving forward, these events will “bridge” and foster networking with new and established member physicians.

Adjustment of the society’s benefit package, event calendar and overall strategic plan cannot be relied upon to produce positive results unless these rest upon a well-crafted foundation of membership polling and careful analysis. NYSOMS polling and analysis should be formalized and scheduled to occur at regular intervals to ensure that the society remains responsive to its membership and that its changes to programming are based upon sound statistical evidence.

The society has not yet launched a focused effort to engage older members and physicians in underrepresented regions of New York State.

### **Our challenges / threats:**

Tightening budgets in the healthcare industry represent a serious challenge to NYSOMS, as well as other professional societies. The budget challenges of hospitals and other employers of DOs may cause these employers to limit society membership choices and fee spending. DOs in private practice may experience even more severe financial conditions. The challenge to NYSOMS is to maintain a positive visibility to healthcare employers and a level of service that DOs deem an advantageous return on their investments.

While the benefits of the ACGME merger are clear, the merger presents long-term existential challenges to osteopathic societies. One likely result of the merger is a decrease in the number of DO graduates seeking certification from the Osteopathic Board. This would deprive NYSOMS of a membership funnel.

While NYSOMS joins DOs across the country in celebrating the new unity with the MD community, the Strategic Planning Committee recognizes that a looming diminishment of the DO identity could threaten the future relevance of NYSOMS and may over time undermine the specific interests of Osteopathic practitioners. In 2014, the society President and Vice President participated in the AOA’s annual leadership meeting, where strategies for continuing organizational relevance were emphasized. The society’s greatest organizational challenge is to embrace the ACGME merger and its advantages while retaining its distinct DO-oriented identity and maintaining its tradition of service to the DO community.

## **SOLUTIONS**

The Strategic Planning Committee’s “SWOT” analysis revealed a number of long-term issues that will require further monitoring and careful planning. Among the lingering “question marks” are the overall effects of the ACGME merger, the impact of the gender-shift in DO graduates upon required and desired programming and benefits, the most effective balance of membership fees with return-on-investment benefits packages, and the direction and usefulness of society research and marketing efforts. We do not pretend to deal with all of these weighty issues in this document. The analysis also revealed, however, a number of areas that can be addressed and should be addressed immediately and in the short-term. Collected here are core goals for the society as we move through 2016 and beyond.

### **Expand CME offerings:**

The society will increase the quantity, variety and regional diversity of CME offerings. Educational offerings will be expanded within the annual mid-year conference. NYSOMS will move to co-sponsor educational opportunities with the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP) as appropriate. CME credits for MDs will be offered in order to broaden the interest for NYSOMS’ programs. NYSOMS intends to offer CME program offerings in Middletown, New York, and to schedule conferences in upstate cities. Additionally, efforts to partner and collaborate with other neighboring state societies could prove mutually beneficial.

**Employ technology to improve CME programs and communication:**

The society will incorporate live-streaming technology in order to expand access to CME programming to several regions of the state simultaneously. Technology will be employed to provide webinars and telephonic meeting opportunities among DOs across the state and to publicize the availability of NYSOMS programs. Technology expansion efforts will provide more potent member and data management tools for communication, outreach and year over year analysis.

**Strengthen advocacy service:**

NYSOMS's outreach to the DO community in the Albany region will be paired with a renewed emphasis on legislative advocacy. Our contracted legislative advocate will be called upon to prepare NYSOMS board members and other society members for participation in the annual Physician Advocacy Day (formerly Legislative Day) of the Medical Society of the State of New York. Board members will expand their activities to include legislative advocacy responsibilities.

**Grow our membership:**

The society will intensify membership drives through a regular program of outreach to non-member DOs. We will place greater emphasis on membership drives in underrepresented areas of the state. An effort will be made to appeal to medical specialists. NYSOMS will investigate CME specialty offerings as a tool for attracting specialists to membership. The society will encourage spouses and significant others of members to assist with society functions and programs as an auxiliary.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Dealing effectively with challenges and threats, exploiting opportunities, bolstering organizational weaknesses and capitalizing on organizational strengths require dynamic planning efforts. No single document, regardless of the forward-thinking of its authors, can hope to chart a course that will steer around obstacles not yet known. In this planning document, the Strategic Planning Committee has sought to employ existing resources to the job of placing the society in the best possible position to meet the challenges ahead and to lay the groundwork for future planning efforts.

This plan will enhance the NYSOMS "brand" through increasing CME offerings, conducting cooperative ventures, focusing on regional approaches and emphasizing communication. It will increase the society's influence by growing its membership, broadening its reach into underrepresented areas and improving its legislative advocacy function. And it will improve society efficiency by joining technology to the tasks of member education and improved communication.

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