

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 6 • SPRING 2026



STAFF PROFESSIONALS ACROSS
THE CONTINUUM OF EDUCATION



Creating S.P.A.C.E

Staff Professionals Across the Continuum of Education

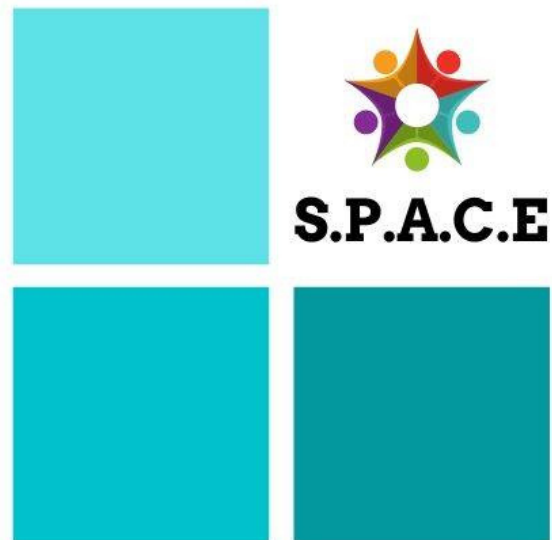
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HAPPY NEW YEAR – WELCOME TO 2026!

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Colleagues,

The AAMC recently announced changes to their Affinity Group structure. This was a major topic of conversation at the Learn Serve Lead meeting, where AAMC leadership made themselves available to hear concerns and offer initial clarification. Many of you may have received the email sent on Monday, November 17th, from Jennifer Schlener titled: Acknowledging Your Feedback on the Evolution of AAMC Affinity Groups; it is clear that we have been heard.

At this point, there are things we do know and many details yet to be determined. What we do know is that the current 17 Affinity Groups will be consolidated into 11 beginning July 2026. What remains unclear are the details of the new structure, including the role of regional groups, S.P.A.C.E., MESRE, dispersion of GEA, and how AAMC leadership plans to engage with current Affinity Group leaders during the transition. (**FAQs**) URL: <https://www.aamc.org/learn-network/affinity-groups/evolution-faq>

The GEA Steering Committee met this past week to debrief and discuss next steps. We are committed to frequent and transparent communication with our regional steering committees and the broader GEA community, so please consider this message the first of several updates.

At this time, here is what we can share:

We will keep putting our effort into community engagement and provide support for medical education scholarships.

- Regional GEA Spring meetings and activities will continue as planned for Spring 2026.
- The GEA grant cycle is progressing normally for 2025, and we will continue to fund grants as we have in prior years.
- S.P.A.C.E. will offer and run Staff Track in 2026
- Regional awards will be released, reviewed, and announced on the usual timeline this year, following our standard cycle.

During the structural transition, we will take following actions to ensure communication transparency.

- AAMC leadership has a retreat scheduled in the coming weeks to discuss the transition; no timeline for a formal update has yet been announced.
- The GEA Steering Committee, under the leadership of Dr. Elissa Hall, remains in active communication with AAMC leadership. We are deeply grateful for Elissa's steady and thoughtful representation of our community.

To aid Affinity Groups' successful consolidation:

- The GEA Steering Committee is committed to preparing all regional and national GEA groups for the transition to the new structure by July 2026. Many operational and financial details still need to be clarified, but we will work through these changes together.

We remain here for you now and as the situation evolves. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Warmly,
Tyrese

Tyrese Hinkins-Jones, EdS, MEd

Recap from Learn, Serve Lead – November 4, 2025

DEB BIRNBAUM, MBA

SPACE found it has a place on the national stage and its presentation at Learn Serve Lead 2025 was a hit! Attendance topped out around 140 (they even brought in extra chairs!), and energy and engagement were high throughout the interactive session. The session was facilitated by Jon Goforth, Director of CQI, Wake Forest University School of Medicine and Deb Birnbaum, Director of Educational Affairs Innovations at Indiana University School of Medicine. Jon and Deb serve as SPACE national secretary and chair-elect, respectively. SPACE Chair Tyrese Hinkins-Jones and former Western Group on Educational Affairs SPACE Representative Brian Herman also contributed to the session; however, were unable to attend Learn Serve Lead.

The presentation, Staff Professionals as Key Collaborators for Educational Success, equipped attendees with essential context and actionable strategies they could take home and put into action. It focused on the following:

- The important roles staff professionals play in the operations, management and leadership of medical education – not just as collaborators, but subject matter experts.
- The importance of staff professional development for growth and retention to the benefit of the staff and institution.
- The results of the first-ever national survey of medical education staff professionals.
- How attendees can discuss and share S.P.A.C.E. opportunities with their staff professionals and become an advocate for their own staff's development.

In a separate event, about a dozen colleagues got up early and participated in the SPACE Section Networking Breakfast. They provided useful feedback about our impact and future needs.

Deb and Jon also represented SPACE in discussions and feedback sessions regarding the AAMC's reorganization of its affinity groups. See the complete update in the Message from the Chair section of the newsletter for more information on this topic of reorganization.

STAFF TRACK 2026

Save the Date for Staff Track 2026

Watch your email for more information about the next Staff Track, which we hope will be held during the month of **June 2026**. Planning is underway and we're excited to once again offer this fully virtual event designed to elevate staff voices and celebrate the essential role staff play in shaping medical education.



ANNOUNCED: 2026 GROUP ON EDUCATIONAL AFFAIRS (GEA) REGIONAL CONFERENCES: CGEA, NEGEA, SGEA, AND WGEA

GEA REGIONAL CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

Check individual sites for registration links:

Northeast Group on Educational Affairs (NEGEA)

Scranton, PA

March 11- 13, 2026,

hosted by Geisinger College of Health Sciences

URL: <https://www.geisinger.edu/gchs/2026-negea-annual-conference>

Western Group on Educational Affairs (WGEA)

Tucson, AZ

April 19 - 21, 2026

URL: <https://www.aamc.org/learn-network/affinity-groups/gea/wgea>

Southern Group on Educational Affairs (SGEA)

New Orleans, LA

May 20 - 22, 2026

hosted by Tulane University School of Medicine.

URL: <https://www.aamc.org/learn-network/affinity-groups/gea/sgea>

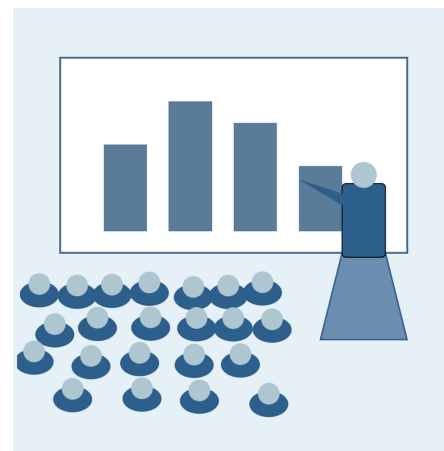
Central Group on Educational Affairs (CGEA)

Rochester, MN

April 27-29, 2026

hosted by Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science

URL: <https://www.aamc.org/learn-network/affinity-groups/gea/cgea>



Have an event you want S.P.A.C.E to promote? Please send to Marisol Brit and Barbara Hildebrand at marisol.britt@yale.edu and barbara.hildebrand@yale.edu

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