

David Jan Skorton, MD

David J. Skorton, MD, is president and CEO of the AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges), a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health through medical education, patient care, medical research, and community collaborations. It represents all 169 accredited U.S. and Canadian medical schools; more than 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 their more than 193,000 full-time faculty members, 96,000 medical students, 153,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences.

Dr. Skorton began his leadership of the AAMC in July 2019 after a distinguished career in government, higher education, and medicine. Shortly after his arrival, Dr. Skorton oversaw a comprehensive strategic planning process that established a new mission and vision for the AAMC. It also introduced [10 bold action plans](#) to tackle the nation's most intractable challenges in health and make academic medicine more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

The strategic plan established two new entities within the AAMC. The [AAMC Research and Action Institute](#) is a think tank that convenes national experts to pursue workable solutions to long-standing health care problems, such as understanding the implications of efforts to reduce rising costs and developing realistic policies to improve access to care. The [AAMC Center for Health Justice](#) collaborates with public health and community-based organizations, among other multisector groups, to co-create solutions to health inequities and to improve the health of people and communities everywhere.

Dr. Skorton engages with academic medical center leadership and staff, medical students, residents, post-doctoral researchers, and interested community members through social media and the [AAMC Communities](#) virtual network. He speaks at medical school commencements, summits and seminars addressing the future biomedical research workforce, and other venues on a wide variety of topics, including the challenges facing academic medical centers and why now is such an important time to enter the field of medicine.

He has been a passionate and outspoken voice for ending systemic racism in academic medicine and addressing persistent health disparities. He raised awareness about the social determinants of health — such as education, job opportunities, family and social support, community safety, and environmental and housing conditions — that affect a person's health and well-being and are, in turn, influenced by fundamental upstream factors such as poverty and systemic racism. In the AAMC's award-winning [“Beyond the White Coat” podcast](#), Dr. Skorton has addressed several of these topics, including diversity, equity, and inclusion in academic medicine.



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In 2023, Dr. Skorton spoke out regarding the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Students for Fair Admissions v University of North Carolina* and *Students for Fair Admissions v Harvard*, which prevents institutions of higher education, including our nation's medical schools, from considering race as one of many factors in admissions processes. In multiple national media appearances, Dr. Skorton reaffirmed the AAMC's commitment to work within the law to diversify the next generation of physicians and scientists, and to improve the quality of care that patients receive, with a steadfast commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Skorton contributed to the national response through frequent interactions with senior government officials, [national media](#) appearances, and the development of a [Road Map to Reset the Nation's Approach to the Pandemic](#). He and other AAMC leaders and experts sounded the alarm on shortages of personal protective equipment in hospitals, testing shortages in academic laboratories, and the importance of respecting science and the scientific process in efforts to fight the pandemic.

Prior to assuming the helm of the AAMC, Dr. Skorton served as the 13th secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, where he oversaw 19 museums, 21 libraries, the National Zoo, and numerous research centers and education programs. Before that, he served as president of two universities: Cornell University (2006 to 2015) and the University of Iowa (2003 to 2006), where he also served on the faculty for 26 years and co-founded and co-directed the University of Iowa Adolescent and Adult Congenital Heart Disease Clinic. A pioneer of cardiac imaging and computer processing techniques, he was a contributor and editor-in-chief of a major text on cardiac imaging.

A distinguished professor at Georgetown University, Dr. Skorton is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society. He is also a lifetime member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He served on the AAMC Board of Directors from 2010 to 2013, and he was the charter president of the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc., the first group organized specifically to accredit human research protection programs.

A nationally recognized supporter of the arts and humanities, as well as an accomplished jazz musician, Dr. Skorton believes that many of society's thorniest problems can only be solved by combining the sciences, social sciences, and the arts and humanities.

Dr. Skorton earned his BA from Northwestern University and his MD from Northwestern University School of Medicine. He completed his medical residency and fellowship in cardiology and was chief medical resident at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is married to Robin Davisson, PhD, an award-winning scientist who is a professor emerita of molecular physiology at Cornell University and Weill Cornell Medical College, as well as an adjunct professor of medicine at Georgetown University and an emerging visual artist.