

The Alabama Medical Education Consortium (AMEC)

What is AMEC?

AMEC is a 501(c)(3) organization which began on October 1, 2005. AMEC's mission is to establish and maintain an osteopathic physician manpower pipeline for rural and underserved Alabama. The intention of the mission is to address both current and future shortages of primary care. The strategy for achieving this mission is a "Physician Pipeline" or pathway created to recruit Alabama students into medical education programs which are designed to prepare primary care providers for service in underserved areas. The AMEC Physician Pipeline can be seen in Appendix A.

AMEC was established through collaboration between the Administration of the University of West Alabama and leaders of the Alabama Southern Rural Access Project. The multi-year Southern Rural Access Project was financed by a Robert Wood Johnson grant which conducted assessments and development activities to improve health care access in rural Alabama. The Project brought together individuals, groups and organizations which were committed to improving the state's access to rural health care and also understood the crucial linkage between access to health care and rural economic development. The Project ended in March, 2006 but its momentum resulted in the formation of AMEC.



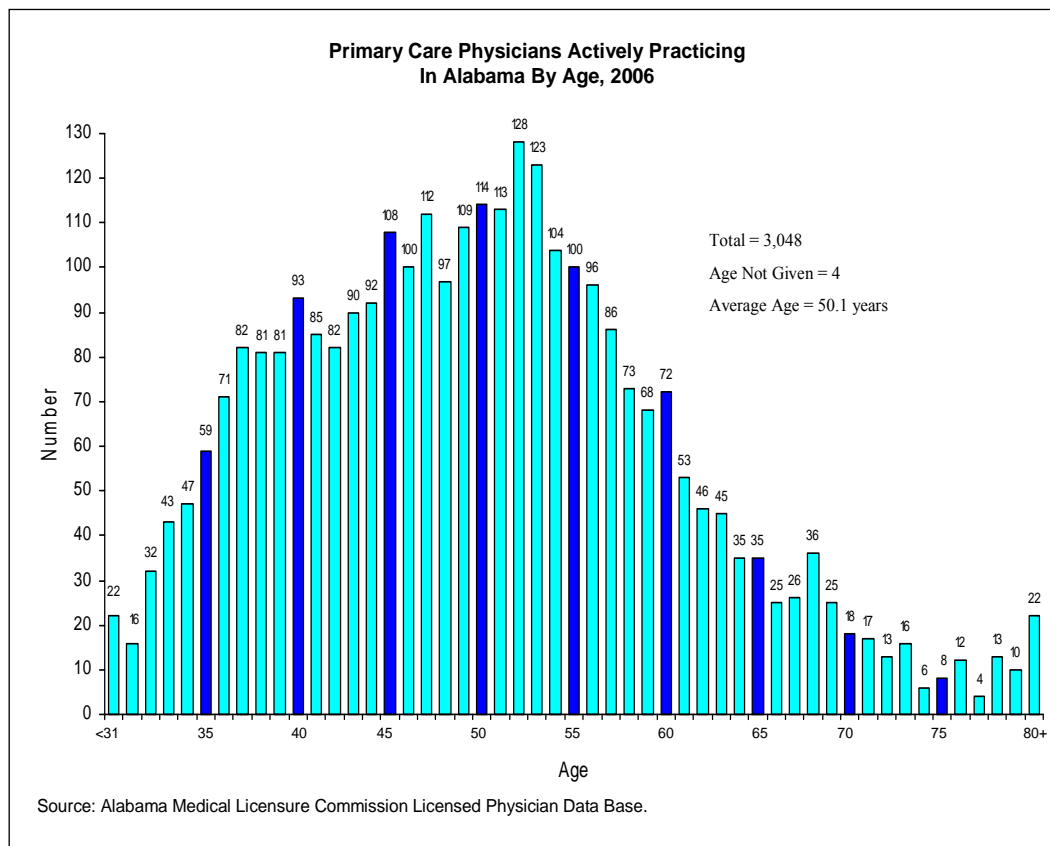
Dr. Richard Holland

AMEC activities are under direction of a 16-member Board of Directors which is chaired by Dr. Richard Holland, President of the University of West Alabama. The Board members represent a diversity of backgrounds who are aware of the importance of assuring that adequate and quality healthcare is and will continue to be available in Alabama's rural and underserved areas. The AMEC operations have 2 full time staff members. Dr. Wil Baker is the AMEC Executive Director and has devoted over 25 years of service to medical education and Ms. Lucy Sowell is the full time Administrative Assistant for AMEC office activities. Additional staff support is provided by part time staff through contracted deliverables based on AMEC's specific needs.

One of the most compelling findings from the Southern Rural Access Project was the perennial deficiency in producing and placing primary care physicians in the state's rural, underserved communities. The deficit is so severe that 60 of Alabama's 67 counties are designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas by the federal government's Bureau of Health Professions. The Bureau estimates that well over 1 million Alabamians are without adequate access to a primary care physician. It projects a current need for an additional 520

physicians strategically located throughout the state to assure reasonable access to a physician in all communities.

The situation is compounded by the anticipation of retirements from an aging physician workforce. One assessment projects that by the year 2012 over $\frac{1}{2}$ of the state's 3,048 actively practicing primary care physicians will be over 55 years of age. Alabama has two excellent medical schools and in combination produce 250 graduates annually. However, these graduates in recent years have predominately chosen residency (graduate) training programs to become medical sub-specialists as evidenced in the following graphic of actively practicing primary care physicians in Alabama by age. Most of them subsequently establish practices in suburban and urban locations.



Several reasons explain this trend but research demonstrates the importance of two crucial factors: (1) fewer students with rural backgrounds are being admitted to medical school and (2) traditional medical school curriculums, teaching sites, and faculty influence these graduates to pursue sub-specialty practices. AMEC is an innovatively designed medical education pipeline to provide an alternative to traditional medical education programs by producing the generalist physicians specifically needed by Alabama's underserved small towns, rural communities, and inner city areas.

What are the accomplishments of AMEC?

AMEC has developed and is coordinating a “Physician Pipeline” which has the potential of producing over 100 physicians annually for Alabama. The “Pipeline” begins by recruiting students predominately from Alabama’s rural and underserved communities into medical school and ends with their return to such communities as primary care physicians. In establishing the pipeline, AMEC has formed partnerships with 20 Alabama colleges/universities, 8 out-of-state osteopathic medical schools, and 14 in-state core teaching sites for students to complete their final 2 years of medical school.

Many of the 20 colleges and universities involved in this partnership are known for their attractiveness to students from rural Alabama communities. The curricula in the 8 medical schools are specifically focused on producing primary care physicians. Collectively, these medical schools are now formally committed to accepting 100+ qualified Alabama students annually through AMEC’s Pipeline. The 14 core teaching sites were established deliberately in locations throughout the state which focus on serving underserved communities and in environments where additional physicians are needed.

Partnering Colleges/Universities in Alabama

Alabama A&M University	Springhill College
Alabama State University	Stillman College
Athens University	Talladega College
Auburn University at Montgomery	Troy University
Birmingham Southern College	Tuskegee University
Huntingdon College	University of Mobile
Jacksonville State University	University of North Alabama
Judson College	University of South Alabama
Miles College	University of West Alabama
Oakwood College	
Samford University	

Partnering Osteopathic Colleges of Medicine

A.T. Still University, College of Osteopathic Medicine – Mesa, AZ
 Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, Kirksville, MO (Pending)
 Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences, Kansas City, MO
 Midwestern University-Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine, Glendale, AZ
 Nova Southeastern University, College of Osteopathic Medicine, Fort Lauderdale, FL
 Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine – Georgia Campus, Suwanee, GA
 Pikeville College School of Osteopathic Medicine, Pikeville, KY
 West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, Lewisburg, WV

The AMEC Network of Partnering Osteopathic Colleges of Medicine



Core Teaching Sites in Alabama (See map in Appendix B)

Birmingham – Cooper Green Hospital
 Montgomery – Montgomery Family Medicine Residency Program, Baptist Health
 Montgomery – Jackson Hospital
 Troy – Southeast Alabama Rural Health Associates (SARHA)
 Selma – Selma Family Medicine Residency Program (family medicine rotation only)
 Selma – Selma Family Practice Inc.
 Geneva – Wiregrass Medical Center
 Mobile – AMEC
 Foley – South Baldwin Regional Medical Center
 Anniston – Family Medicine Residency Program (Family Medicine Rotation only)
 Demopolis – Bryan W. Whitfield Memorial Hospital
 Dothan – Southeast Alabama Medical Center
 Rural Alabama Health Alliance – West Alabama
 Hamilton – Boyett Health Service

What is the Application Process to the AMEC Pipeline?

An application process for admission to one of AMEC's annual 100+ medical school slots has been established through collaboration of staff and representatives from each of the 8 medical schools. AMEC staff members work with college/university premed advisors in identifying and counseling potential pipeline applicants on the core requirements for medical school admission. Students who complete these core requirements and make written application for admission to the Pipeline receive additional counseling from AMEC staff to insure their understanding of AMEC's purpose, expectations, and how the pipeline works. Applicants express their

preliminary preferences for enrolling in one of the 8 participating medical schools. AMEC Staff confer with medical school admission officers on each applicant's academic record and jointly evaluate their suitability for medical school enrollment. Staff members also conduct reference interviews with former teachers and others who are knowledgeable about the applicant's capabilities.

The application process requires each qualified applicant to be interviewed by the AMEC Admissions Committee to assess the appropriateness of their admission to medical school and career as a physician. The Admission Committee's decision is based on consideration of staff evaluations, personal references, discussion with the applicant on career plans, results of Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) scores, the SAT reasoning test, overall grade point average, science grade point average, and other indicators which predict the likelihood of success in medical school. Qualifying applicants can receive "conditional" approval for admission to medical school as early as the end of their first year of undergraduate study.

Where is AMEC going?

An AMEC priority is filling all 100⁺ medical school slots available to Alabama students. This will require a marketing plan to publicize the AMEC pipeline

Once the Pipeline is filled with medical school students additional community based core teaching sites will be needed. These sites will provide the clinical rotations required for students during their 3rd and 4th years of medical school.

The existing 14 core teaching sites will be expanded by 10 additional sites which are now being planned.

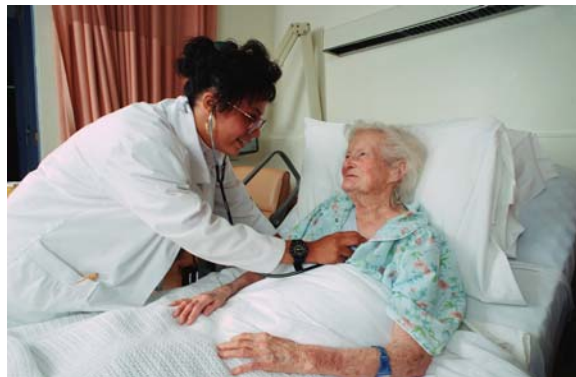
These 24 sites will provide the state wide clinical training network needed for the 100⁺ medical students who will be returning to Alabama to complete their last two years of medical school under the direction of their respective medical schools and AMEC. AMEC has employed a part-time Director of Medical Education (DME) for the state and a DME for each Congressional District in Alabama. The DME will organize medical activities in each of AMEC's planning regions (Congressional Districts). This will involve identifying local qualified and competent preceptors as well as scheduling clinical rotations for the students.



The final section of the Pipeline involves establishing graduate medical education (residency) programs in primary health care with a particular focus in Family Medicine. The diminished emphasis on Family Medicine careers has placed considerable strain on existing residency programs to survive. The overwhelming majority of annual placements in Alabama's 55 Family Medicine residency slots are being filled currently by International Medical School graduates because of a lack of applications from Alabama and other U.S. medical school graduates. The AMEC Pipeline will significantly increase demand for these slots and additional primary care graduate training programs will be needed. Plans are now underway to establish 2 new Family Practice residency programs in the state.



An AMEC Health Policy Institute is under development. This component will not be involved operationally in the Pipeline but will impact its activities significantly. The Institute's 21 member Health Policy Council is comprised of representation from each of Alabama's 7 congressional districts. A Data Development component will collect and analyze data to assist in evaluating the Pipeline activities. A Workforce Needs Committee will conduct an on-going census of physicians by medical specialty actively practicing in each rural community.



This Committee will work with the communities, civic leaders, and health care leaders in identifying their current and projected future needs for physicians. This arrangement will establish an ideal environment for rural communities to begin a "grow your own physician" program. This on-going community-based physician census will provide a central data base of physicians needed statewide and provide guidance in the Pipeline's planned production of physicians.

AMEC's First Year in Review

The following information provides a brief summary of several AMEC achievements during its first full year of operation:

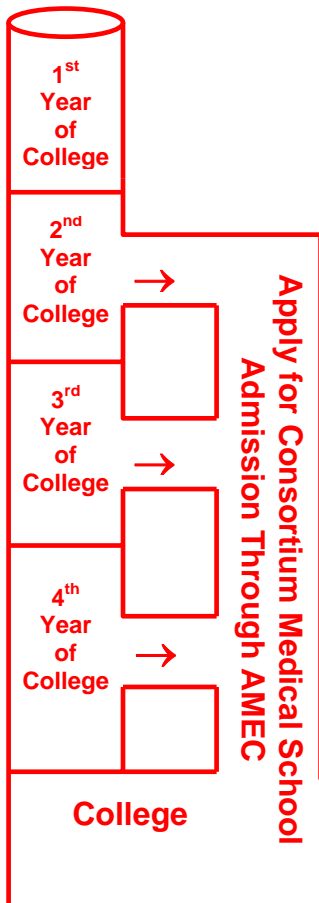
- State funding was secured from the Legislature for FY 2006 and FY 2007.
- An administrative structure was established consisting of 1 part time and

2 full time employees.

- Five consultants have been hired who provide contracted deliverables to AMEC.
- An AMEC website has been developed at www.amec.uwa.edu.
- Data development plans are being implemented and primary care status reports have been conducted for 12 counties. These reports are posted for everyone to access and use on the AMEC website.
- An auditing schedule has been established through a Certified Public Accounting firm and financial statements are available for AMEC's first year of operation.
- AMEC Partnerships have now been established with 20 Alabama colleges/universities and 8 out of state osteopathic colleges of medicine.
- 14 core teaching sites have been established in Alabama communities.
- 100+ admission slots to osteopathic medical school are available annually to qualified Alabama students.
- 79 Alabama students are now in the AMEC Pipeline and enrolled in the 8 partnership osteopathic medical schools.
- AMEC is being marketed to Alabama's college and universities to recruit students to medical school but also to middle and high school students to create an interest in careers as physicians and awareness of the academic requirements.
- An Evaluation component is being developed to assess and assure accomplishment of AMEC's mission in a cost-effective, efficient, transparent, and quality manner. A consultant has been secured for this effort.
- Two "Think Tanks" were held for the purpose of developing an equivalent structure to a 21st century medical school. One was held at Miles College in Birmingham and the other at Troy University in Montgomery. Approximately 36 people were a part of the process.
- The AMEC Admissions Committee has met 6 times, has interviewed 21 students, and has recommended 19 for admission to the AMEC program. The next admissions committee meeting will be held in February 2007 to interview 17 students.
- A health policy entity has been developed, and 2 meetings have been held.
- A work force needs committee is in the process of being developed and is to meet in early 2007.
- Ten slots per year have been allocated for a joint degree in Family Medicine and Dentistry for students having interest in both clinical areas.
- Up to ten slots per year have been allocated for Dental students in addition to the slots for the joint Family Medicine/Dentistry program.
- Ten slots per year have been allocated for students interested in psychiatry.(other specific allocations have been made.)
- AMEC's success and innovation has been noted beyond the borders of Alabama. AMEC was invited to share information on its mission, vision, and success at the 2006 Southern Regional Rural Health Conference in Choctaw, Mississippi; the 2006 Annual Area Health Education Centers Conference in Jackson, Mississippi; and will present at the 2007 Annual Conference of the National Rural Health Association in Anchorage, Alaska.

Appendix A - Alabama Medical Education Consortium Physician Pipeline

Alabama High School Graduates Enter a Consortium Member College/University



ALABAMA COMMUNITIES ←



AMEC Member Colleges/Universities:
(as of January 2007)

- Alabama A&M University
- Alabama State University
- Athens University
- Auburn University at Montgomery
- Birmingham Southern College
- Huntingdon College
- Jacksonville State University
- Judson College
- Miles College
- Oakwood College
- Samford University
- Spring Hill College
- Stillman College
- Talladega College
- Troy University
- Tuskegee University
- University of Mobile
- University of North Alabama
- University of South Alabama
- University of West Alabama

AMEC Partnering Osteopathic Medical Schools:

- A. T. Still University
College of Osteopathic Medicine
Mesa, Arizona
- A. T. Still University
Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine
Kirksville, Missouri
- Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences
Kansas City, Missouri
- Midwestern University
Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine
Glendale, Arizona
- Nova Southeastern University
College of Osteopathic Medicine
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
- Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine -
Georgia Campus
Suwanee, Georgia
- Pikeville College School of Osteopathic Medicine
Pikeville, Kentucky
- West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine
Lewisburg, West Virginia

Year Two Residency Training

Year One Residency Training

Medical School Completed

Accepted to Alabama Residency Program

4th Year of Medical Training at Alabama Training Site - Apply to Alabama Residency Program(s)

3rd Year of Medical Training at Alabama Training Site

2nd Year on Consortium Medical School Campus

Return to Alabama Training Sites for 3rd and 4th Years of Medical School Training

The AMEC Mission:

To establish and maintain a physician manpower pipeline for rural and underserved Alabama that includes all related components of medical education.

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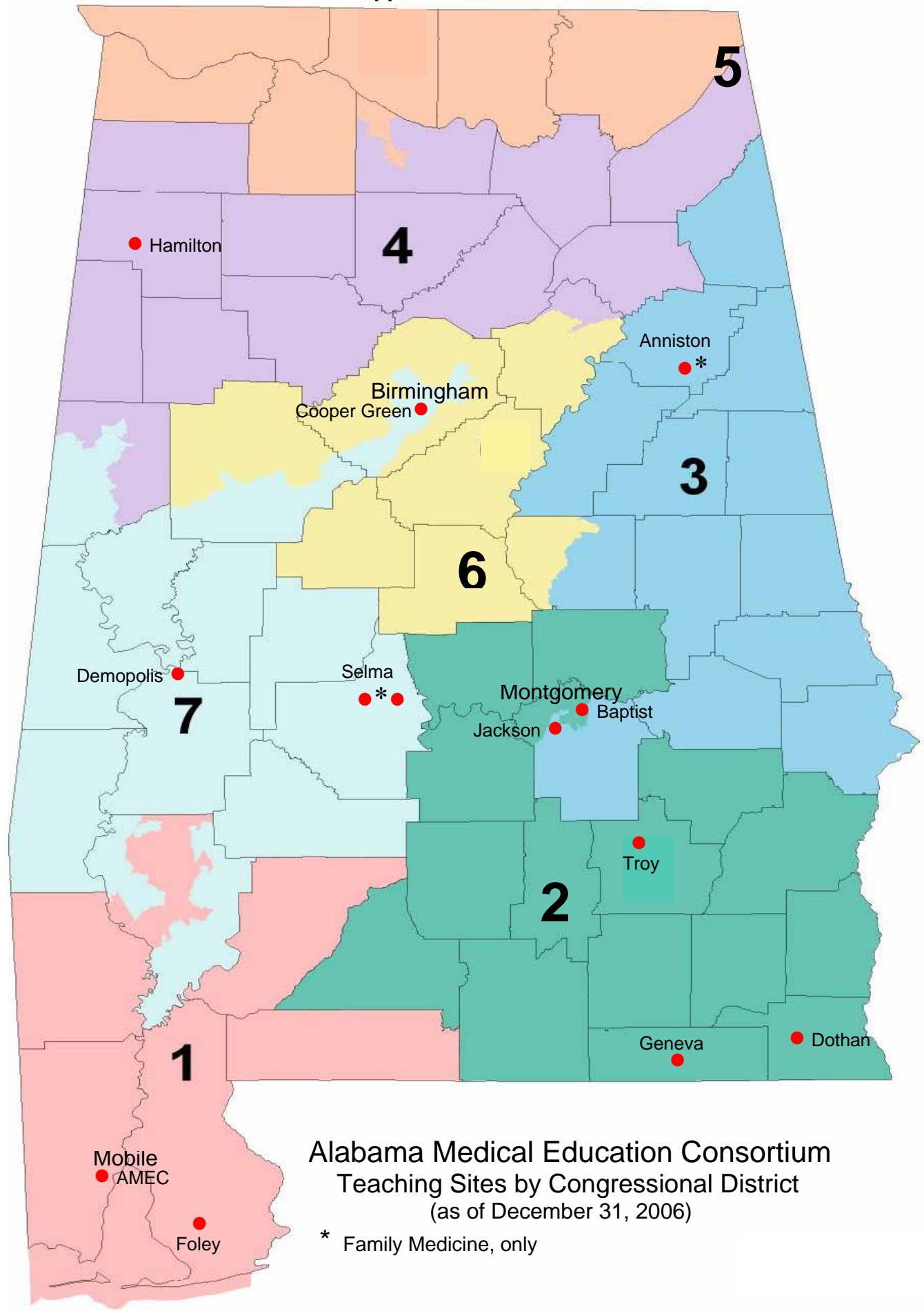
Pipeline Version: January 2007

AMEC Admission Committee Evaluates Applications

Admitted to Medical School

1st Year on Consortium Medical School Campus

Appendix B



Alabama Medical Education Consortium
Teaching Sites by Congressional District
(as of December 31, 2006)

* Family Medicine, only