



SBAS Presidential Address: Change Management, Leadership & the Society of Black Academic Surgeons (SBAS)



Keywords:

Change management
Society of Black Academic Surgeons

Society of Black Academic Surgeons' members and guest, it has been a personal honor and a privilege to serve as the 21st president for The Society of Black Academic Surgeons (SBAS). I became a member of SBAS in 1997 and never dreamed of becoming its president; as my name joins the pantheon of extraordinary individuals who dutifully served in this position before me. I want to thank the Ohio State University (OSU), Dr Ellison, Dr. Steinberg, the local program chairs Dr. Sylvester Black and Dr. Amy Rushing, and the administrative staff Ms. Ann Forchione and Ms. Kim Knight for the graciousness extended in hosting our annual scientific assembly. And a real thank you to Dr. Robert Higgins, past Chairman of the OSU department of surgery for sponsoring the invitation from OSU to host the 26th annual meeting of this august organization. The title of my Presidential Address is: "Change Management, Leadership & the Society of Black Academic Surgeons (SBAS)".

Charles Darwin, the English naturalist and geologist best known for his contributions to evolutionary theory concluded that, "it is not the strongest of the species that survive, or the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

The Society of Black Academic Surgeons (SBAS) was founded in 1989. The organization's logo features Dr. Charles Drew, a great African American physician, surgeon, educator, researcher, and mentor. The inaugural meeting of the society was hosted by Duke University, and brought together prominent African American surgeons to discuss the essentials of building academic careers in American Surgery [Fig. 1]. It was emphasized that scientific investigation and mentoring were essential to achieving this goal and a cornerstone to the future of SBAS. The 1st annual scientific meeting occurred the following year in 1990; and the Society celebrated its 25th, silver anniversary meeting at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2015 [Fig. 2].

The organization has come a great distance in terms of number of members, meeting attendance and gender diversity in the past 26 years. So, what is the mission and vision of the Society of Black Academic Surgeons (SBAS)? Is SBAS positioned and capable of meeting its mission, and achieving its vision? And finally, is SBAS [as an organization] positioned to grow? I had 3 broad objectives for my presidency year: (1) establishment and growth – i.e. hard-wiring the Society's central office, establishing standard operating

procedures for all the organization's administrative and annual meeting activities, establishing strategic partnerships, and funding agencies, creating the foundation for growth; and having clear objectives and deliverables; (2) engagement – i.e. leveraging the cognitive brain power within the organization; and (3) empowerment – i.e. creating value for the organization's membership, providing excellent educational offerings and opportunities, and ultimately increasing the reach of the organization and its members nationally within American Surgery.

One of the most influential books about organizational transformation in the past 25 years is "Leading Change" by John P. Kotter.¹ First published in 1995, the book was based on more than 15 years of personal observation and broad-based analyses.

Kotter described an 8 stage process for **CHANGE MANAGEMENT**: (1) Establishing a sense of urgency, defining the challenges and competitive environment, performing a SWOT analysis; (2) Creating the guiding coalition, putting together a cohesive group with enough power to lead change; (3) Developing a vision and strategy, creating a vision to direct the change effort that is clear and unambiguous to ALL; (4) Communicating the change vision, using every vehicle possible to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies; (5) Empowering employees for broad-based action, changing systems or structures that undermine the change vision and seek out strategic, new ways of doing business, new roles and partnerships; (6) Generating short-term wins and creating, new opportunities, transforming a culture; (7) Consolidating gains and producing more change, hiring, promoting and developing people who can implement change vision; and (8) Anchoring new approaches in the culture, creating better performance at all levels [leaders, members, connecting the dots].

I. Establishing a sense of urgency: there remains a real sense of urgency for SBAS to be visible, relevant, nimble, accessible, and inclusive. I cite three observations that underpin a call to action: (1) inadequate representation of African Americans in Academic Surgery; (2) failure of African Americans to advance [in substantial numbers] in academic medicine; and (3) the underrepresentation of African American researchers in Health Service and Policy Research.

The 2008 Annals of Surgery article, "major deficits in the number of underrepresented minority academic surgeons persist," demonstrated that the overall U.S. medical workforce, and epitomized by the field of surgery, dramatically misrepresents the patient



Fig. 1. The 1989 inaugural meeting of the Society of Black Academic Surgeons hosted by Duke University.

population in which they are responsible for providing care.² Despite the rise in the underrepresented minority population in the US over the past 50 years, African Americans have gained minimal ground in the field of surgery, both in the private sector and academia. In 2006, African Americans comprised 12.3% of the U.S., but were only 7.1% of the U.S. medical school graduates, 4.7% of U.S. surgical residents, comprised only 2.9% of U.S. surgical Faculty and only 1.8% of U.S. tenured surgery professors. Unfortunately these findings hold true today. Over a 12 year study period, a retrospective cross-sectional analysis of the Association of American Medical Colleges' data on teaching Faculty at US medical schools

from 1997 to 2008 showed that whites accounted for 66% of assistant professors, 79% of associate professors, 85% of professors, 88% of chairpersons and 91% of deans. African Americans, on the other hand, represented 4% of assistant professors; 2.5% of associate professors, 1.25% of professors, 2.69% of chairpersons and 4.94% of Deans.³ Of all races and ethnicities, African American demonstrated the lowest percent increase in academic physicians in comparison to Whites, Hispanic, and Asian physicians during this time period, at the level of instructors, assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors.

The publication, "The Future of Diversity and Inclusion in Health



Fig. 2. The 25th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Society of Black Academic Surgeons.

Services and Policy Research: A Report by the Academy Health Workforce Diversity 2025 Roundtable," was published in 2015.⁴ The report addressed potential etiologies associated with the persistence of systemic, institutional, and historical factors that work against diversity and equity in health services and policy research and the larger health care workforce.

II. Creating the guiding coalition: SBAS must continue to seek and establish strategic partnerships with other academic organizations and societies. Moreover, the organization must emphasize preceptorship and mentorship of medical students, residents, and junior teaching faculty. The organization's Constitution and Bylaws underwent substantive amendment in 2015. The amended SBAS Constitution was ratified on 4-11-2015 at Chapel Hill. The amendments included the articles of *Incorporation*: Article I – Designation, Article III – Membership; Article IV – Officers and Council; and Article V – Organization Structure.

Article 1 now designates a central office for the organization. It formalizes an Executive Council, *comprised* of its Officers: President, President-Elect, Treasurer & Secretary and 4 Appointments. The constitution also established 8 Standing Committees: (1) Finance; (2) Membership; (3) Advocacy; (4) Education/Research; (5) Program; (6) Nominating; (7) Audit; and (8) Informatics.

Article III defines Active membership as a Fellow in the Society of Black Academic Surgeons. Active fellowship in SBAS is open to an individual who occupies a faculty position in a university department of surgery, institute or its affiliated hospitals or free-standing surgical residency program. The person can be an investigator (e.g., M.D., D.O., PhD, or ScD.) or teacher (e.g., M.D., D.O., PhD, or ScD.)

The category of institutional membership was codified within the Society's bylaws. Institutional members host our meetings, and in return derive value through (1) access to career development opportunities in the organization for their own faculty, and complimentary meeting registration for specified number of faculty. Associate membership was expanded to include medical students, residents and fellows in training.

Honorary Fellowship recognizes leaders in academic surgery who have furthered the mission of the organization and have made substantial contributions to the Society and/or its membership in terms of career development or mentorship; Honorary Fellows are elected to Fellowship at the American Surgical Association Honorary Fellowship luncheon.

III. Developing a vision and strategy. Under the leadership of past President Ed Barksdale, SBAS held its first strategic retreat in the summer of 2013. The retreat represents an opportunity to brainstorm, to ensure the organization stays true to its vision, develop strategic objectives and deliverables, and to clearly define the challenges, threats, and identify organizational opportunities

I had the honor of presiding over the 3rd annual retreat in August of 2015. The participants included the executive council and the standing committee chairs. We discussed the organization's finances, the standing committees reported on their initiatives, we explored ways to leverage SBAS website, discussed the importance and relevance of social media to the organization, discussed the updates in the central office to hardwire processes and procedures for the major activities of the organization, and discussed strategic partnerships and finally envisioned a possible SBAS Foundation.

IV. Communicating the change vision. Communicating the change in vision occurs through: monthly Executive Council teleconference calls, SBAS Web site www.sbas.net; and social media. The procedure and processes for posting Career development opportunities as well as membership listing, and announcements on the organization's website starts with the organization's Secretary, who can involve the officers. The American journal of surgery is the venue for SBAS to communicate the science within our annual meetings and our ability [as an organization] to make meaningful scientific contributions. The organization published 18 manuscripts from the 2014 meeting and published 24 manuscripts from the in 2015 annual meeting.

V. Empowering members for broad based action. The 8 standing committees held their first face to face meeting at the 2015 Chapel Hill meeting. These committees provide a venue for focused engagement of members to harness and leverage the collective wisdom, talent, and energies of the organization. The Finance Committee's mission is to insure the financial health of the organization (both present and future). The Research and Education Committee's mission is to establish efforts within the organization to enhance career development and opportunities in academic careers; forging strategic with preeminent organizations. The Membership Committee's mission is to establish an accurate roster of the members and promote enhancement of growth, engagement, and relevance of SBAS to all constituencies within the organization. The Advocacy committee's mission is to ensure that the organization maintains its social relevance by proactively addressing important issues related to minority health, minority health care, and academic achievement. The Program Committee's mission is to oversee the development and implementation of the Annual Meeting. Informatics Committee's mission is to develop effective strategies for utilizing social media, informatics and advanced technology to connect with constituency, educate the public, market our organization, and endeavor to remain relevant to our younger and more diverse members. The Audit Committee's mission is to assess the integrity of the financial records of the organization. The Nominating Committee's mission is to bring forth a slate of officers at the annual business meeting.

VI. Generating short term wins. A standing central office began operations shortly after the 2014 Philadelphia meeting, a milestone in the journey of this organization. In my tenure, we standardized the expectations, timelines and deliverables for the organizations administrative leadership and for all activities in which the organization participates.

VII. Consolidating gains. In collaboration with leading departments of Surgery, the Annual Scientific Meeting is the principal venue to stimulate and demonstrate academic excellence amongst its members, providing a forum for scholarship and scientific exchange, career mentoring, and leadership development. The annual scientific meeting provides opportunities for SBAS members to visit the hosting institution, and for the hosting institution to witness the exceptional broad-based talent of African Americans surgeons pursuing academic careers.

In 2006, SBAS established the Leadership Institute; partnering with a hosting institutional member. The leadership institute is a 2-year curriculum; its penultimate goal is to increase the number of under-represented minority leaders in academic surgery, and provide a network of academic leaders to nurture enhanced leadership skills. Dr Robert Higgins is the current Program Director for the leadership and faculty development institute, following the inaugural program director, Dr Selwyn Vickers and subsequently Dr.

Eddie Cornwell.

A grant review and writing workshop represented a new offering to the 2016 SBAS annual program in Ohio State annual meeting. The workshop provided an overview of grant writing skills and the scientific review process that it entails.

VIII. Anchoring new approaches in the culture. The Society of Black Academic surgeons has developed strategic partnerships with The Society of Surgery of the Alimentary tract (SSAT) and the Association for Academic Surgery (AAS). The SBAS/AAS traveling Fellowship began with this 26th Annual Meeting to increase exchange between organizations. One AAS abstract was presented at this meeting. In partnership with the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary tract, SBAS will co-sponsor a 2 year research fellowship for a resident member of SBAS commencing in 2017. Fifty percent of the funding will originate from SSAT and the remaining dollars provided by the hosting institution [e.g. from a program grant (T-32)].

The book, “the first 90 days by Michael Watkins looks at how to get up to speed quickly, efficiently and with the greatest likelihood of success as a new organizational leader.”⁵ In evaluating the specific life cycle of an organization, Watkins created the STARS acronym which outlines the characteristics and challenges of an organization's life cycle: (1) Start-up; (2) Turnaround; (3) Accelerated growth; (4) Realignment; and (6) Sustaining success. In my opinion, SBAS is in the life cycle stage of *sustaining success*.

In closing, what is the mission and vision of SBAS? I believe the mission of SBAS is to stimulate, encourage, promote, and actively increase the number of African Americans surgeons (men and women) pursuing Academic Careers in American Surgery, achieving at its highest level. The organization aspires to a vision where the participation and leadership of African Americans and other underrepresented minorities in Academic Surgery is representative of African Americans and other underrepresented minorities in the general American population, at all levels.

Is SBAS [as an organization] positioned to grow? I am proud to say that the Society of Black Academic Surgeons has secured a

specialty seat on the American College of Surgeons' Board of Governors, a statement of achievement that SBAS is recognized as a leading organization in American Surgery.

SBAS is positioned to meet its mission, to aspire towards its vision, and has positioned itself for unfettered sustainable. Why?

- SBAS has established a strong central office
- SBAS has created a set of standard operating procedures to drive all its administrative, operational and CME activities
- SBAS now has a nimble and robust Constitution and bylaws
- SBAS has established standing Committees
- SBAS has established Strategic Partnerships
- SBAS has established a more robust media and communication platform
- SBAS strives to create added value of membership (both at the individual and institutional membership)
- And SBAS contains able leadership (past and future)

References

1. Kotter John P. *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press; 2012.
2. Butler PD, Longaker MT, Britt LD. Major deficit in the number of underrepresented minority academic surgeons persists. *Ann Surg*. 2008;248:704–711.
3. Yu PT, Parsa PV, Hassanein O, Rogers SO, et al. Minorities struggle to advance in academic medicine: a 12 year review of diversity at the highest level of America's teaching institutions. *J Surg Res*. 2013;182:212–218.
4. Edmunds M. *The Future of Diversity and Inclusion in Health Services and Policy Research: A Report on the Academy Health Workforce Diversity 2025 Roundtable Academy Health*. September 2015.
5. Watkins Michael D. *The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting up to Speed and Smarter*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press; 2013.

Orlando C. Kirton, MD, FACS, MCCM, FCCP, MBA, Surgeon-in-Chief,
Chairman of Surgery*
Ohio State University, Columbus OH, USA

* Department of Surgery, Abington - Jefferson Health, 1245 Highland Avenue, Suite 604, Abington, PA 19001, USA.
E-mail address: Orlando.Kirton@jefferson.edu.