In this unprecedented season of health policy challenges to SGIM’s core missions, it is vital that SGIM strengthen its members’ ability to respond and advocate for our patients, practices, and programs. Therefore, we are delighted that 20 participants (scholars) and 10 experienced health policy mentors gathered at this year’s annual SGIM meeting to launch the Leadership in Health Policy (LEAHP) program.

LEAHP, a national health policy, career development program, was created based on the successful models of the TEACH (Teaching Educators across the Continuum of Healthcare) and the Association of Chiefs and Leaders in General Internal Medicine’s LEAD programs.

After spending a few months reading primers on health policy and advocacy, the group met for a half-day session that included mini-lectures, case-based presentations, and interactive discussions on how health policy is made, the Affordable Care Act and the current state of healthcare reform, the federal budgeting process and its role in research funding, and how Medicare’s Graduate Medical Education (GME) policy shapes the physician workforce. The LEAHP scholars and mentors networked and began developing affinity groups on common interests and activities.

The LEAHP scholars range from resident to seasoned faculty with interests in how policy impacts clinical practice, education, and research. Over the coming year, participants will undertake a variety of Capstone projects based on their interests and expertise. These include developing health policy curricula for students, residents, and faculty, writing white papers or op-ed pieces, leading workshops at regional and the national meeting, and engaging in analysis, teaching, and advocacy on payment topics, such as alternative payment models and the Resource-Based Relative Value Scale (RBRVS).

Evaluation of the pre-course was highly positive, and comments from the scholars included the following:

“I liked the continuous engagement through debates/tables sessions. I think that case-based examples are most effective for my learning and would love to see that continue to be incorporated in the curriculum.”

“I definitely came out of the session with new ideas for my LEAH P year, and loved interacting with my colleagues.”

“I felt that the actual content was fascinating, and I liked how there were activities throughout to keep us engage and thinking.”

“I loved being “tested” to go out of my comfort zone with the “breakouts” at the end of each session. That was really great higher level thinking.”

The goals of the LEAHP program are to develop SGIM members who will become effective and active health policy advocates and local health policy experts, leaders, and teachers; to offer health policy career development resources and opportunities to all SGIM members; and, to develop an expanding, national cadre of Health Policy Committee (HPC) members and broaden engagement in the Society’s health policy efforts.

LEAHP is a year-long program focused on health policy knowledge and advocacy skills aligned with SGIM’s core missions. The program’s learning objectives include:

- Knowing the key structures and functions of the US health care system;
- Understanding the key players and processes in the federal health policy-making;
- Ability to critically evaluate healthcare delivery and economic models and to propose needed changes and/or additions;
- Ability to explain the impact of health care reform on the practice of medicine, education, and research; and
- Ability to advocate effectively with policy-makers.

During the coming year, LEAHP trainees will participate in the following:

- Quarterly Webinars led by LEAHP faculty with curriculum presentations, case discussions, etc.;
- Quarterly health policy/advocacy teleconferences (available to all SGIM members) for a health policy update by CRD (SGIM’s government affairs partners in DC), “Washington Post” journal clubs, and discussions of pressing issues to build a community of practice;
- Monthly phone calls with their mentors to make progress on their individual development plan and Capstone projects, guide learning, and discuss challenges and opportunities;
- Membership in a health policy
subcommittee (education, research or clinical practice); participating in monthly calls and health policy committee advocacy activities;

- Reading and contributing to resources curated on SGIM’s Advocacy Web site, including a core set of books, key papers, online sources on policy basics, and news feeds on health policy;


At the national meeting in Denver in April 2018, a new cohort of LEAHP scholars will be welcomed. And we will celebrate the accomplishments of the first graduating cohort of LEAHP scholars. The call for applications for the 2018-19 LEAHP cohort will be sent out in August and applications will be accepted until November 16th. For more information, please go to SGIM’s Health Policy Web page: http://www.sgim.org/communities/advocacy/leadership-in-health-policy.

Passions for learning and for making a difference are the essential attributes for LEAHP scholars, but no prior health policy expertise is required. We encourage prospective LEAHP applicants to sign up for one of our Health Policy Committee Subcommittees (clinical practice, education, research) which can help improve the likelihood of acceptance to the program. To sign up for a subcommittee or for more information about committee participation, please contact Ms. Francine Jetton at jettonf@sgim.org. Accepted applicants will be notified in January.

In this year in which SGIM has announced a fund-raising campaign devoted to advocacy, the LEAHP program aims to prepare a diverse set of health policy scholars and advocates that can represent our patients and SGIM’s missions. We look forward to seeing your application for the 2018 LEAHP program!