



FMEC 2025 Annual Meeting Healthcare Innovators Network
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Innovation at the Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine

Presentation by Aaron George, DO

Aaron George, DO is a member of the FMEC Board of Trustees and currently serves as associate dean of clinical education at the Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine in Hagerstown, MD. As George walked his listeners through some of the school's recent innovations for medical students, he pointed out that Meritus' top three clinical positions (including George's) are occupied by family medicine physicians. "We have committed every Wednesday to have two full-time family medicine doctors interacting with all of our students," he said.

George explained that while many medical schools are built around traditional models of lecturing and note-taking, "we wanted to develop physicians that were really comfortable not only serving in but being part of a community." To that end, Meritus constructed student housing adjacent to the medical school while also sending their new students into the community on their second day of classes. First year students are sent out to perform community service in groups. "Our students have built-in protected community engagement time – that's very important to us," George noted. In the classroom, Meritus students are assigned to teams of eight students and "will see patients, solve cases and in some cases are graded tougher...knowing that you sometimes find success or failure with your teammates," George said. Meritus' medical students learn collaborative skills such as conflict resolution, listening skills and communication among team members.

"We also offer virtual reality for both anatomy and clinical situations," George added, describing how the school provides an anatomist who wears a headset alongside students so everyone can view the same 3D images. Meritus also has an inpatient/outpatient simulation center that includes a room with 360-degree projectors. Students can enter simulated environments, such as ER waiting rooms and rural crash sites, to enhance their learning.

Meritus uses stethoscope covers which simulate clinical conditions like heart murmurs and pneumonia rales when students work with standardized patients. "Meritus also partners with local family medicine residencies for two required underserved family medicine rotations in the fourth year, alongside cores in third year," George concluded.