

Errol D. Crook, MD AFMR President, 2003–2004

Rather than reflect on the year as president, I will comment on my time on the AFMR council as being president is just one of several years of service that all presidents get to enjoy. To be part of a group of young academic physician scientists and educators was an awesome experience. However, I served during a time when there was clearly a transition in academic medicine at many levels. Although the research enterprise was growing, funding for an individual's research program was less certain. All academic faculty, including junior faculty, were expected to perform more clinical tasks while working to develop their own research programs. All of these pressures were made bigger by the growing financial pressures on academic medical centers.

My time on the council started in the late '90's and spanned to 2005. During that time AFMR and its sister societies went through transitions and lots of soul searching. But, the focus of all of the individuals with whom I served was to promote the development of physician investigators and to advocate for a healthy medical research environment in the U. S. We understood that was necessary for medical progress to continue and for the health of the nation to improve. Determining how that was best done and AFMR's role in that endeavor took a lot of time and effort, but it was time well spent.

There were great discussions that led to many initiatives that I think still have a great impact today. I won't list specific initiatives and programs that developed, but, suffice it to say, that AFMR should be proud of its role over the last 2 decades helping to shape pathways for junior investigators to become independent investigators. The definition of a medical researcher and the distinction among types of medical researchers was often discussed. It became clear that focused preparation was needed for physician scientists regardless of how they defined themselves – basic scientist, clinical investigator, translational investigator, etc. It was great to be part of the national discussion on how funding and development of these increasingly specialized investigators would be handled. I am gratified that most of the members of the AFMR counsel that served with me are still mentors, educators, and scholars and continue to contribute to those discussions.

In summary, I loved my time as part of the leadership of AFMR. I think the experiences of that time were the best preparation for my role as an internal medicine department chair- a role that I have now served in for 11 years at 2 institutions. I am sure that AFMR will continue to be a great trainer of leaders of academic medicine and a strong advocate for the young physician scientist.