

# The American Gynecological and Obstetrical Society—reinvigorating for the 21st century



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The American Gynecological and Obstetrical Society (AGOS) was formed in 1981 by merging the American Gynecology Society (1876) and the American Association of Obstetrics and Gynecology (1888), 2 of the oldest and most prestigious organizations in obstetrics and gynecology.<sup>1</sup> Each of these legacy organizations stood for high standards in clinical practice, education, and research. Some of the most notable contributions of these organizations included the formation of academic departments of obstetrics and gynecology and the unification of obstetrics and gynecology into a single discipline. In 1959, the influential Josiah Macy Foundation published a report, largely as the result of efforts within these organizations, which advocated enhanced research activities in departments of obstetrics and gynecology. Once established, AGOS retained the same commitment as its legacy organizations to advocacy for women's reproductive health and to the principles of high-quality clinical care, education, and research.

Over the past several decades, there have been tremendous changes in obstetrics and gynecology with the development of 4 American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ABOG)—approved subspecialties and many other areas of special focused interest. This has led to fragmentation of our field into many different subdisciplines, each with its own agendas, meetings, committees, and journals. Although the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and ABOG both span all of these subdisciplines, they have specific and focused mandates that do not necessarily take into account all academic aspects of our field. AGOS has a role to play as a unifying organization with leaders from across the specialty, including specialists and subspecialists, that can

speaking with a single, unified voice for the reproductive health of women, training in obstetrics and gynecology, and research in the reproductive sciences.

In the past year, AGOS developed a strategic plan to reinvigorate the organization for the 21st century.<sup>2</sup> Why now? The answer is simple. The changing landscape of women's health demands that those of us committed to women's health develop new approaches to our work. That changing landscape includes, and is not limited to, the following challenges: 1) increasing maternal severe morbidity and mortality; 2) increasing prematurity rates; 3) reduced access to women's health care services—in particular, access to contraception and abortion services—for all women, but especially those of low socioeconomic status; 4) increasing behavioral health issues such as depression and domestic violence; 5) disproportionate decrease in funding for women's health research; and 6) high rates of disparities in all of these domains. If this does not represent a call to action, what does? Moreover, AGOS is ideally positioned to lead the coordinated effort required to address the serious challenges facing women's reproductive health. The organization is free of pecuniary “trade union” concerns and conflicts of interest. Specifically, AGOS is unencumbered by the need to address the practice-specific needs of its members and can focus solely on the health issues facing women. In addition, our membership includes many of the leaders in the field of obstetrics and gynecology, all aligned to improve women's health. We have a single voice.

The Strategic Plan has several overarching goals. The first includes reestablishing AGOS as a purpose-driven organization, with an eye to becoming a more vocal advocate for women's health and reproductive rights. Political engagement and publication of white papers focused on important, contemporary, and highly relevant topics in women's reproductive health will become key components of AGOS's advocacy efforts. One of the most important strategic goals is supporting research in women's reproductive health, with special attention to increasing federal funding and developing the next generation of women's health researchers through supporting American Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Foundation (AAOGF) scholars. Several strategic goals focus on diversifying, engaging, and mentoring emerging leaders in obstetrics and gynecology. Finally, we will focus on increasing the workforce needed to maintain a sustained effort for improving the health of women in the United States and worldwide. Given the myriad issues facing women's health, there can be no anticipated immediate gratification. The long view is critical.

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Received Dec. 5, 2018; revised Dec. 20, 2018; accepted Dec. 31, 2018.

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2018.12.038>

Developing a strategic plan is the easy part. Implementation of that plan requires coordinated effort and commitment, in this case on the part of the entire AGOS membership. Our call to action must be, of necessity, loud and clear, for AGOS believes that, after a century of progress, the reproductive health of women across the life span, across all social strata, and across the nation is seriously challenged. ■

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**ABSTRACT**

## The American Gynecological and Obstetrical Society—reinvigorating for the 21st century

The American Gynecological and Obstetrical Society (AGOS) has the potential to serve as a unifying organization to advocate for women's reproductive health care, education, and research. This report reviews a strategic plan designed to reinvigorate AGOS to address, together with our partner organizations, the ever more pressing issues and challenges in women's reproductive health.

**Key words:** American Gynecological and Obstetrical Society, reproductive health, strategic plan, training in OBGYN, women's health research