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Cato T. Laurencin, MD, PhD, FAAOS, Receives American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons' Diversity Award

CHICAGO (March 24, 2022)—The [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](https://www.aaos.org) (AAOS) presented its 2022 Diversity Award to Cato T. Laurencin, MD, PhD, FAAOS. The Diversity Award recognizes members of the AAOS who have distinguished themselves through their outstanding commitment to making orthopaedics more representative of, and accessible to, diverse patient populations.

"I am very proud to receive this award," said Dr. Laurencin, the Albert and Wilda Van Dusen Distinguished Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Connecticut. "It recognizes my longstanding work promoting racial justice and equity, and gender equity in the profession and worldwide."

The sum of those affected by Dr. Laurencin's mentorship and work is immeasurable, according to MaCalus V. Hogan, MD, MBA, FAAOS, from the University of Pittsburgh McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine. Dr. Laurencin's 40 years of work promoting racial and gender diversity has spanned the realms of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and resulted in the establishment of programs that are poised to diversify the field of orthopaedic surgery and medicine in general for generations to come.

"Dr. Laurencin has been a torch bearer for diversity, lighting the path into this field that we all hold so dear, and he has done it for so many who otherwise may not have considered, seen, or have had the opportunity to be part of this great profession," said Dr. Hogan.

Dr. Laurencin's efforts began in the 1980s at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he was assistant director of the Harvard Summer Health Professions Program, which trained Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students. His efforts continued at Allegheny University and Drexel University where, as a professor of orthopaedic surgery, he funded and supported scholarships for Black and Latino women students.

Soon thereafter, Dr. Laurencin became chairman of orthopaedic surgery at the University of Virginia. He was the first Black surgeon and only the second Black chair in the history of the university. Some of Dr. Laurencin's most significant contributions to diversifying the field occurred during his tenure as chairman, according to Dr. Hogan. During this time, Dr. Laurencin acted with intent in the recruitment of BIPOC and women into the residency training program and faculty.

"Dr. Laurencin was the driving force behind improving and taking this department to be one of the top programs in the country both on a clinical and research level," Dr. Hogan said. "His department was going to be a department that represented and reflected the diversity of the world we live in and was completely inclusive of all."

Under Dr. Laurencin's leadership, the number of BIPOC student applicants for externship orthopaedic surgery rotations rose exponentially, along with the number of applicants and interviews for orthopaedic surgery rotations. With more than 50% Blacks, Latinos, and women, the orthopaedic surgery program set a standard for other residency programs within the university — and nationwide.

“Several underrepresented minorities and women from that era are currently residency program directors, vice chairs, and division chiefs at programs throughout the country. They, too, are now making strides to further diversify of our field,” added Dr. Hogan.

Continuing his career at the University of Connecticut, Dr. Laurencin further committed himself to building and fostering diversity initiatives. His work includes:

- Founding the Young Innovative Investigator Program, which recruited underrepresented students to the university for a two-year intensive mentoring and research experience that paved the way toward MD, PhD, or MD-PhD training.
- Serving as the site principal investigator for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) BUILD (Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity) Initiative grant program, which invites five Latinx students each year to come to the university for intensive mentoring and research experiences.
- Heading an inaugural site for the National Science Foundation Research, Experience and Mentoring Program, which invites BIPOC high school students, college students, and teachers to his institute.

Dr. Laurencin has worked to foster diversity not only at his institutions, but at the national level:

- As speaker of the house for the National Medical Association (NMA), which is dedicated to supporting Black physicians and the patients they serve, he worked to develop the National Research Mentoring Network.
- He helped to institutionalize the NIH/NMA Fellows Program, helping innumerable Black residents enter academic careers.
- He cofounded the W. Montague Cobb/NMA Health Institute, which was designed to address health disparities and promote diversity in all its forms.

In recognition of his work, Dr. Laurencin has received numerous awards, including: the J. Robert Gladden Orthopaedic Society Alvin Crawford Mentoring Award; the Association of American Medical Colleges Herbert W. Nickens Award; the Beckman Award for Mentoring; the American Association for the Advancement of Science Mentor Award; and the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring, awarded to him in ceremonies at the White House by President Barack Obama. He has served on the Board of Directors of the J. R. Robert Gladden Orthopaedic Society, and he launched and serves as editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Disparities*.

On top of all these accomplishments, Dr. Laurencin is revered as an extraordinary clinician and scientist, according to Dr. Hogan. “His work and efforts have guided our profession and have set a path for the future,” he said.

Dr. Laurencin received his medical degree (Magna Cum Laude) from the Harvard Medical School and remained at Harvard to complete his residency in orthopaedic surgery, serving as chief resident. He completed a fellowship in sports medicine and shoulder surgery at Cornell University/The Hospital for Special Surgery and also earned a PhD in Biochemical Engineering/Biotechnology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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About the AAOS

With more than 39,000 members, the [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](#) is the world’s largest medical association of musculoskeletal specialists. The AAOS is the trusted leader in advancing musculoskeletal health. It provides the highest quality, most comprehensive education to help orthopaedic surgeons and allied health professionals at every career level to best treat patients in their daily practices. The AAOS is the source for information on bone and joint conditions, treatments, and related musculoskeletal health care issues, and it leads the health care discussion on advancing quality.

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