

Dr. Donald E. Wilson

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From: The University of Maryland
 To: Howard University School of Medicine

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Dr. Donald E. Wilson became senior vice president for health sciences in August 2007 at the Howard University School of Medicine. Wilson served as dean of the University of Maryland School of Medicine from September 1991 until his retirement in September 2006. He was the nation's first African-American dean of an accredited nonminority medical school. In addition to serving as dean, Wilson was appointed as the University of Maryland's first vice president for medical affairs in 1999.

Wilson came to Maryland after 11 years as professor and chairman of the department of medicine, State University of New York Health Science Center at Brooklyn. He was physician in chief of the University Hospital of Brooklyn and Kings County Hospital Center, Brooklyn. He completed his undergraduate education at Harvard University, received his medical degree from Tufts University and was awarded the honorary degree of doctor of science from the University of Maryland. He is board certified in gastroenterology and internal medicine.

Wilson has served as chairman of several federal committees, including the National Institute of Health (NIH)'s Digestive Diseases Advisory Board, the Food and Drug Administration's Gastroenterology Drugs Advisory Committee, and the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (Department of Health and Human Services) Advisory Council. He was also a member of the advisory committee to the director of the NIH. Wilson was chairman of the Maryland Health Care Commission from 1994–2004, one of two regulatory commissions overseeing healthcare in Maryland. He was also a member of the Emergency Medical Services Commission of Maryland from 1993–2006.

Wilson is past chairman of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). In 2000–2001, he was chairman of the Council of Deans of U.S. medical



schools. He is the first African American to hold each of these positions. He is a member of several medical/research societies, including the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, the Association of American Physicians, and the American Clinical and Climatological Association. He is a master of the American College of Physicians, an honor bestowed on <1% of members. Wilson cofounded the Association for Academic Minority Physicians in 1986. He has received numerous awards and honors, including election to membership in Alpha Omega Alpha (ΑΩΑ), the national medical honors society. He now serves on the ΑΩΑ board of directors and also as vice president. Wilson received the Baltimore Urban League's Whitney M. Young, Jr. Humanitarian Award and the Boy Scouts of America Health Services Good Scout Leadership Award in 1999. In 2000, he was awarded the AAMC's first Herbert Nickens Award. In 2001, Wilson was the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America honoree, and he received the Monumental Medical Society's Medical Pioneer award. Wilson serves on several hospital boards, the William S. Baer Board of the Baltimore City Schools, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Board and the Provident Bank board. In 2001, he was named the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor

at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. In 2003, Wilson received the prestigious Frederick Douglass Award from the University System of Maryland Board of Regents. In 2004, he received the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's first Extramural Associates Distinguished Service Award. In 2006, he received the National Medical Association's Distinguished Service Award. He was the first recipient of the Institutional Leadership Diversity Award from the AAMC Group on Student Affairs–Minority Affairs Section in 2006. *Baltimore Magazine* named him Baltimorean of the Year in 2007. In 2007, he received an honorary degree ScD from the University of Maryland, Baltimore. Wilson also served as president of University Physicians, INC, the medical school's clinical practice organization from 1996–2006.

Wilson has >150 publications in the fields of internal medicine, gastroenterology, healthcare and medical education. He has served or is serving as editor or associate editor of several medical journals.

Why Did I Accept the Position?

For the last six months, I served as an external consultant to the president and board of trustees of Howard University, regarding the health sciences enterprise (HSE). For many years, I have regarded Howard as occupying a unique place in healthcare and education in our country, and I was eager to see if my 40 years of experience in academic medicine could be of value. The more involved I got and the more I learned, it just became clear to me that Howard, while accomplishing much, has enormous further potential. Howard is not just historical—it is the future. I was “nudged” kicking and screaming out of retirement because I want to have a role in helping to shape the agenda for that future.

What Are My Goals?

HSE must be the best that it can be. We must improve our facilities, especially Howard University Hospital. When people in the DC area respond to the question “where would you go to get the best medical care,” I want them to respond: “Howard.” We must significantly increase the research productivity in our HSE colleges—our national reputation depends on it. When students and trainees finish their time at Howard, I want them to feel that they have received the best support, education and training available. All of us must become more interested in and respectful of our customers (our patients, students, faculty, alumni, each other). Howard can write the book on delineating, understanding and eliminating healthcare disparities, and I want Howard to be recog-

nized in this arena. These are just some of the goals that I believe are imminently achievable. My vision for the HSE is to achieve demonstrable excellence in education, healthcare, research and service to the community.

How Have My Previous Positions Helped Prepare Me to Lead the HSE?

Having come through the ranks of private practice, faculty member, division chief, department chair, dean and vice president, I believe that I understand reality from many perspectives. I have had the opportunity to manage a significantly larger operation than the Howard HSE. I have learned the value of communications, collaboration and transparency. I have also learned that it is critical to have a vision, develop a consensus around that vision and move ahead expeditiously to achieve it.

What Will My Biggest Challenges Be?

Obviously, we will need a lot of financial support to correct the many structural deficiencies we currently have in our colleges and hospital. But I want to be clear that we will have to generate part of that support. When I went to Maryland in 1991, some of my friends asked why would I go to Baltimore with Johns Hopkins in town. They said Maryland would always be second class. I told them that Maryland was a diamond in the rough and that class is a state of mind. Maryland is now first class in both mind and body. The faculty, staff and students who are part of the Howard HSE need to have a sense that something is happening, that they are a part of change and that we are as good as anyone can be. People need to feel that excellent performance will be recognized and rewarded and understand that the standards are high. People need to feel invested in and a part of the enterprise. We need to be able to compete on an equal basis for the best students, faculty and staff available who are attracted by the legacy and mission of Howard.

What Is My Main Ingredient for Success?

It is not about my success. It is about the success of the HSE. I believe there are several prerequisites for success. Hard work is essential. If you do not want to work hard, do not stay at Howard. Honesty is of prime importance. I do not always tell people what they want to hear, but I will always be truthful. We will be able to measure our success as we see our students challenge us more in the classroom, as we see our patients sing our praises, as we see national recognition of our excellence in our areas of concentration, as we see our research portfolio grow and as we see more and more outside faculty calling us to see if a position is available at Howard.