

SEMINAR SERIES

SEPTEMBER 14
11 AM-12 PM
PERKINS GALLERY

*Jack A. Gerster Memorial
Lecture*

WHEN AN ENGINEER-TURNED-DOCTOR TAKES ON HEALTH ISSUES FOR THE STATE: THE VIEW FROM DELAWARE'S SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES



KARA ODOM WALKER
Delaware Department of
Health and Social Services
Cabinet Secretary

B.ChE., University of Delaware, 1999

ABSTRACT

Delaware's Cabinet Secretary of Health and Social Services, Kara Odom Walker, an UD ChE '99 alum and family physician will discuss three top priority state health issues in DE—3rd most expensive health care state, high youth homicide in Wilmington, and the opioid epidemic. Through storytelling and data sharing, she will explore how her experiences and sensibilities as an engineer-turned-family physician have helped address these issues. Finally, the conversation will land on how engineers can contribute to the solutions.

Learning objectives:

Attendees of this session will be able to:

1. Describe how engineering principles are critical in approaching statewide population health
2. Discuss key examples of state health challenges -- from controlling health care spending to the opioid crisis to reducing youth violence
3. Identify specific ways that new process design and broad leadership can influence public health challenges

BIOGRAPHY

Kara Odom Walker was sworn in as Secretary of the Delaware Department of Health and Services on Feb. 6, 2017. As Secretary, she leads the principal agency charged with keeping Delawareans healthy, ensuring they get the health care they need in a fast-changing world, and providing children, families and seniors with essential social services including food benefits, disability-related services, and mental health and addiction treatment. She oversees one of the largest departments in Delaware's government with an annual budget of more than \$2 billion.

As Secretary, Dr. Walker chairs the Health Fund Advisory Council, and is a member of the Delaware Health Care Commission and the Delaware Center for Health Innovation Board.

Secretary Walker previously worked as the Deputy Chief Science Officer at the Patient-Centered Outcomes

Research Institute (PCORI), a nonprofit, nongovernment organization in Washington that is authorized by Congress to improve evidence available to help patients, caregivers, employers, insurers and policymakers make informed health care decisions. She managed the Institute's research investments, which totaled \$1.6 billion in 2016, toward a planned total of \$2.5 billion by 2019. She formerly taught Family and Community Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, as an Assistant Clinical Professor, and has worked with several national organizations to advocate for health equity and for access to quality health care in minority and underserved populations, including the National Medical Association, the Student National Medical Association and the American Medical Association. Dr. Walker has been recognized for leadership by Harvard Business School's Program for Leadership Development, American Medical Association and the National Medical Association.

A Caravel Academy high school graduate, she earned her bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Delaware and her medical degree from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. She has a Masters of Public Health from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and a Masters in Health Services Research from the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Public Health, where she also completed a post-graduate fellowship in the Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars program. She is a board-certified family physician and has provided direct patient care in many primary care settings, including those for uninsured and underserved populations. She has published research papers on physician workforce issues, health care organization and delivery.

Secretary Walker envisions a Delaware community in which all citizens have the opportunity to access quality, affordable health care in order to attain their optimal health, while working to reduce the cost of that care. She believes in a DHSS that is efficient and effective in terms of service delivery, and is responsive to all Delawareans, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and people suffering from addiction, serious mental illness or homelessness so they can live and thrive in their communities.