DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Memorandum

Date December 11, 1981

From The Surgeon General

Subject Continued PHS Participation at USUHS

To The Secretary
Through: The Under Secretary _____

SUBJECT/ISSUE

Justification for Continuation of the Public Health Service Students and Faculty at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences:

- o USUHS is intended to represent all the uniformed services; without PHS the university would be a DoD university with emphasis on training for combat readiness. PHS provides a focus on training in disease prevention; health promotion; and surveillance techniques needed for such emergencies as Legionnaires Disease.

- o USUHS provides the only uniformed services training academy for future development of an elite cadre of officers. There is no where else where such training can be obtained.

- o USUHS students are combat ready for instant mobilization to meet military and national disasters. USUHS is the only place where PHS students and military students train side by side. The closure of PHS hospitals removes the main source of supply for commissioned officers who could serve immediately in national disasters.

- o USUHS faculty who are PHS officers are recognized by all services as the mainstream academic strength in the University and provide an esprit de corps that is essential.

- o The required seven year pay back of students guarantees a cadre of PHS officers who would be available to meet the needs of the PHS and must continue life time careers in the PHS.

BACKGROUND

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) was established by PL 92-426 in 1972 with the signing of the Uniformed Services Health Professions Revitalization Act. This law requires that the University,

be located within a 25 mile radius of the District of Columbia and that it be organized under the Department of Defense. USUHS is unique in that it is the only uniformed services university of its kind specifically developed to prepare physicians. When resources become available other disciplines may be added.

As the Surgeon General is a member of the University Board of Regents, the PHS is a full partner in the development of the University policy. The School of Medicine is the primary functioning unit of the University and its medical students are required to be commissioned in one of the four participating services (PHS, Army, Air Force, or Navy). Participation in USUHS is designed to provide PHS with dedicated and career oriented medical officers who have specialized training suitable for the varied missions of the Public Health Service.

Legal Basis

Before USUHS accepted its first student class, the PHS and the University began negotiations as to the level of support considered to be in the interest of the PHS. In an exchange of letters between PHS and USUHS during 1974-1976, the PHS agreed to support approximately five percent of each entering class. Memoranda of Agreements between PHS and USUHS concerning student and faculty support were signed in 1977.

Students

PHS students who are accepted at USUHS must demonstrate a serious commitmer to public service and have a high academic standing.

PHS students are given a comprehensive orientation by PHS staff in the history, traditions, organization, and broad mission of the Public Health Service in a special pre-freshman orientation. These newly commissioned officers are also given training in emergency medicine and search and rescue missions consistent with the PHS mandate to provide high quality medical care to the U.S. Coast Guard and to assist the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Students are taught the necessary leadership and management skills to command medical units and organizations in the delivery of health services in addition to the general medical curriculum. They are exposed to the problems of dealing with national medical emergencies such as floods, earthquakes, and mass immigrations to this country. Over the years these experiences have become commonplace for PHS officers. The traditional medical school does not prepare its students for involvement in these types of activities. USUHS, however, does prepare medical officers for service in these activities.

Upon graduation, each officer is given a regular commission in PHS and has a seven (7) year active duty obligation to the Service for the four years of supported medical education. Additional training such as in internship or residency is not credited toward the seven year obligation. PHS officers graduating from USUHS are ready to function as medically trained personnel in an emergency situation. For the PHS this would mean that there would be a cadre of individuals who could be assigned immediately to cope with national emergencies.

Interns

Once students graduate from USUHS, the PHS is committed to support them for at least the internship year (GME-1 year) since without an internship a graduate is not eligible for licensure. Students must apply for this first year of post graduate training during their senior year. Approval of the request is made based on relevancy of the proposed training to PHS needs.

It was originally planned that these graduates would be assigned to PHS training programs for the GME-1 year and would be supported by billets from these programs. With the closure of the PHS hospitals, all PHS internships have been eliminated. Consequently, it is necessary that a number of billets be made available for this required year of training in non-PHS facilities. PHS regulations require that in the absence of PHS training programs, USUHS graduates train in DoD facilities and if that is not available, to obtain training outside-the-Service (TOS). We have established good working relationships with the offices of the Surgeons General of the Army, Navy and Air Force and have been able to place our graduates in appropriate internship and residency programs.

Faculty

Over the last two years, PHS has filled its full complement of six faculty billets at USUHS. Faculty are selected from among PHS officers who have been screened by both the USUHS and our PHS/USUHS Liaison Committee. Our faculty occupy high levels of responsibility (Chairman, Department of Pathology; Associate Chairman, Department of Preventive Medicine and Biometrics; Curriculum Director, Department of Pediatrics). They have direct student contact as well as conduct research in the various departments. The PHS faculty participate in the full range of University activities and well represent the Service. They serve as positive role models for our PHS students and students from the other military services as well.

RECOMMENDATION

In order that PHS continue to carry out its mission of improving the Nation's health, and to be responsive to national emergencies, it is recommended that PHS continue its commitment for both students and faculty at USUHS at the present level of six students per class and six faculty. This represents a reduction of student support from the originally agreed upon five percent of each entering class to 3.5 percent of each entering class.

CEK 12/14/81

C. Everett Koop, M.D.