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David J. Shulkin, MD
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
San Francisco Veterans Administration Medical Center
4150 Clement Street
San Francisco, CA 94121

Dear Secretary Shulkin,

Congratulations on your appointment.

I am writing to respond to your letter of March 24 in advance of the upcoming National Academic Affiliations Council meeting. Thank you for the invitation to share our ideas for how to improve the collaboration between the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Health Care System (SFVAHCS) and the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine (UCSF SOM). We share your commitment to providing care to Veterans and to strengthening our academic partnerships.

SFVAHCS's affiliation with UCSF began in 1968. In the ensuing decades, our partnership has led to expert clinical care for our Veterans, a robust research program and important training of future clinicians. We hope you will continue to advocate for funding of such impactful partnerships.

As we look to the next decades of work together, we have generated some ideas from our faculty to ensure our work proceeds and we are able to achieve our missions. As you alluded to in your letter, a few policies and procedures impede our faculty's ability to maximize their impact at the VA and the progress of their research.

Specific improvement ideas could include:

- Simplify the contracting process between SF VAMC and UCSF.
- Allow safe and efficient access for VA/UCSF providers working outside the VA firewall to the rich and important data within the VA computer systems.
- Reduce the restrictions that limit data sharing between UCSF and SF VAMC so that we can leverage the information from the millions of patients in the VA's highly functional electronic health record system to build on our strong history of meaningful research that improves the lives of veterans (and nonveterans).



- Allow VA computer access to trainees throughout their tenure at VA without having to reactivate accounts every 90 days.
- Adjust VA physician time-keeping regulations to allow flexible tours of duty to be more simply documented in order to facilitate part-time joint VA/UCSF appointments.
- Simplify the VA's Personal Identity Verification (PIV) process.

Improve care for Veterans, their families and our community -- Beyond the practical and operational concerns, we look forward to envisioning ways to use our resources to improve care for more Veterans, their families and our community. The Director of SFVACHS, Bonnie Graham, has shared her vision of a bold VA, one that would allow our partnership to develop creative models of care delivery that would leverage our individual assets to care for Veterans and their families together.

Additionally, we share your commitment to ensuring quality of care and accessible care. We are confident our expertise in telehealth, quality and safety as well as computational health will provide new opportunities to extend our reach.

Finally, one of the core strengths of our partnership is our shared commitment to educating the next generation of leaders. At UCSF, we continue to develop new models of education to best prepare a talented workforce.

The SF VAMC is an integral part of this mission and we look forward to a strong partnership improving education and developing the future leaders in medicine. Thank you again for your commitment to our Veterans and the VA's partnership with academic institutions. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Talmadge E. King". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Talmadge E. King, Jr., MD
Dean, UCSF School of Medicine
Vice Chancellor - Medical Affairs, UCSF