



**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON**

March 24, 2017

Dear Academic Colleagues:

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA), I want to reaffirm the Department's commitment to preserving and enhancing the relationships we share, ensure that we collaborate on transforming VA, and reduce the barriers of doing business with the Department. VA and the academic community have partnered together for over 70 years, working together to advance medical knowledge and train each new generation of health care professionals. Due to the close proximity of VA facilities and your institutions, we have built a synergistic, mutually beneficial relationship that has allowed us to share space, faculty, trainees, research, and work together to advance our shared missions.

In order to build upon our truly unique partnership, we must generate ideas and implement solutions to break down barriers and eliminate the inhibiting factors that are obstacles to our success. For example, we must streamline the sole source contracting processes and improve contract timeliness. We must facilitate faculty access to the electronic health record from home and academic locations, accelerate Personal Identity Verification card issuance, and be more creative about burdensome policies that impact faculty and trainees from affiliates. We hear you when you ask about reducing mandatory training requirements, streamlining the hiring process and reducing duplicative credentialing and privileging processes for shared and volunteer faculty.

I want to hear from you about ways to improve our relationship with our partners in academic community and how to overcome the challenges and barriers that are delaying us from realizing our full potential. The VA National Academic Affiliations Council is meeting July 12-13, 2017, in Washington, D.C. I have asked Dr. Karen Sanders, Deputy Chief of the Office of Academic Affiliations, Veterans Health Administration, to dedicate time during that meeting to discuss the ideas that you generate. In addition, if you or a particular member of you staff or faculty have an interest in exploring new ideas or collaborating with VA, please let me know. I can be reached at [David.Shulkin@va.gov](mailto:David.Shulkin@va.gov) or you can reach Dr. Sanders at [Karen.Sanders@va.gov](mailto:Karen.Sanders@va.gov) or by phone at (202) 841-5998.

Thank you for your partnership and commitment to Veterans. I look forward to our continued collaboration.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Shulkin". The signature is stylized and fluid.

David J. Shulkin, M.D.