

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

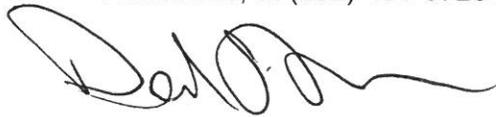
Date:

From: Under Secretary for Health (10)

Subj: National Academic Affiliations Council VHA Action Plan Response (VAIQ #7765958)

To: Acting Secretary (00)

1. The National Academic Affiliations Council (NAAC) Federal Advisory Committee held its meeting on September 13, 2016 via teleconference. The Council provided a variety of recommendations to advise you on matters affecting partnerships between VA and its academic affiliates.
2. Attached are the Council's recommendations, as well as VA's responses to those recommendations, pending your approval.
3. Should you have any questions, please contact the NAAC Designated Federal Official, Mr. Stephen K. Trynosky, Staff Assistant in the Office of Academic Affiliations, at (202) 461-6723 or by email at steve.trynosky@va.gov.



David J. Shulkin, MD

Attachment

Concur / Non-Concur

Robert Snyder

January 3, 2017

The Honorable Robert Snyder
Acting Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Acting Secretary Snyder:

It is with great pleasure that I submit the minutes from the National Academic Affiliations Council's (NAAC) meeting held via teleconference on September 13, 2016.

The Council commends VA's dedication to bolstering external relationships with the academic community. As evidenced by its September 2016 meeting, the Council continued to explore the many benefits of seamless integration between VA and its academic partners to enhance Veterans' access to health care.

The Council also had the pleasure of receiving updates on the Graduate Medical Education expansion initiative authorized by the Choice Act and VA's truly groundbreaking efforts in nursing education.

Finally, I would draw your attention to the concern expressed by the Council regarding the need for legislative authority allowing VA to engage in joint planning for, and common execution of, joint ventures with the academic community.

In order to further strengthen VA's national leadership in health professions education, the Council makes the recommendations contained in the attached minutes.

We look forward to your feedback.

Sincerely,



Malcolm Cox, MD (Chair)
VA National Academic Affiliations Council

Enclosure

CC: David J. Shulkin, MD



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

Response to the National Academic Affiliations Council (NAAC)
September 13, 2016 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Council has repeatedly stressed the importance of seamless integration between VA and its academic partners to enhance Veterans' access to health care. Strategic partnerships and joint ventures are vehicles for such integration. Accordingly the NAAC recommends that VA seek legislative authority to engage in joint planning for, and common execution of, joint ventures with the academic community. The overall goal of this authority should be the creation of local and regional care networks that serve Veterans and their families in joint facilities. At a minimum, such authority should allow for sole source leasing of existing clinical space and the development and maintenance of new clinical space when necessary.

VA Response: Concur. Sole source leasing of clinical space from affiliates and other governmental entities is necessary to provide timely access to care for Veterans. The current competitive leasing process generally takes years, and is poorly responsive to Veterans' access to care needs. VA will submit a proposal to acquire the authority for sole source leasing in the next legislative cycle.

Recommendation 2: The Council notes that the implementation of Phase III of VACA is pending final approval of funding by VA leadership. The NAAC has previously emphasized the importance of this program for expanding access to care for Veterans, including veterans in rural areas, and recommends full funding of Phase III as well as continuing support of the program into the future.

VA Response: Concur in Principle.

VA remains committed to the Graduate Medical Education (GME) expansion program authorized by PL 113-146. This effort has the potential to transform Veteran access to care by developing a physician pipeline in underserved areas. We are pleased to announce the results for Phase III of this high priority initiative: 175.2 FTE positions were authorized by the Under Secretary of Health on October 7, 2016. Of these, 72.7 positions were in primary care and 40.4 were in mental health. VA has a continuing commitment to improve access in GME shortage areas.

Recommendation 3: The Council recognizes that early acculturation of health professionals is a critical element of clinical workforce development. With this in mind, the NAAC recommends that, once the pre-medical shadowing program is established, VA consider expanding the program to other students with interest in joining the health professions.

VA Response: Concur in Principle.

VA is pleased to provide ongoing technical assistance to draft congressional legislation that would authorize a pilot pre-medical shadowing program. VA is also prepared to implement a limited pilot if and when statutory authority and funding is provided. An expansion of the pilot program beyond pre-medical students would further VA's commitment to interprofessional education but would of necessity require funding and additional personnel for this expansion of capacity.

Recommendation 4: The Council notes the increasing size, scope and innovation of VA's nursing programs, including (amongst others) the VA Nursing Academy, the post-baccalaureate nurse residency program, and nurse practitioner residency programs in primary care and mental health. In some cases, VA has taken the national lead in the development and evaluation of such programs, and has also fostered consideration by academic nursing bodies for the development of new accreditation standards. Given the increasing diversity of VA's health professions education portfolio, the NAAC requests a briefing on the size, scope and funding of the entire portfolio at the next NAAC meeting.

VA Response: Concur.

This meeting is scheduled for November 29-30 in Boston, MA.

Actions to Implement: None