



T H E M I L I T A R Y C O A L I T I O N

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April 13, 2005

The Honorable William Winkenwerder, JR, M.D.
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
1200 Defense Pentagon, Room 3E1082
Washington, DC 20301-1200
Fax 703.697.4197

Dear Secretary Winkenwerder,

For many years, The Military Coalition has committed its support for the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS). The Coalition would sincerely appreciate your continued attention and ongoing support for our Nation's only Federal university dedicated to medical readiness.

The Secretary of Defense refers to the USUHS graduates as the "backbone" of the Military Health System (MHS) and he has officially recognized that USUHS academic centers and research programs have established international credibility for: military unique medical expertise; communication and assessment of military medical humanitarian assistance training; addressing traumatic stress in uniformed and civilian health care communities; and, developing radiological countermeasures and unique training for the response to radiological emergencies. In addition, USUHS is recognized by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) as the one place where physicians of tomorrow get thorough preparation to deal with many contingencies, including the medical aspects of chemical and biological terrorism. USUHS students learn how nuclear, biological, and chemical agents act on the human body and what to do in the event of a suspected exposure.

The median length of non-obligated service for physician specialists in the MHS, not including USUHS graduates, is 2.9 years; however, the median length of non-obligated service as physician specialists for USUHS graduates is 9 years. The significance of the USUHS physician specialists serving three times longer than the other physician accession sources is critical to medical readiness as well as to cost-effectiveness. As our Armed Forces continue to be deployed into combat zones, USUHS graduates ensure that these superb uniformed personnel are provided with quality care from the initial preventive measures taken to protect their health, to the moment of injury, through their release from hospitalized treatment.

Fifty-one percent of physicians with the Army Special Operations Forces are USUHS School of Medicine (SOM) alumni; and, one out of every three physicians with the Special Operations Forces across the Army, Navy and Air Force are USUHS SOM graduates. The MHS could not easily identify or hire civilian physicians who would accept the critical risks associated with combat care. At present, 2,758 USUHS SOM alumni represent 23 percent of the active duty force. The 231 USUHS Graduate School of Nursing graduates are passing their certification examinations with outstanding scores and are cost-effectively providing essential skills under deployed conditions. The USUHS Graduate Education Programs in Public Health have been ranked sixth

in the Nation for the past two years.

The Military Coalition supports the University in its cost-effective provision of career-oriented uniformed physicians, advanced practice nurses, and scientists dedicated to the provision of continuity and leadership and ensuring medical readiness for the Military Health System.

The Military Coalition

(Signatures enclosed)