

**Board of Regents, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Open Session Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting No. 220
May 17, 2024**

The Board of Regents (BOR), Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) met in an Open Session Meeting on Friday, May 17, 2024, both in-person at the USU campus in Bethesda, Maryland and via Google Meet.

The meeting date and agenda items were published in the Federal Register, and each Regent was duly notified prior to the meeting. The Designated Federal Officer (DFO), Ms. Annette Askins-Roberts and the Chair, Dr. Nancy Dickey, were both present during the entire meeting. The meeting was called to order by the DFO at 7:30 a.m.

Members, staff, and briefers listed below were in attendance:

Board Members

Nancy Dickey M.D., Chair
VADM (Ret.) Raquel Bono, M.D., Member
Eric Holmboe, M.D., Member
HON Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H., Member
Gen (Ret.) Richard Myers, Member
HON James Peake, M.D., Member
MG (Ret.) Patrick Sargent, M.A., Member
HON Lester Martínez-López, M.D, M.P.H., Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
Glendon Diehl, Ph.D., representing HON Jonathan Woodson, M.D., President, USU
LTG Mary Izaguirre, D.O., Surgeon General of the U.S. Army
CAPT Misty Scheel, M.P.H., Ph.D., representing RDML Darin Via, M.D., Surgeon General of the U.S. Navy
Maj. Gen. John DeGoes, M.D., representing Lt. Gen. Robert Miller, M.D., Surgeon General of the U.S. Air Force
Brian C. Lein, M.D., representing LTG Telita Crosland, M.D., Director, Defense Health Agency
RADM Denise Hinton, B.S.N., M.S., representing VADM Vivek Murthy, M.S., M.B.A., Surgeon General of the United States

Staff Members

Annette Askins-Roberts, Designated Federal Officer, BOR, USU
Angela Bee, Management Analyst, BOR Staff Support, USU
Tanner Dean, Management Analyst, BOR Staff Support, USU

Briefers

HON Lester Martínez-López, M.D, M.P.H., Assistant Secretary of Defense (HA), Member
Glendon Diehl, Ph.D., representing HON Jonathan Woodson, M.D., President, USU
Eric Elster, M.D., Dean, F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine, USU
Carol Romano, Ph.D., R.N., Dean, Daniel K. Inouye Graduate School of Nursing, USU

Drew Fallis, D.D.S., M.S., Dean, USU Postgraduate Dental College, USU
Andrew Reimund, M.A., B.S.N., Interim Dean, USU College of Allied Health Sciences, USU
COL Danielle Holt, M.D., M.S.S., Associate Dean of Admissions and Recruitment, USU
Stephen Henske, M.H.A., Assistant Vice President for Accreditation
Jeffrey Freeman, Ph.D., M.P.H., Director, National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health

MEETING CALL TO ORDER/OPENING COMMENTS

Ms. Askins-Roberts introduced herself as the DFO for the Board of Regents and called the meeting to order. She provided administrative remarks and thanked USU staff, briefers, the contract support, and attendees for their participation. Dr. Dickey welcomed the Regents and discussed the meeting agenda. Dr. Dickey asked for a moment of silence to honor those who serve our country. She proceeded with introductions of Regents, Staff, Briefers, and members of the public in the room, then introduction of those attending virtually.

HEALTH AFFAIRS UPDATE

HON Martínez-López shared the passing of one of his mentors, HON Enrique Mendez Jr. on Sunday, May 16, 2024. HON Mendez retired as a Major General, he served as Army Deputy Surgeon General and later was Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

HON Martínez-López reviewed important parts of the Military Health System (MHS) Strategic Plan. He stressed areas where USU can help with research and training personnel. He stated that there needs to be deliberate decisions, for example, how far in advance the Services need to notify the MHS of deployment in order to provide medical personnel. HON Martínez-López spoke about the importance of digital health and stated LTG Crosland deployed a digital health pilot program at five sites, including virtual first appointments. He emphasized that when digital health is established enterprise-wide, patients can have virtual appointments with providers from other locations. HON Martínez-López stated beneficiaries' health care will be covered, either through direct care or purchased care (network). He stressed direct care is more economical, thus getting beneficiaries back to the Military Treatment Facilities is important. He added that money saved can be reinvested in direct care for civilian personnel, military personnel, and equipment.

HON Martínez-López spoke about the growing issue of pharmaceutical security. He stated about fifty percent of the generic drugs the MHS uses are made outside the country and many by China. He said these included a number of critical medicines, like anti-rejection medications for transplant patients. HON Martínez-López stated that Congress tasked DHA to 1) determine essential medications and where they or their active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) are made. and 2) determine if the medicines are performing how they should—are they safe, is there quality control? He stated the FDA sets minimum standards, but the pharmaceutical industry is self-regulated. Dr. Holmboe shared Rosemary Gibson's book, *China Rx: Exposing the Risks of America's Dependence on China for Medicine*, which discusses these two major issues—security and quality.

The Regents discussed USU's role providing health care personnel for the MHS and Services, and providing research to inform policy making, e.g., with pharmaceuticals. They discussed the issue of credentialing for military and civilian health care providers. HON Martínez-López stated that DHA owns the credentialing process. Dr. Lein stated the DHA now has centralized credentialing for all Services, and they are working with the National Guard and the Services to include the Reserves. He stressed that credentialing and privileging are different, privileging is done by the hospitals. There is a pilot program and DHA is working on privileging by proxy to streamline the process; for example, if a provider has privileges at Walter Reed in good standing, then those credentials would work for privileging in San Diego too. Dr. Lein stressed this is needed for virtual care, which can help with continuity of care with patients who relocate. HON Martínez-López spoke about the need to hire and keep personnel in the direct care system and the proposed legislation that will increase money for personnel. HON Peake asked if Congress is aware of this change. Dr. Elster stated there is a reference to backpay as part of a proposed legislation.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Glendon Diehl, Vice President of External Affairs at USU, gave the President's Report for HON Woodson.

The USU Strategic Plan began to develop Fall 2023 and aligned with others like the MHS Strategic Plan. Dr. Diehl introduced some of the plan's lines of effort:

- Force generation – addressing the shortfalls in military health professionals.
- Force sustainment – lifecycle health professions development and management to educate and train military healthcare professionals so they can be more effective. He spoke about the new department, Health Professions Education at USU, which will help in this line of effort and cost effectiveness.
- Research and scholarship – come through many pathways, including Congress and grants; looking at how it ties in with military relevance, to the Combatant Commands and to align with DHA, JPCs, etc.
- Enterprise-wide thought leadership and innovation – For example, digital transformation, which USU is helping with through education and training. Dr. Diehl spoke on how HON Woodson champions thought leadership and innovation at USU.
- Global health engagement and operational support – per DoD, USU is to support Combatant Commands and operational forces, make sure of support for the Joint Staff and synchronizing across the MHS, leveraging capabilities of USU in a cost-effective manner.

Dr. Diehl stated that the USU Strategic Plan is going through the final edits and the way forward includes stakeholder engagement. He said HON Woodson will be available to HA, DHA, BOR, and the Surgeons General of the Services in the next month. Dr. Diehl expanded on the Digital Transformation Strategy and its relevance to patient-centered care. He spoke about using artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) tools to help with the back office and patient care, in addition to cost savings. He stated workforce development is part of this—

need for data scientists and informaticists and how USU can support the DHA's digital strategy. Dr. Diehl stated that HON Woodson's passion for digital transformation can be seen in all the events he participated in, such as at being part of an AI panel with Ms. Mullen. He invited the Regents to the next Digital Health Summit.

Dr. Diehl next gave a legislative update that was sent to the Hill in April, which includes agreements with international partners. He spoke about recent meetings with Poland, Thailand, Vietnam, Georgia, Israel, Malaysia, and Mexico, and that they have about 20 other MOUs/MOAs. He stressed the importance of these in global health engagement and supporting Combatant Commands. He stated that they all need to go through OSD International Law Division and be vetted through policy which can take a long time. Dr. Diehl stressed these are non-binding agreements with allies and partner nations. They will work to improve processes if they do not get legislative authority. He stated another part of the authority package is gifts, no matter how small the gift, it must go through the Office of The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)).

The House Armed Services Committee picked up the section that addresses expanding the number of foreign military students at USU, which will need to be in reciprocity with other military medical schools. The House and the Senate Armed Services Committees will take this up in May and June respectively. Part of the legislative package is a request for parity of USU with other military service academies and National Defense University. Dr. Diehl spoke with Mr. Hutter and Mr. Smith of the USU Office of General Counsel about where authority lies and where there are gaps. He mentioned the Friends of USU, a non-governmental organization, has a meeting at the National Press Club in May. He stressed that HON Woodson will be in Germany and the German Surgeon General is very concerned with the Eastern Front and would like to enter an MOU on research and education exchange with USU. Additionally, the University of Pittsburg contacted USU regarding a research partnership. Dr. Diehl spoke of other events HON Woodson will attend, including a graduation ceremony onboard the USS Missouri. He also stated the Digital Health Summit on July 10, 2024, will be a hybrid event.

The Regents discussed the issue of gifts. Mr. Hutter stated the primary issue is receiving gifts. HON Peake asked about the Friends of USU. Mr. Hutter said the Friends of USU is a nonprofit organization which raises money and works with the Alumni Association. He added that the leadership of both are interested in working more like the Friends of West Point. Dr. Elster spoke about the large amount of money that could be available if USU had gift authority like the other academies. HON Peake shared that the Army War College had to go through a process to endow a chair.

Dr. Diehl stated they are working on the process for international agreements and working on a package to speak with HON Martínez-López and HON Vizirani. HON Martínez-López stressed the importance of international health and biodefense.

Dr. Dickey thanked Dr. Diehl for briefing the Regents and the discussion which will need follow-up for future BOR meetings.

END OF ACADEMIC YEAR SUMMARY

The three Deans and one Interim Dean presented their end of academic year summary. Dean Eric Elster provided an overview of the School of Medicine (SOM), speaking to the increase in research projects for students over the last couple decades. He shared that the new Department of Health Professions Education already has many publications. Dean Elster shared that the SOM does much better than many medical schools nationally in the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) accreditation process. Dean Elster provided specific details on demographics including collegiate athletes, accomplishment, program of study for 2023-2024 graduates, incoming class of 2028 students, and incoming graduate students.

Dean Carol Romano gave an overview of the Graduate School of Nursing's (GSN) national status and numbers of their graduates. She highlighted that the Nurse Anesthesia program is the largest in the GSN and the dual Family Nurse Practitioner and Women's Health Nurse Practitioner enables the graduates more flexibility. Dean Romano stated GSN has the capacity to have another ten students. She stressed that they are working on international collaboration and there are projects at 16 Military Treatment Facilities.

Dean Drew Fallis provided an overview of the Postgraduate Dental College (PDC), summarizing the class number and graduation rates. He highlighted recent cutting-edge research on the link between gut health and oral health—prebiotic inulin, a plant fiber, which improves gut health is shown to increase in good bacteria and decrease in bad bacteria around teeth. Dean Fallis stressed the importance of oral health as part of a person's overall health, "put the mouth back in the body."

Mr. Andrew Reimund provided an overview of the College of Allied Health Sciences (CAHS). He stated that though CAHS growth began slowly, it has taken off. He summarized the class size and program information, retention rates, and specialized accreditation programs. Mr. Reimund stated they are working with the Registrar to capture all students who have completed their degree programs.

The Regents asked the deans questions. Dr. Romano said that by partnering with PharmDs, nutritionists, etc. better outcomes are achieved, that there needs to be specializations, but they must work together. Dr. Fallis spoke about interprofessional training and work and how dentists were trained to be independent but now it is a team. He stated they are looking at early career indicators that promote retention. VADM (Ret.) Bono stated it is great that the schools are providing more medical personnel for the MHS. She asked about private-public partnerships and how AI and ML might be used in military medicine. Dr. Elster stated the USU has made tremendous strides across the board. Mr. Reimund said that CAHS is small but mighty and they are using AI and ChatGPT to be more efficient, for example, when drafting curricula, however, faculty need to check and edit after using ChatGPT. Dr. Romano said USU just released an AI policy. Dr. Diehl noted that technology has increased retention, decreased the cost of recruiting, and increased knowledge and continuity. He said MHS leadership is populated with USU graduates. The Regents further discussed public-private partnerships. HON Martínez-López said the Army has more private-public partnerships than the Navy and

Air Force. Mr. Reimund stated CAHS will train what the Services require, the AF and Community College of the Air Force are in the process of giving the medical portion to CAHS.

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE ADMISSIONS PROCESS UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

COL Danielle Holt gave an update on the USU School of Medicine (SOM) Admissions process. She shared that SOM applications increased after COVID-19 like medical schools nationwide. COL Holt reviewed the demographics for the class of 2028, including the breakdown of Under-Represented in Medicine (URiM) and stated the Association of American Medical College definition for URiM is strict. She discussed the current admissions process, and over-enrolling is not possible because spots are delegated by the Services.

Dr. Dickey thanked COL Holt for her brief and asked for questions and comments. MG (Ret.) Sargent spoke to the acceptance rate of persons of color and that it has increased at USU. He stated there are ethical questions regarding biases and asked how the SOM might address that. COL Holt acknowledged the concerns over AI and said they have a three-pronged approach specifically working with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HISs), and others, like Bowie State to engage students with research and mentorship programs at USU. She stated there is still work to be done. MG (Ret.) Sargent offered to work with USU SOM to be a place of application for minority students. Dr. Diehl stated the BOR may like to take an in-depth look at partnerships. Dr. Dickey said the Regents are geographically scattered, which would be helpful. She added many students are seeking shadowing and need to increase access of URiM to potential shadowing opportunities within the MHA. HON Martínez-López said that this needs to be strategic, that DHA and HA must be proactive. Dr. Elster said it is also an issue of marketing—need to increase the budget and increase social media to widen access to URiM. Dr. Dickey suggested that as SOM sends ambassadors out, they should target sophomores.

USU ACCREDITATION POLICY AND MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

Mr. Stephen Henske gave a briefing on the USU Accreditation Update. He began by thanking the schools for doing a great job. Mr. Henske reviewed the site visits and status of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) suggested improvements. He provided information on the MSCHE changes to the accreditation policy, such as increasing rigor needed for third-party relationships with schools of higher education. Mr. Henske spoke to another change regarding USU's growth in student population and programs, that they must let MSCHE know about the changes in advance. Dr. Dickey asked for any questions or comments. Dr. Holmboe asked about what MSCHE felt USU was doing well. Mr. Henske replied 1) the interaction between the schools because they do not see that often in large institutions, 2) USU's refined strategic plan - they did have some suggestions that tie into the resource issue, and 3) continuing education and faculty development and how USU brings the schools together to develop this. Dr. Dickey thanked Mr. Henske for his brief and reiterated that it is important for the BOR to be engaged in and learn about this process.

NATIONAL DISASTER MEDICAL SYSTEM PILOT PROGRAM BRIEF AND DISCUSSION

Dr. Jeffrey Freeman briefed the Regents on the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) Pilot Program. He began with a history of the National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health, which is a federal organization and academic center with many partners. Dr. Freeman spoke about the impact of the NDMS Pilot Program, which has five fully staffed sites. He highlighted three goals for pilot improvements: 1) assess and strengthen the NDMS of today—based on what happened the first couple of years of the pandemic, 2) define policy recommendations for improving the NDMS of tomorrow—they have done some policy but primarily in isolation, thus are working with stakeholders on critical recommendations, and 3) develop plans for rapidly growing NDMS under future scenarios—need to be able to build large capacity on the fly (mission over all else); define, identify and develop operational plans to be quicker, more efficient, and more effective. Dr. Freeman stated that they have learned a lot about what surge capacity is and is not during a protracted event. He said that there has been a focus on process improvement and optimization in the civilian world, which can break in an acute event when there is a much greater need. Dr. Freeman said there are two questions they are asking civilian Level 1 trauma centers, 1) how they can support and sustain the DoD when warfighters return for care and 2) what more can they do if given freedom and regulatory relief.

Dr. Dickey asked for any questions and comments. HON Martínez-López spoke about strategic planning and that there are not enough civilian beds, VA does not have enough beds either. He stated the MHS needs to play a large role but also partner with civilian hospitals for the rest—a lot more work to be done. HON Peake spoke about Landstuhl and HON Martínez-López mentioned a retainer for beds. HON Martínez-López stated they are refining the models, for example work being done at the University of Nebraska. HON Peake stated his concern regarding money and authority, what percentage of the beds does the private sector control and how does it change over time. Dr. Dickey stated that airplanes are an example, where the planes are owned by the private sector, but funded in part by the DoD so the planes can be used when needed. HON Martínez-López said that it is a convoluted journey, but USU brings value to civilian-military partnerships.

Dr. Dickey said there are just about two years left of the NDMS pilot program and asked what is being done to extend the funding at USU. Dr. Diehl spoke about what USU is doing to continue NDMS—looking at the resourcing issue and having NDMS as a program of record. He congratulated Dr. Freeman and his team on an excellent job bringing disparate stakeholders together as partners. The Regents discussed interoperability and interagency coordination. Mr. Freeman suggested getting the Board of Advisors for NDMS, then getting the White House involved. Mr. Hutter shared that Dr. Freeman is operating his program under a Homeland Security Presidential Directive, it is not law. He is working with Dr. Freeman on what is needed to get the authority to move forward. Dr. Diehl stated it is a pilot due to funding. He said that as long as it is a pilot and reauthorized it will continue, but the program would be better served if it were a program of record with DoD and HHS joint statutory obligation with interagency partners. Dr. Freeman said that not having authority helped because it made the NDMS less

threatening, and it allowed them to build relationships first. Dr. Dickey thanked Dr. Freeman for his insightful and energetic presentation and would like to have him back to brief at a later date.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Dr. Dickey thanked the Regents, briefers, and all attendees for their support of the BOR. She reminded the Regents the next BOR meeting is August 5, 2024, at USU in Bethesda, Maryland.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Askins-Roberts adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m.

CERTIFIED BY:

Handwritten signature of Nancy W. Dickey MD in cursive script.

August 16, 2024

Nancy W. Dickey, M.D.
Chair, Board of Regents

Date