

April 19, 2012

Ms. Anita Rhawn
Public Health Analyst
Bureau of Health Professions
Health Resources and Services Administration
Parklawn Building, Room 9-105
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Re: Comments on Update of the Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students Program

Dear Ms. Rhawn:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I would like to offer comments on the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) request for comments on the proposed update to the Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS) Program.

AACOM represents the administrations, faculty, and students of the nation's 26 colleges of osteopathic medicine and four branch campuses that offer the doctor of osteopathic medicine degree. Today, more than 20,000 medical students are enrolled in osteopathic medical schools. More than 20 percent of new U.S. medical students are training to be osteopathic physicians. By 2019, that number is expected to grow to 25 percent.

AACOM commends HRSA for proposing many necessary changes that will promote transparency and work to increase access for disadvantaged and minority students who benefit from the SDS Program. Colleges of osteopathic medicine have a long established history and have continually set the precedent in graduating students who go on to practice in primary care and medically underserved communities. We believe that efforts to enhance this program align directly with the mission and service of colleges of osteopathic medicine and their ongoing commitment to diversify the physician training workforce.

AACOM wants to ensure that access for osteopathic medical students to the SDS Program is not limited, but expanded to all colleges of osteopathic medicine. Therefore, AACOM believes thoughtful consideration should be given to the implementation of expanding the current one-year project period to a four-year project period. Moreover, we strongly believe that adequate deliberation be given to increasing the school eligibility requirement to qualify for the SDS Program. AACOM wants to ensure that its member institutions' efforts to recruit and retain disadvantaged and minority students are not inhibited, but supported in a measured manner. In

addition, in order to ensure adequate and appropriate time for the proposed changes to the SDS Program to be implemented effectively, AACOM urgently requests a delay in the implementation of these changes to give time for our schools to take the necessary steps to execute these changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed changes to the SDS Program. AACOM looks forward to working closely with the HRSA to ensure that osteopathic medical students and schools are well-served by the SDS Program. If you have questions or require further information, please contact Pamela Murphy, Director of Government Relations, at (301) 968-4151, or pmurphy@aacom.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SC Shannon". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light-colored rectangular background.

Stephen C. Shannon, D.O., M.P.H.
President and CEO

