



**FINAL REPORT  
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF HEALTH  
PROFESSIONALS IN THE COMMISSIONED CORPS**

**FOUNDATION RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROJECT**

**NOTE: THIS VERSION OF THE REPORT DOES NOT CONTAIN APPENDICES A THROUGH I. THEY MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE PHS COMMISSIONED OFFICERS FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

March, 2003  
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With funding support from the Division of Commissioned Personnel  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

**Final Report  
Recruitment and Retention Project  
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## INTRODUCTION

The material in this report documents the conduct of a research project conducted for the Division of Commissioned Personnel of the Department of Health and Human Services by the **PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health** during the period February 22, 2002 to March 31, 2003. The project examined the potential of using former PHS Commissioned officers on the faculties of schools of the health professions as auxiliary recruiters for the Commissioned Corps.

The project was conducted by a panel of retired PHS Commissioned officers with a background of experience in the academic community and in health professional organizations.

The material contained in this report includes an executive summary of the project's operations, specific comment on the contract requirements set by the Division of Commissioned Personnel, and a series of findings and recommendations which have evolved from the research effort.

Also included as appendices are copies of the project's publications ranging from a review of the literature on recruitment and retention of personnel in the Federal health service through focus group findings on that same subject and including listings of former PHS Commissioned Officers now serving on the faculties of schools of the health professions. The appendices also include a list of auxiliary recruiters from the "pilot" schools of the health professions which were part of the research study and a timetable for the project operations for each of the thirteen and one quarter months of the project.

Professor Jerrold M. Michael, George Washington University  
Co-Principal Investigator  
March, 2003

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**Recruitment and Retention Project**  
**PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health**  
**March, 2003**

The project approach was based on the hypothesis that *former PHS Officers and their interested colleagues on the faculties of the health professions schools may be identified and then called upon to become recruiters for much needed health manpower in the Federal Health Services.*

The major focus of the project was designated as the faculty and administrators of the schools of the health professions, particularly those faculty members who had previously served as Commissioned Officers of the PHS. Individuals from a series of "pilot schools" were solicited to become auxiliary recruiters for Commissioned Officer candidates from their institutions. The purpose of that sampling was to determine the probabilities of other individuals at the other schools of the health professions serving in a similar volunteer role. The process used and the selected schools are noted below.

To assist in the process, the project investigators accumulated and reviewed PHS recruitment and retention relevant materials available in Federal agencies and with the assistance of panels of present and former officers made an assessment of those materials most appropriate for specific use at schools of the health professions by former PHS officers now serving on those faculties. That activity was completed in April of 2002 and the results put into pamphlet form. A copy of that document is included in appendix D of this report.

Further, in order to provide these volunteer recruiters with current information as to what factors motivate young health professionals to join and to remain in service, the investigators first did a literature search covering the past 30 years related to recruitment and retention in the Federal health services. That work was completed in May of 2002 and the results put into pamphlet form. A copy of that document is included in Appendix E of this report. To validate those findings the investigators also conducted a series of "focus Group" type seminars using faculty, and students as well as current and former PHS officers to make those assessments. That work completed in May of 2002 was published in pamphlet form. A copy of that document is included in appendix F of this report.

As noted above, in order to carry out a sampling of former officers now serving on the faculties of the schools of the health professions, and to examine other issues which were part of the project, several "pilot" schools in the categories of Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Public Health and Environmental Health Science were selected for study.

In order to conduct the evaluation of the selected institutions, special Faculty Seminars were held from August through October of 2002. These faculty seminars brought together the "anticipated" auxiliary recruiters from the "pilot" schools of the health professions.

The first such seminar was held on August 24, 2002 at the George Washington University. It brought together representatives of The School of Medicine, George Washington University; School of Public Health, George Washington University; Philadelphia School of Osteopathic Medicine; School of Public Health, University of South Carolina and School of Environmental Health Science, Eastern Kentucky University. The agenda for that faculty seminar is included in appendix A of this report.

The second seminar was held on September 17, 2002 at The University of Maryland. It brought together faculty from the University of Maryland School of Dentistry and the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy.

Follow up sessions to accommodate faculty who could not attend those first two seminars were held at the Philadelphia School of Osteopathic Medicine on September 23, 2002; at the School of Public Health of the University of South Carolina on October 17, 2002; and at the Eastern Kentucky University on December 3, 2002.

The overall objectives of those sessions were two fold. It was to provide the faculty members with special recruitment materials and special contact information and also to permit the sharing of ideas about the most academically appropriate approaches for exposing students to the opportunities available through service in the Commissioned Corps of the PHS. **All of the attendees at these sessions have agreed to participate as Auxiliary Recruiters for the Commissioned Corps of the PHS.** Their names appear in appendix B of this report.

Among the materials distributed to all of the auxiliary recruiters in a briefcase kit were discipline specific recruitment materials and a special power point visual set prepared for use by the former PHS officers on those faculties. In addition, interactive CDs, developed by the Division of Commissioned Personnel, were distributed. These CDs permit their potential applicant students to make a preliminary application to the PHS Commissioned Corps "on line." Those applications were "marked" with a special designator so that follow up on the "pilot schools" applicants is possible.

The project also developed lists of former PHS officers serving at schools of Public Health and Pharmacy. The listing for the Schools of Public Health was issued in pamphlet form on December 2, 2002. It contains the names of 76 individuals. The listing for Schools of Pharmacy was issued in pamphlet form on February 6, 2002. The framework for the listing of Schools of Dentistry was issued in pamphlet form on ----. Copies of these pamphlets are included as appendix G, appendix H, and appendix I of this report.

The findings and recommendations section of this report contains commentary on (1) Changes in the Recruitment and Placement process; (2) Appointment of auxiliary recruiters; (3) Use of recruitment material; and (4) "Teachable moments" for recruitment.

In one very important area of those findings and recommendations, namely the section on Changes in the Recruitment and Placement Process, the following key points are made:

- Redefine the personnel mission of DCP/OSG and the Corps to centralized force management.
- Reorganize and centralize the way in which recruiting and placement is done in DHHS and provide the necessary resources to make it function properly.
- Develop a cadre of former PHS officers and "Friends of the PHS" to act as auxiliary recruiters at the schools of the health professions so that they can share their experiences and knowledge throughout the academic training program
- Give all Commissioned Officer recruiters a marketing message they can sell and that captures the vision of the Corps; provides an identity that young health professionals want to be part of, and that outlines opportunities not available anywhere else.

## COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC PROJECT REQUIREMENTS (Contract Language)

The numbered items below are noted as project contract requirements and the text in bold print reflect comment on those requirements.

- 1) Accumulate recruitment and retention relevant materials available from DCP analyzing and validating appropriateness for specific use at schools of health professions

**This requirement is addressed In Appendix D in the document titled, *SUMMARY OF COMMENTARY ON PHS COMMISSIONED OFFICER RECRUITMENT MATERIAL RESULTING FROM PANEL SESSIONS HELD ON MARCH 14 AND APRIL 18, 2002.* In this document each unit of recruitment material is analyzed and recommendations made regarding its use by the auxiliary recruiters at the schools of the health professions.**

- 2) Identify schools of health professions that are nationally accredited and establish relationships with faculty, career counseling and employment centers, and students of schools of health professions.

**This requirement was met with the identification of “pilot” schools of the health professions at George Washington University (Schools of Medicine and Public Health); The University of Maryland (Schools of Pharmacy and Dentistry; the University of South Carolina (School of Public Health); Philadelphia School of Osteopathic Medicine and Eastern Kentucky University (School of Environmental Health Science).**

**All of the faculty members who attended the faculty sessions have agreed to serve as auxiliary recruiters for the PHS Commissioned Corps.**

**A copy of an illustrative agenda for one of the faculty seminars (Session held at The George Washington University on August 24, 2002) is attached as Appendix A in this report.**

- 3) Familiarize school faculty, career counseling and school employment centers about the PHS Commissioned Corps utilizing current recruitment and retention materials developed by DCP and empower them to actively participate in recruiting students. The educational process could utilize various methods of instruction, such as campus TV stations and career fairs.

**See response to item number 2 above.**

- 4) Evaluate impact of recruitment materials on school faculty, career counselors, employment personnel and students.

**Follow up sessions were held at all of the Universities which served as “pilot” schools. All of the selected schools are actively participating in recruitment efforts. They are using the recruitment materials supplied and are involving student services personnel in the process of recruitment.**

**Lists of former PHS officers and in one case, “Friends of the PHS” on the faculty and staff have been developed for Schools of Public Health and Schools of Pharmacy. These are contained in Appendix G and Appendix H of this report. A framework for the listing of faculty at Schools of Dentistry is contained in Appendix I. Preliminary results from "Computer identification" of the applicants who do a pre application “on line” indicate an increased number of recruits from the “pilot schools”**

5) Conduct "focus Group" type seminars to identify the factors involved in a health professional's choice of employment and continuation of that employment in the PHS Commissioned Corps, and the identification of sources for potential voluntary auxiliary recruiters in schools of health professions.

**The requirement related to factors for choice of employment and retention are addressed in the document titled *REPORT OF FINDINGS OF FOCUS GROUPS WHICH EXAMINED THE ISSUE: WHY HEALTH PROFESSIONALS JOIN AND REMAIN IN THE COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE US PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE*. In this document, included in this report as Appendix F, is a priority listing of reasons for joining and reasons for remaining.**

**The requirement related to the source of potential auxiliary recruiters is addressed in the listings provided of former PHS officers in the Schools of Public Health and Schools of Pharmacy and the framework for such a listing at Schools of Dentistry. These documents are included as Appendix G, Appendix H and Appendix I in this report.**

6) Analyze and make recommendations concerning the need for modification of current, or development of new recruitment materials.

**See response to item number 1 above.**

7) Develop and produce reports on recommendations, list of schools involved, school points of contact, and number of school members and students who became familiar with the Commissioned Corps as a career through this effort.

**The overall recommendations related to this project are contained in the next section of this report.**

**The schools involved are noted in item I-2 above.**

**The school points of contact are noted in Appendix B of this report and additional potential auxiliary recruiters are noted in the listings of former PHS officers and “Friends of the PHS.” in Appendix G, and Appendix H of this report.**

**The number of school members (Faculty and staff) who have become familiar with the Commissioned Corps through this effort at the pilot schools is estimated at 52. The number of students at the pilot schools who have become familiar with the Commissioned Corps as of the concluding date of the contract of March 31, 2003 is estimated at 131.**

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Findings and Recommendations of the project are presented in four areas as noted below;

### **1) Findings and Recommendations for Change in the Recruitment and Placement Process**

#### **A) DEVELOP A PRODUCTIVE CENTRALIZED COMMISSIONED OFFICER OPERATED RECRUITMENT SYSTEM LINKED TO PLACEMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

The process of officer recruitment and placement as currently conducted (outside of the work of the Division of Commissioned Personnel {DCP}) is primarily a function of the agencies. This lends itself to **agency level human resources planning rather than department wide human resources planning**. It also leads to insularity where the professional identification of the officer in some agencies is to that agency rather than to the overall mission addressed by the Commissioned Corps. It also results in the inevitable loss of many potentially effective officers.

When commissioned officers are in a central position in the recruitment and placement undertaking, the process is generally very effective. When the reverse is true it suffers.

A system that provides a “seamless” track from recruitment to placement carried out in a more centralized Department wide manner and directed by the Surgeon General, would not only enhance the effectiveness of the utilization of the Commissioned Officers to the benefit of national health problem solution, but could also result in a higher level of satisfaction and thus retention through the use of a more system wide mentoring process.

**Seminal to the achievement of such an enhanced system are the following recommendations:**

**1) Movement of DCP which includes the functions of recruitment, placement, career mentoring and assignment of commissioned officers directly within the Office of the Surgeon General.**

**2) Maintenance of the recruiting function under the direct control and authority of uniformed personnel from the Director of the Division of Commissioned Personnel down to the active duty recruiters.**

**3) A resource augmented Division of Commissioned Personnel and in particular its Recruitment and Assignment Branch, that can carry out overall recruitment plans in collaboration with agency and discipline recruitment efforts and also rapidly respond to vacancy needs specified by the individual agencies.**

4) An augmented Division of Commissioned Personnel, acting in consort with auxiliary recruiters at the various Universities, that can rapidly process applications and match them with agency needs in a short period of time.

5) Resources for a computer based system operated and updated by the Division of Commissioned Personnel that will provide information on capabilities, education, experience and special skills and certifications that can be used to rapidly respond to the particular needs of the agency human resource personnel as well as to provide information valuable in making rapid deployment of individuals for emergency needs.

6) Resources for an effective public affairs program operated by the Division of Commissioned Personnel, that can provide useful material to opinion makers, the professional community and the general public about the past present and future contributions of the PHS Commissioned Corps to the health of the nation and to the world community.

7) A broader and more formalized system of involvement of the Commissioned Corps system within the Human Resources units of the agencies and their sub units to assure that all professional positions are made not only eligible but promoted for application by commissioned officers.

## **B) ENLIST INSPIRED, KNOWLEDGEABLE RECRUITERS**

Recruitment should be conducted by knowledgeable recruiters, in so far as possible from the same discipline as those being recruited. Regular DCP recruiters and Associate recruiters from the various disciplines can and should be supplemented by auxiliary recruiters drawn from the ranks of former PHS officers who are on the faculties of the schools of the health professions. Some of these auxiliary recruiters could be identified and enlisted into a formal program using the principles of the other uniformed services that provide incentives for "Reserve Officers" for their recruitment efforts.

Recruitment efforts of these active duty and volunteer recruiters should emphasize the merited role of the active duty officer in enhancing national health goals and the respect that comes from being part of an admired professional team. In addition, long term benefits including remuneration, that follows a dedicated career needs to be explained.

Contrary to conventional thinking, a great many young professionals are also attracted by the challenge of differing posts over a career and the opportunity for service as a team member in national emergencies. In this regard, recruiters appearing in uniform underscore many of these values that can be stressed in the recruitment effort.

## **C) EMPHASIZE PRIDE IN THE CORPS AND THE UNIFORM**

Retention determination seems also to follow the elements which serve as incentives for entry into the corps. While not totally consistent for all in the corps, the sense of pride of service to the nation and to the underserved is often felt in the discipline of wearing the PHS uniform. Identification with others who are respected and who wear the same uniform is an attractive incentive for many to join and remain in the corps. Auxiliary recruiters can strengthen this link to national service by inviting active duty officers in uniform to participate in the educational programs at schools of the

health professions. The recruitment efforts of the other uniformed services may be used as a model for recruitment of personnel into the commissioned corps of the PHS.

#### **D) PROVIDE AND PROMOTE THE REALITY OF LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY**

Equally important to the judgment to join the corps is the incentive to remain in service if professionals understand that they will be able to shape the policy directions that they follow in their work environment. This is particularly true for those serving in direct service billets, research activity, and emergency assignments.

Equity in treatment as regards recognition, promotion, remuneration and opportunity for leadership are also seminal to recruitment and retention of people with highly desirable professional skills. This goes beyond the traditional aspects of gender and racial equity and encompasses the notion of professional growth and opportunity for every age group and in every professional category.

#### **E) EMPHASIZE COSTEP PROGRAMS**

The Division of Commissioned Personnel should be given additional resources in order to place a priority effort on the broad use of the junior and senior COSTEP programs to stimulate a flow of officers from the health professions schools. When appointed, all COSTEPs should be required to take the Basic Officer Training Course. As noted above it would be well to utilize recruiters from the same discipline, including former PHS officers serving on university faculties. The careers of these individuals can be presented as role models for those being recruited.

## **2) Findings and Recommendations regarding appointment of auxiliary recruiters**

All of the faculty members contacted at the seven "pilot schools", without exception, enthusiastically agreed to serve as auxiliary recruiters for the PHS Commissioned Corps. In addition other non PHS officers who attended the faculty briefing sessions agreed to also serve as auxiliary recruiters. Those who can be listed as "friends of the PHS" included school Deans and Assistant Deans for student services who can be instrumental in the recruitment effort.

From this sampling taken at schools of medicine, public health, environmental health science, dentistry and pharmacy; it is appropriate to conclude that **almost every former PHS officer on such a faculty of a health professions school would in like fashion agree to serve as an auxiliary recruiter.**

While not part of the original project plan or required by the project contract, the project investigators decided to develop lists of former PHS officers (and in the case of Schools of Pharmacy, "Friends of the PHS") in two of health professions categories. The concept is that such lists would enable the regular recruitment operations of the Service led by the Chief Professional Officers, their Professional Advisory Committees

and the Division of Commissioned Personnel to enlist these individuals into their ongoing, coordinated recruitment and placement effort.

**It is therefore recommended that the Division of Commissioned Personnel (DCP) and in particular its recruitment and Assignment Branch in consort with the Chief Professional Officers and their Professional Advisory Committees undertake to (1) utilize former PHS officers and “Friends of the PHS” now serving on the faculties of the schools of the health professions as auxiliary recruiters and that (2) the DCP undertake to maintain and update the listings of former officers and “Friends of the PHS” provided by the project and undertake to develop similar listings for all of the other health professions.**

**It is also recommended that the Commissioned Corps examine the potential of identifying former officers at schools of the health professions who can be commissioned in the reserve corps of the PHS and can be provided with a stipend for such service as is now done for health and medical officers in the other uniformed services and in particular, the US Navy. When so appointed, all such recruiters should be required to take the Basic Officer Training Course.**

### **3) Findings and Recommendations on recruitment material**

A major portion of the project was devoted to an examination of what currently available PHS recruitment material would be useful to former PHS officers now serving on the faculties of schools of the health professions in their work as auxiliary recruiters. That work included providing advice to students about future career options including a potential career as a Public Health Service Officer.

To accomplish that, a series of four recruitment material review panels were held at which time all of the available recruitment material was reviewed and evaluated. The panels included every active duty PHS officer category or discipline at ranks from 02 (Lieutenant Junior Grade) to 06, (Captain). Each panel also included retired officers, primarily those on faculties of schools of the health professions, as well as graduate students.

In addition to commenting on the material, the panels placed each recruitment tool into one of five categories as follows:

- One: Excellent for all uses
- Two: Excellent for all uses if adaptations or deletions of some visuals are possible and permissible.
- Three: Good but needs to be revised
- Four: Suitable only for specific groups
- Five: Not suitable

All of these evaluations are documented in Appendix D of this report which is titled, ***SUMMARY OF COMMENTARY ON PHS COMMISSIONED OFFICER RECRUITMENT MATERIAL RESULTING FROM PANEL SESSIONS HELD ON MARCH 14 AND APRIL 18, 2002***

### **4) Findings and Recommendations on “teachable moments” for recruitment**

## A) Teachable Moments at the Schools of the Health Professions

The subject of the “teachable moments” in which to introduce health professions students to the notion of a career in the Commissioned Corps of the PHS was central to the project activity. In the course of the conduct of the several seminars with faculty from the schools of the health professions (which included schools of Medicine, Pharmacy, Environmental Health Science, Dentistry and Public Health) a variety of ideas, most of which resulted from actual experience with the concept, were put forward.

The following several points summarizes those ideas:

1) Faculty noted that each school of the health professions will be able to identify their own “critical moments” in which to communicate information about the Corps. A uniform finding for all of the schools is that the best communicators to be used in that process are those who are in the **same discipline; those who have had or are currently having the experience of service as a commissioned officer; and those who would be regarded by the student as someone who they regard as a role model.** In particular faculty members and fellow students have considerable influence in these interactions.

2) Arranging for the participation of current faculty who are former PHS Officers as well as invited active duty officers (In uniform) as participants (speakers) in ongoing courses, practice and seminar settings to discuss the current professional work of PHS officers contributes to the quality of the educational process while also providing an opening for discussion of career options as a PHS Commissioned Officer.

3) Opportunities present themselves in medical school courses such as THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE; seminar presentations on WHAT SHOULD INFLUENCE THE SELECTION OF A SPECIALTY; and specialty courses ranging from PEDIATRIC CARE through RESEARCH METHODS and INFECTIOUS DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY. These are forums where current and former PHS officers could be invited (In uniform) to present topical information related to their professional experience. This also provides the opportunity for individual or group discussion on a career in the Service.

4) At Schools of Public Health, It was suggested that there are opportunities to utilize active duty Commissioned Officers as adjunct faculty to teach whole courses, parts of other courses or to participate as mentors for the “extern instruction” of students during their matriculation. In some cases, there is an added value in the use of students who are in the Corps as teaching assistants and advocates. These individuals along with committed faculty can serve as auxiliary recruiters. In connection with this point it was noted that the practice of assigning active duty PHS officers for short term duty at a school of the health professions has proven valuable to both the PHS and to the University and particularly to the students.

5) In Environmental Health Science Schools it was noted that the practice of introducing ongoing and scheduled seminars on EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCE and having faculty who have

served in the Corps counseling students are effective ways to stimulate appropriate candidates to consider the PHS as a career early in their matriculation.

6) Faculty from all of the schools noted the value of the availability of up to date PHS recruitment material particularly the interactive CDs which can be used independently by students. They also suggest the establishment of a “named mentor” in the PHS who could assist the aspiring professional in making his or her way through the bureaucratic maze from recruitment to selection and placement as well as for career guidance after placement.

7) Faculty from all of the Schools felt that the CAREER DAY SEMINARS and JOB FAIRS which are routinely attended by the Armed Forces Recruiters are a missed opportunity that the PHS and its faculty recruiters should consider.

8) Faculty members who were members of the Uniformed Services Reserve noted in particular the Navy program of using faculty members who are reserve officers as recruiters, during which time they earned pay as if they were participating in reserve training. They suggested the identification of former PHS officers who could be called to reserve duty (In uniform) with responsibilities for recruitment, mentoring and placement of potential PHS officers.

9) One additional comment made by a number of the participants was the suggestion that a high ranking officer of the PHS, possibly the chief professional officer or the Surgeon General should make it a point to attend meetings of the Health Professions Associations (Association of Medical School Deans; Association of Schools of Public Health, etc.) to personally enlist former PHS officers and other “friends of the PHS” as active participants in this recruitment process.

## **B) Teachable Moments in Schools of Pharmacy**

Faculty colleagues from the area of Pharmacy commented in some detail about opportunities for influencing students about a career in the Commissioned Corps. Their ideas are noted below:

1) Most Pharmacy schools have some kind of seminar course very early in the curriculum where faculty and/or outside speakers expose the students (often for the first time) to information about the variety of practice opportunities in the profession. At this point, most students know only of their personal experiences with community, retail pharmacy. This may be regarded as a teaching opportunity, where students could be initially exposed to the kinds of practice available in the IHS, FDA, CDC, NIH, etc. Such first exposure usually takes a while to incubate.

2) As appropriate during specific professional classes, examples of PHS practice can be used by knowledgeable instructors to illustrate clinical situations where pharmacists are challenged to use their skills to influence patient outcomes. IHS patient counseling, FDA drug advertising regulation and BOP patient education programs are examples of where these activities are done well by PHS pharmacists and are models for the profession. This builds on the initial exposure to such roles described above.

3) Undergraduate students now need to do several different 1-month experiential assignments during their last year. Knowledgeable advisors can connect students to PHS experiential opportunities, either in response to the student's own request (based on earlier exposure) or because the advisor believes that the PHS experience will benefit the student and/or match his interests. During this assignment process, there is good opportunity for the advisor or other PHS contacts to provide additional information to the student about PHS career options.

4) Most students are interested in financial assistance or well-paying student employment. COSTEP, Senior COSTEP, Scholarship, and Loan Repayment are all possible PHS programs that pharmacy students should be made aware of by knowledgeable faculty/advisors at various points in their education when financial need arises.

5) Several PHS facilities offer general practice or specialized post-graduate residency programs for pharmacists. Faculty advisors, career resource collections in libraries, etc. should be equipped with information on these programs to convey to interested students at the point they might be considering post-graduate training.

