



SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Commission on Higher Education

FROM: George P. Fulton, *et al.*

SUBJECT: Progress Report on Optometric Education

Assessment of Need

The Task Force on Optometric Education, formed by and reporting to the Health Education Authority, is continuing an assessment of need for a proposed tri-state regional school of optometry that would be established at the Medical University of South Carolina to serve students from the states of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The implementation of the assessment has been delegated to a Committee on Need with diverse representation, including professional staff from the Division of Research and Statistical Services, representatives of the Health Systems Agencies that are involved in health care planning, members from the Commission on Higher Education, representatives of primary vision care (optometry and ophthalmology), and others. The initial meeting was held on January 12. Study papers were presented on the numbers, distribution, age profile, and work profile of optometrists and ophthalmologists in South Carolina. Preliminary reports were made on the status of vision care of patients in such locations as the school systems, penal institutions, mental health institutions, and others. Additional meetings have been scheduled for February 16 and March 9 and a report is planned for the Health Education Authority on March 22 and the Commission on April 7.

Prospects for Federal Funding

Mr. Clair Huntington (Assistant to the President for Planning and Institutional Research, MUSC) and I made an appointment at the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland, to meet with Dr. Nathan Watzman, Associate Director of Regional Programs, Bureau of Health Manpower, Health Resources Administration, DHEW, concerning the prospects for federal assistance for the construction

of a new school of optometry and start-up costs for program development. Several important points were made:

- (a) PL 94-484 authorizes the appropriation and expenditure of not more than \$103 million for construction in the first cycle (October 1977-September 1978), with awards not to exceed 90 percent of the total cost for construction. Subsequent funds beyond the first cycle are authorized at a significantly lower level.
- (b) In order to meet the time schedule for the first cycle, a letter of intent would have to be ready for transmittal by mid-March or early April of 1977, and the application would have to be ready to submit by September 1. For these reasons, the Optometric Task Force and the Interstate Planning Committee are making every effort to expedite their work.
- (c) Although the proposed school would be regional in concept and function, the host institution (MUSC) would have sole responsibility for the administration of the grant and would retain full ownership of the facility.

Financial Plan

Representatives of the higher educational agencies in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, and from MUSC and the Southern Regional Education Board, met in Columbia on January 11 and 21 to prepare a financial plan that has been entitled "Proposed Plan of the State of South Carolina for Financing the Tri-State Regional School of Optometry." This plan will be discussed at the meeting of the Interstate Planning Committee on Optometric Education, to be held at the Medical University of South Carolina on January 28.

Contingent upon acceptance of the proposed financial plan, in principle, by the Commission, we recommend that a copy be sent to the Medical University for further consideration there.

We anticipate that the proposed plan will be presented to the Commission at its March meeting for formal consideration, after the Medical University has completed its study and any revisions that may seem appropriate.