

February 13, 2019

George Sigounas, MS, PhD, Administrator
Brian LeClair, JD, MBA, Principal Deputy Administrator
Diana Espinosa, MPP, Deputy Administrator
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Dear Administrator Sigounas, Principal Deputy Administrator LeClair, and Deputy Administrator Espinosa:

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS), an organization devoted to improving the health, independence and quality of life of older adults, is deeply disappointed by a recent decision from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) deeming VA employees ineligible for the Geriatrics Academic Career Award (GACA) program. **AGS urges HRSA to immediately reverse this decision and allow for the review of VA applicants.**

The GACA program is focused on developing clinician educators in training the next generation of geriatrics healthcare professionals. We were pleased that HRSA in November 2018 released a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the GACA program after it was previously eliminated in 2015. However, we are disheartened by this recent development.

It is our understanding that there is no policy excluding VA staff from applying for a GACA, nor was this cited as an exclusion in the November 2018 NOFO (HRSA-19-007). We believe this decision to exclude these applicants was made in error. The part and full time VA employees who applied in good faith abiding by the NOFO's eligibility criteria are eligible applicants and should have their applications reviewed. Furthermore, this decision unfairly penalizes academic faculty with VA appointments who are providing clinical care to older veterans.

Finally, it is quite common for individuals to be on university faculty, hold concurrent VA appointments and provide care at the VA. Additionally, we are unaware of the policy in which this decision has been based as prior applicants for the GACA who had VA appointments were deemed eligible.

As applications have been circulated for review as of yesterday, February 12th, this issue is very time-sensitive and needs your immediate assistance. Again, we strongly urge HRSA to reverse its decision and allow the applications of those employed by the VA to move forward.

Thank you, in advance, for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy E. Lundebjerg".

Nancy E. Lundebjerg, MPA
Chief Executive Officer