Contract Scope of Work

The University of Alaska seeks an acknowledged expert in pharmacy education to provide guidance in several areas:

1) Confirmation of the need for pharmacy education in Alaska and in the nation
2) Pre-pharmacy education through current offerings across the UA system and recommendations to best align with national pharmacy education requirements
3) Potential partnerships with other institutions for in-Alaska delivery of a graduate pharmacy program
4) Prospects for development of an in-state pharmacy school

Contractor will research and produce a report with recommendations for Pharmacy Education in the state of Alaska that can be offered or facilitated by the University of Alaska System. This report will include a national scan of pharmacy education and resource factors for Alaska to consider.

BACKGROUND

Effort is underway to develop a comprehensive and coordinated suite of opportunities for Alaskans to apply to and complete graduate programs in pharmacy. The principal investigator on this project will be Jan Harris, Vice Provost for Health Programs. This effort is expected to be coordinated in its development with:

Associate Vice President of the University of Alaska Karen Perdue
Dean Cheryl Easley, College of Health and Social Welfare UAA
Dean Paul Layre, College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, UAF
Dean Sandra Carroll-Cobb, Community and Technical College, UAA
Dean Jim Liszka, CAS, UAA,
Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Director Office of Research Integrity John Blake, UAF

All of these entities have been interested in the planning process and will be instrumental in the execution of collaborative relationships with pharmacy schools that may be selected as partners in this endeavor, and in development of an Alaska school of pharmacy. This committee may call on experts and key stakeholders throughout the University for their expertise in informing the consultants and to review work products.

The report is being prepared for the Vice President of Academic Affairs for the University of Alaska and will be guided by input of the System-wide Academic Council. The President’s Biomedical Subcabinet and the UA Health Programs Alliance will also review the work product.
INDUSTRY SUPPORT
The health care industry in Alaska has been calling for assistance with the pharmacist shortage in the state for nearly a decade. The vacancy rate for this profession stood at about 23% in 2007. The Alaska Department of Labor projects a need for nearly 180 additional pharmacists in the decade ending in 2012. Almost one-third of practicing pharmacists were 50 years or older in 2002. Pharmacists are expensive to recruit: the SORRAS study in 2005 found that hiring a single pharmacist cost Alaska health care organizations an average of $71,300. Urban facilities spent $39,900 per hire and rural facilities $105,000.

Pharmacists are required in the operation of hospitals and nursing homes, as well as retail pharmacies. Alaska health care organizations must hire excessively expensive “travelers” in order to stay open while paying exorbitant recruitment costs. It is clear that the state is not keeping up with demand and there is real danger that going outside to school will result in these individuals not returning to the state.

The Alaska State Pharmacist Association and several individuals are proposing the development of a pharmacy school in Alaska. This may be a long-term goal, but costs associated with pharmacy school development and operations are very high and it is not known if there are sufficient clinical opportunities in Alaska to sustain a viable school. A transition period utilizing existing or developing schools in other states could be of benefit to Alaskans while discussions about establishing a school here proceed. It is strongly preferred that all or most of any interim or long-term pharmacy program should occur in Alaska to encourage graduates to stay and practice in the state.

GENERAL SCOPE OF WORK
In order for the University of Alaska to determine the best viable long term plan for pharmacy education to meet workforce shortages, a comprehensive assessment with associated report and recommendations is being requested. This document provides the scope of work for the consultant.

The work done by this consultant will consider the status of Alaska in relation to national pharmacy education opportunities. The scope of work would include the following items:

1). Confirmation of the need for pharmacy education in Alaska.
This would include a national scan of the demand for pharmacy education in the United States, and recent trends in academia to respond to these needs. The needs of rural states must be included in the scan including new pharmacy programs, trends in pharmacy education and accreditation.
Report on Alaska’s demand and supply projections using the following data points as background. The University of Alaska will provide this information to the consultant.

a. Itemization of registered pharmacists by region and historic trends.
b. Current and historic pharmacist vacancy rates and trends by region.
c. Characterization of current Alaskan students attending schools of pharmacy, recent trends and historic rates of return after graduation.
d. Assessment of future healthcare needs, historic and projected Alaska population demographics.
e. Detailing of demographic shift toward older population including recent shift in number of retirees returning to the state, and related anticipated health care needs.
f. Military force expansion or base closure plans and projected active duty and dependent demographics.
g. Discussion of recent developments regarding refusal of service to Alaskan Medicare beneficiaries by family physicians and how this might impact demographic trends.

2) Pre-pharmacy education

Inventory Pre-pharmacy offerings at the UA system and determine the following:

a. Is there parity between University of Alaska course offerings and typical pharmacy school prerequisite courses?
b. How available is pre-requisite coursework within the University of Alaska system or other accessible, perhaps online, colleges?
c. What is the cost of completing all pharmacy school prerequisite courses at the University of Alaska and how does this compare to other schools in the region?
d. What University support mechanisms are in place for students interested in healthcare professions and specifically pharmacy?
e. What University support mechanisms are in place for Alaska Native, American Indian and minority students interested in healthcare professions and specifically pharmacy?

Provide recommendations for improving University of Alaska’s approach to pre-pharmacy education.
3) Potential partnerships with other institutions for in-Alaska delivery of a graduate pharmacy program

Deliverables include:

a. Itemize existing pharmacy practice sites at clinics and healthcare facilities within the state. Determine how many Alaska pharmacy sites are accepting students now and would accept Alaskan pharmacy students. Determine if these sites provide the level of supervision necessary to meet accreditation requirements.

b. Explore regional strategies (similar to WWAMI) for in-state education.

c. Document existing arrangements with accredited Universities providing pharmacy education in Alaska. Details of partnership discussions with Creighton University will be provided to consultant.

d. Document the need for and level of support for experiential rotations from healthcare facilities, particularly hospitals and retail pharmacies. Is this sufficient for an independent pharmacy school? What student population could available opportunities support?

e. Determine how many qualified pharmacists are necessary to support pharmacy education in Alaska? Does Alaska possess sufficient numbers of ‘qualified’ practitioners and if not, what must be done to either attract these practitioners or transform existing professionals into competent experiential educators and what resources and mechanisms will be necessary?

f. Discuss the question: Should all experiential rotations occur within the state? Where should other rotations occur? Is the risk of losing students to other states greater than the benefit of more robust rotations out of state?

g. Determine what level of support might be available from private industry, military and tribal healthcare organizations to support students in their academic and clinical experiences.

h. Which partnership options would be open to University of Alaska faculty becoming active affiliate faculty in the execution of the program?

4) Prospects for development of a pharmacy school

Overall, what are the elements UA would need to develop to deliver an in-state pharmacy school. Questions include:
a. How many students and faculty would be needed to develop an accredited program? What other major elements would be necessary to develop an accredited program? Examples follow:
   1. What physical facilities are available or must be constructed to support a school of pharmacy?
   2. Is it feasible to provide a distance version of this program and what resources would that entail?
   3. What level of research will be necessary to meet financial needs of a school?
   4. Will contracts to serve as clinical adjuncts and part time faculty with practicing health care pharmacists help reduce financial expenses of a school?
   5. Determine if one pharmacy school can meet the needs of pharmacy students at UAA, UAF and UAS under accreditation requirements.

b. Provide an approximate cost of developing and maintaining a pharmacy school in Alaska, at UAA, UAF or a combined program.

c. Produce a timetable and next steps required for implementation.

It is expected that project activities will include extensive interviews with Alaska providers, university faculty and leaders and members of the profession. Major clinical facilities in Alaska will be site visited for assessment of experiential resources and others will be contacted for relevant information. Ongoing dialogue will occur with the Pharmacy Task Force of the University of Alaska during the course of this consultation.

Consultant findings, reflections and recommendations will be included in a significant paper report, and will be presented in person to a forum of University of Alaska leaders and other interested parties at the conclusion of this project.

This Consultant needs to be a nationally recognized expert in pharmacy education and hold a pharmacy related doctorate. She/he must have extensive knowledge and practice with the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education and have demonstrated leadership in an existing pharmacy school.