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Marketing & Communications Office

**Higher Learning Commission awards WVSOM 10-year** **accreditation**

**LEWISBURG, W.Va.** – The West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM) has been granted continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) with the next reaffirmation in 10 years. The milestone marks the culmination of a years-long effort to prepare for the commission’s review.

The commission accredited the school with no concerns, which indicates that the institution has no areas that need improvement.

As one of seven institutional accreditors in the nation, the HLC accredits about 950 colleges and universities primarily in the central portion of the U.S., in 19 states ranging as far west as Arizona and as far east as West Virginia. Besides WVSOM, 12 other osteopathic medical schools have or are seeking HLC accreditation.

James W. Nemitz, Ph.D., WVSOM’s president, said he is pleased with the commission’s findings and appreciative to the administrators, faculty and staff who helped the school meet HLC requirements.

“The Higher Learning Commission’s report shows that WVSOM is adhering to the highest standards of compliance while preparing students for careers as competent, compassionate physicians,” Nemitz said. “I’m proud of all those who have helped make this accreditation a success. A stamp of approval from a prestigious organization like the HLC will have positive implications for WVSOM for years to come.”

The comprehensive evaluation included an assurance review of arguments and evidence provided by the institution demonstrating compliance with the commission’s accreditation criteria; a student opinion survey; and an on-site review conducted by peer reviewers who are trained to evaluate how institutions apply the commission’s requirements. A final review and action, based on the site team report, was determined by an HLC decision-making body.

Andrea Bucklew, J.D., WVSOM’s director of accreditation and continuous quality improvement, said the HLC requires institutions to prove they meet five sets of criteria.

“First, we have to show that our mission statement guides our decisions. Second, we have to act with ethics and integrity. The third and fourth criteria deal with teaching: Are our students learning? Do they have good outcomes? Are they able to match to residencies? And the fifth criterion deals with planning and institutional resources,” she said.

Bucklew said the school’s high performance prompted the commission to allow WVSOM to choose an “open pathway” for its next accreditation cycle. Institutions permitted to gain reaccreditation through the open pathway are considered to have few accreditation concerns, more financial stability and a stronger culture of compliance.

“The open pathway requires an institution to determine a strategic initiative and report the progress of that initiative to the HLC. The timing is good because we’re already in the process of doing that as part of our strategic planning,” Bucklew said.

Machelle Linsenmeyer, Ed.D., WVSOM’s assistant vice president for institutional effectiveness and academic resources, said the successful reaccreditation will lay a foundation for the school’s continued growth.

“Accreditation shows that we are a school with processes in place and continuous quality improvement projects that meet the standards not only of our programmatic accreditor, but of an institutional accreditor. We’re thrilled that we got the highest recommendation, and we now have the opportunity to move forward with the open pathway, which is important for the expansions we want to make for new opportunities at WVSOM,” she said.

The programmatic accreditor for the school’s D.O. program is the American Osteopathic Association’s Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation. WVSOM has continued accreditation status for the program through academic year 2029-30.

Linsenmeyer noted that Bucklew’s predecessor at WVSOM, Mary Norris, Ph.D., who retired in early 2025, was instrumental in the accreditation process.

“Dr. Norris worked closely with the on-site teams who wrote the assurance arguments and collected supporting evidence, was the editor for the final report, and oversaw the logistics of the site team visit including close communication with site visitors throughout the process,” Linsenmeyer said. “I’m thankful to her, our teams and everyone at WVSOM for successfully navigating this process.”

**# end #**

*WVSOM is a national leader in educating osteopathic physicians for primary care medicine in rural areas. Visit WVSOM online at* [*www.wvsom.edu*](http://www.wvsom.edu)*.*