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Senior HHS Advisor Rear Adm. Susan Orsega to Receive Honorary Degree from Uniformed Services University

Bethesda, Md. – The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) will bestow an honorary degree upon U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Rear Adm. Susan Orsega, a USU graduate and the senior advisor to the U.S. Surgeon General and the Assistant Secretary for Health in the Department of Health and Human Services. The degree symbolizes the university's respect for Orsega's continued service, and will be presented during the university's commencement ceremony on May 21, Armed Forces Day.

Orsega earned a Master of Science in Nursing degree from USU's Daniel K. Inouye Graduate School of Nursing (GSN) in 2001. Her distinguished career in the USPHS Commissioned Corps began in 1989, when she was assigned to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), just as the HIV/AIDS epidemic was unfolding. From 2007 to 2019, she was responsible for the operational management of two National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases projects with South African and Malian governments. In 2015, she was appointed to an NIH/NIAID Ebola trial operations team and was responsible for making sure the first Ebola human vaccine and treatment trials in Liberia and Sierra Leone were successfully implemented at a time when the Ebola transmission rates were catastrophic. As she continued to advance her nursing and scientific knowledge with a focus on practice as a Nurse Practitioner, she also became known as a subject matter expert in HIV/AIDS global research, advanced nursing practice, health diplomacy and disaster response. She has served as the former Chief Nurse Officer of the USPHS, and was appointed by President Joe Biden in 2021 to serve as Acting U.S. Surgeon General, bridging the gap as the nation's top healthcare advisor while Dr. Vivek Murthy awaited Senate confirmation. Prior to her current position, she served as the Director of the 6,500-member USPHS Commissioned Corps. She has focused on advancing interagency, and military and public health partnerships, as well as USPHS Commissioned Corps modernization, and increased response to public health crises.

Orsega, who is also the first GSN alumnus to reach the rank of rear admiral, has earned many accolades in her pursuit of global health, including the Department of Health and Human Services Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service in 2016, USU's distinguished GSN Alumni of the Year in 2015, and the NIH Director's award in 2002.

"We are proud to honor Rear Admiral Orsega for her scholarship as a global health research investigator, effective leader in public health and an outstanding clinician and officer. As an alumna of USU, she epitomizes excellence in public service and commitment to improving the health of our nation," said Dr. Carol Romano, Dean of USU's GSN.

The honorary doctorate is among the University's highest forms of recognition, and is awarded to an individual who has demonstrated high standards of excellence through service or scholarship.

USU's commencement exercise will take place at the Daughters of the American Revolution Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. During the ceremony, more than 340 uniformed professionals will receive their medical, graduate nursing, dental, biomedical science, public health, and clinical psychology degrees. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Mr. Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr. will deliver the keynote address.

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About the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences: The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, founded by an act of Congress in 1972, is the nation's federal health sciences university and the academic heart of the Military Health System. USU students are primarily active-duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service who receive specialized education in tropical and infectious diseases, TBI and PTSD, disaster response and humanitarian assistance, global health, and acute trauma care. USU also has graduate programs in oral biology, biomedical sciences and public health committed to excellence in research. The University's research program covers a wide range of areas important to both the military and public health. For more information about USU and its programs, visit www.usuhs.edu.