

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Federal Advisory Committee
National Academic Affiliations Council (NAAC)
Meeting Minutes for December 11, 2023**

Attendance: See Appendix A

Welcome and Announcements

Ms. Nellie Mitchell called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM and welcomed NAAC members, VA staff and members of the public. She informed all attendees that, in accordance with FACA, she would be running the meeting as the Designated Federal Officer in the absence of the NAAC Chairman and Vice Chairman. Ms. Mitchell briefed the Council on the virtual meeting procedures.

VA Primary Care Equity Dashboard Presentation

Leslie Hausmann, Ph.D., Associate Director and Equity Capacity Building Core Co-Director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion, presented an overview of VA's Primary Care Dashboard. She discussed how the VA's Equity Guided Improvement Strategy (EGIS) and the Primary Care Equity Dashboard (PCED) support the Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goal of improving healthcare equity for the hospital's patients as a quality and safety priority. Dr. Hausmann stated that the PCED is a user-centered Power Business Intelligence (BI) application developed to engage the VA healthcare workforce in identifying and addressing inequities affecting their patient populations and is available to all VHA employees. She provided an overview of how the dashboard works, the data collected, and how this information can be used to create action plans.

Mr. Robinson asked if the metrics in the dashboard align with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) National Healthcare Quality and Disparity reports and if there are plans to compare VA performance to the AHRQ data set. Dr. Hausmann stated that the guidelines used by the Electronic Quality Measurement team are similar and that integrating this data to non-VA health care metrics has been proposed as a next step in research.

Dr. Evans said he would like to see this work shared outside of the VA to help improve health systems nationally. He asked how this data can become a standard integrated element of work and training. Dr. Hausmann agreed and added that the reason for taking a user-centered design approach was to set this process up to work within the demands of the VA organization. She said that the dashboard has served its purpose in showing that it is a tool people will use when planning quality improvement and monitoring when the disparities are central. It is a subset of the many issues the VA tracks, and the Office of Health Equity is consulting and teaching others how to

incorporate this into their work. Dr. Elster asked about the possibility of collaboration with military healthcare. Dr. Haussmann appreciated the collaboration suggestion and said they should meet to discuss how to proceed.

PACT Act, Section 704 – Sole Source Leasing from Academic Affiliates

Alfred Montoya, MHA, FACHE, VHA-CM, Deputy Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Support Services, VHA, provided an update of the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act with a specific focus on Section 704 that authorizes sole source leasing of space by VA with a qualified academic affiliate. The 700 series of the PACT Act manages leasing and includes various authorities, including raising the threshold for capital projects to \$3.1M without congressional approval. Mr. Montoya discussed the potential benefits of the PACT Act as it expands 38 USC 8103 with explicit authority to allow the VA to lease space from approved academic affiliate entities without competition. He provided an overview of the requirements and acquisition processes, including the responsibilities of the VA and the affiliate. All sole source leases, which can be renovation of existing affiliated owned or controlled buildings or new construction, must be based on VA need. VA needs may include clinic space, research space, or specialty care space. VA must identify the need, complete capital investment planning, and conduct market research. Mr. Montoya noted that various authorities in the 700 series can be combined, providing opportunities to secure space in new ways.

STRONG Veterans ACT Overview

Kimberly Falco, DNP, RN, Coach/Mentor, Registered Nurse Residency Programs, Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA), presented on STRONG Veterans Act Section 103 Expansion of Mental Health Training for VA. She briefed the Council on expanding mental health positions, including trainee positions, and planned future expansion of mental health. Ms. Falco discussed barriers experienced in the application process, including field interest and examination pass rate, and how OAA works to remove those barriers and aid facilities.

Russell Peal, Director, Workforce Recruitment and Retention Service, Workforce Management and Consulting (WMC), VHA, presented on STRONG Veterans Act Section 103 Expansion of Scholarships and Loan Repayment Programs for Mental Health Providers. Mr. Peal briefed us on each program and how WMC uses the programs in recruitment, stating that these programs are two vital tools the VA uses to recruit trainees to continue their careers with the VA after training.

Dr. Elster asked where primary care and non-specialized medicine fit into these programs because primary care physicians often manage mental health medication. Ms. Falco stated that requests for expanding covered professions in the STRONG Act were included in OAA's recommendation response, but those recommendations were not included in the final legislation.

In response to Dr. Kowalski's question about the number of physician assistant (PA) positions compared to nursing positions, Mr. Peal discussed how VHA's need for critical positions is prioritized with regional needs.

Public Comments

No public comments or questions.

Closing Remarks

Ms. Mitchell provided an overview of the upcoming in-person March 2024 NAAC meeting in Washington, D.C. She thanked members for their participating in the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM.

Prepared By: Nellie Mitchell, MS, RHIA, Designated Federal Officer, NAAC

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nellie N. Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N".

Certified By: Nellie Mitchell, MS, RHIA, Designated Federal Officer, NAAC

Appendix A: Attendance Records

Council members present:

Marjorie A. Bowman, MD, MPA (Ex-Officio), Chief Academic Affiliations Officer, Office of Academic Affiliations; Loretta Christensen, MD, MBA, MSJ, FACS (Ex-Officio) Chief Medical Officer, Indian Health Services; Eric Elster, MD, FACS, FRCSEng (Hon.), CAPT, MC, USN (Ret.), Dean, School of Medicine, Professor of Surgery, Uniformed Services University (Ex-Officio); Arthur Evans, Jr., PhD, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Vice President, American Psychological Association; David D. Henderson, MD, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Family Medicine and Associate Dean, Multicultural and Community Affairs, Connecticut School of Medicine; Maga Jackson-Triche, MD, MSHS, Assistant Vice Chancellor and Health Executive Advisor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), University of California San Francisco; Paul Jung, MD, MPH, FACPM (Ex-Officio), Captain, United States Public Health Service (USPHS), Director, Division of Medicine and Dentistry, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA); Meredith Wallace Kazer, PhD, CNL, APRN, A/GNP-BC, FAAN, Dean and Professor, Fairfield University School of Nursing; Timothy J. Kowalski, DO, D.FACN, Vice Provost for Professional and Public Relations, Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine; Ryan Lilly (Ex-Officio), Network Director, VISN 1; Christopher J. Loyke, DO, FACOFP, Dean and Chief Academic Officer, Lincoln Memorial University–DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine (LMU-DCOM); Christopher Robinson, MS, MBA, CPO, ATC, FAAOP(D), Clinical Resource Director, The National Commission on Orthotic & Prosthetic Education, Assistant Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Northwestern University's Prosthetics Orthotics Center; Kelly R. Ragucci, PharmD, FCCP, BCPS, Vice President, Professional Development, American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP); and Anthony M. Stazzone, MD, MBA, FACP (Ex-Officio), Network Chief Medical Officer, VA MidSouth Healthcare Network, VISN 9.

Council members unable to attend:

Susan Bakewell-Sachs, PhD, CRNP, Vice President (Nursing Affairs) and Dean, School of Nursing, Oregon Health and Science University; Deborah German, MD, Vice President for Health Affairs, Founding Dean, University of Central Florida College of Medicine; James E. K. Hildreth (Chair), PhD, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer, Department of Internal Medicine, Meharry Medical College; Thomas P. O'Toole, MD, Deputy Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services, Quality and Field Operations, VA; Elena V. Rios, MD, MSPH, FACP, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Hispanic Health Association; Alison J. Whelan, MD, Chief Medical Education Officer, Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC).

VHA Staff attending (all are OAA staff unless specified otherwise):

Larissa A. Emory, PMP, CBP, MS, Management and Program Analyst (Alternate Designated Federal Officer for the NAAC); Kimberly Falco, DNP, RN, Coach/Mentor - Registered Nurse Residency Programs; Jeannie Howard, Management Analyst; Leslie Hausmann, PhD, Associate Director and Equity Capacity Building Core Co-Director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion;

Ramona E. Joyce, Executive Officer; Nellie Mitchell, MS, RHIA, Program Analyst (Designated Federal Officer for the NAAC); Alfred Montoya, MHA, FACHE, VHA-CM, Deputy Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Support Services, VHA; Russell Peal, Director, Workforce Recruitment and Retention Service, WMC; and Cheryl Whitney, Public Affairs Specialist.

Members of the Public attending:

No members of the public attended.