

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Federal Advisory Committee
National Academic Affiliations Council (NAAC)
Meeting Minutes for June 29, 2023

Attendance: See Appendix A

Welcome and Announcements

Ms. Mitchell called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM. She briefed on the virtual meeting procedures before introducing the NAAC Chairman, Dr. James Hildreth.

Welcome and Introduction of New Members

Dr. James Hildreth, NAAC Chair, welcomed the NAAC members, VA staff, and members of the public. He announced Dr. Karen Sanders' retirement and thanked her for her years of VA service and participation in the NAAC. Dr. Bowman added her thanks to Dr. Sanders for her contribution to VA spanning over four decades.

EHRM Updates: CERNER and Health Professions Trainee Medical Record Access

Edward Walton, MD, Director, Medical Informatics Unit, OAA, provided a presentation on the status of the Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) efforts. The goal continues to be that every Health Professions Trainee (HPT) is fully onboarded, trained, provisioned, and ready to care for Veterans on day one of their VA experience. Since the issue was raised that HPTs were not adequately considered in the original CERNER designs and roll-out, a new Health Professions Trainee Council was created as part of the realignment of all EHRM councils with the Veterans Health Administration. It is under the oversight of Dr. Carolyn Clancy, the Assistant Undersecretary for Health for Discovery, Education, and Affiliate Networks (DEAN.) Also, two workgroups were created – the Day One Readiness Workgroup and the Documentation, Supervision, Data Management and Reporting Workgroup – to ensure that the pitfalls regarding HPTs in the EHR are identified, managed, and addressed appropriately in future planning. Dr. Walton also discussed information technology (IT) and security concerns, including the plan to disable IT accounts at 30 days, a 180-day PIV renewal requirement, and a Special Agreement Check (SAC) versus a tier-1 background check for trainees. All these concerns affect the ability of trainees to contribute to Veteran care in a timely and efficient manner.

Dr. Hildreth is concerned about the continued non-concurrence with the revised VA policies related to background checks and the duration of PIV activation. Dr. Walton stated that the security leadership within VA Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security, and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) has said that they are following the policies provided by the federal security agencies. OAA may require a waiver from the Secretary of the VA if this continues to be an issue.

Dr. Elster questioned the difficulty with oversight of PowerForm notes in Cerner. Dr. Walton explained that in CERNER, trainees can sign PowerForm notes without co-signature, which is against OAA policy. The process to document a supervisory provider review of a note created by a Powerform is much more complicated than the supervision of a note created through the usual documentation workflow. Mitigations to the PowerForm supervisory process are being designed.

Dr. Walton also reported that OAA and the Health Professions Training Council are working closely with the DoD on shared educational concerns within the overarching Federal Electronic Health Record Modernization project.

Mr. Robinson asked about present waiver requests to the Secretary regarding security requirements. Dr. Walton stated that VA is currently under a waiver for all trainees. HRA/OSP is trying to contest the maintenance of the waiver, which would require OAA to provide a solid justification to keep.

Dr. Walton gave a brief update on a new trainee onboarding system that received final approval for deployment across all sites last week. Initial feedback is positive.

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

Brian Melewski, Director, Office of Capital Asset Management, VHA, provided an overview 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 sections in the PACT Act deals with leasing and includes various authorities including raising threshold for capital projects to \$3.1M without needing congressional approval. Mr. Melewski discussed the potential benefits of PACT Act as it expands 38 USC 8103 with explicit authority to allow VA to lease space from approved academic affiliate entities without competition. He provided an overview of the requirements and acquisition processes, including the specific responsibilities of the VA and the affiliate. All sole source leases, which can be renovation of existing affiliate owned or controlled buildings or new construction of the same, must be based on VA need. VA need may include clinical, research, or specialty care space. VA must first identify the need, complete capital investment planning, and conduct market research. Mr. Melewski noted that various authorities in the 700 series can also be combined providing opportunities to secure space in new ways.

Dr. Rios recognized the increase in federally qualified clinics can provide teaching opportunities in graduate medical education and questioned how they are connected to community health centers. Mr. Melewski sees them as connected and hopes that this effort will help bridge that gap.

Dr. Christensen questioned the potential timeline from request to execution. Mr. Melewski stated that it depends on approval process. For example, if the space already exists, then it does not require congressional approval to build. If it is a full-build project, it would take approximately two years to design, approve, and begin construction. On a smaller scale, these projects can be executed in the current budget. Larger projects would require budget requests, which would take approximately two years.

Dr. Hildreth stressed the inclusion of academic research space. Mr. Melewski looks forward to further discussions with Dr. Hildreth regarding this initiative.

Mr. Melewski wants to focus efforts and requested suggestions from the members on whom they should engage. Dr. German suggested the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) at the Council of Dean's November annual business meeting.

MISSION Act Section 403 Overview & Update

Kanta Velamuri, MD, MEd, Associate Director, Medical and Dental Education, OAA, provided a presentation on status of MISSION Act, Section 403 implementation. Section 403 authorizes VA to establish a pilot program to place no fewer than 100 resident physicians at covered facilities using specific selection criteria. Covered facilities include those operated by Indian Health Service, Tribal organizations, federally qualified health centers, and DoD. The selection criteria focus on provider need and underserved areas. The proposed rule was published February 4, 2022; the public comment period closed on July 5, 2022. There were two new authorities in the proposed rules – reimbursement for resident time for delivering non-Veteran care in non-VA facilities, and reimbursement of startup costs for new residency programs at non-VA facilities. OAA has developed two courses of action for execution. The first is to reimburse local affiliates with existing graduate medical education programs to provide trainee rotations at those facilities. The second model is for VA to pay for all start-up costs to establish programs, which is a lengthier process. VA has received public comments, and the next step is publication of the Final Rule. After publication, part of the reporting requirements includes the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) clearance. OAA is projecting Request for Proposal (RFP) submissions by the end of this, or beginning of next, year.

Dr. Jung asked if the Teaching Health Center (THC) residency programs funded by Health Resource and Services Administration (HRSA) could be part of this effort and receive reimbursement from VA for participation. Dr. Bowman stated that the government cannot double-fund, but HRSA and VA could fund different portions of the resident costs. This would have to be explored further between the two agencies.

Brief Discussion Topics

Increasing Congress and Other Pertinent National Entities Awareness on the Role of VA in Training the Health Care Workforce: Dr. Kazer emphasized the VA training impact on the nursing field, and the positive outcome on workforce pathways. Dr. Elster stated that there is a DoD effort with academic health centers and would suggest VA to partner with DoD. Dr. German mentioned a new legislator orientation and there may be potential to provide educational material for that process. Dr. Bowman mentioned VA publications and the ongoing work to be recognized as an academic health care system.

Uniformed Services University Training for Designated Education Officers (DEOs): Dr. Patel stated that VA has partnered with DoD, creating an inter-service agreement to develop training for education leaders. This is a formal certification program. The inaugural class consists of 14 DEOs and will begin their curriculum in November.

Dr. Hildreth mentioned that the current administration recently announced the abolishment of affirmative action and asked for feedback from the members. Dr. Evans stated that most see this as a social and/or political issue, but the Council may need to refocus it on healthcare. Dr. Henderson stated that diversity is always difficult to defend, and workforce diversity is important for health equity, i.e., diversity is the outcome, but the goal is health equity. Dr. Bakewell-Sachs explained that the field of nursing has planned for months, expecting this decision, and anticipates that each institution will look over their admissions strategy to ensure that a diverse representation is maintained. Dr. German explained that the screening process under affirmative action does not lead to accepting unqualified applicants; diversity is only one aspect of selection. Dr. Jackson-Triche mentioned how the decision is politicized and that the Council needs to discuss how to move forward and become more creative and progressive to accomplish the same diversity goals in a different way. Messaging will be important in moving forward. Dr. Henderson recommended that the Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce Subcommittee bring this issue to their meeting for discussion and potential recommendation creation for NAAC consideration.

Administrative Information for September Face-to-Face Meeting: Ms. Mitchell announced that the fall face-to-face meeting will be held in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with a focus on MISSION Act, Section 403 discussion. More information to follow for travel and logistics.

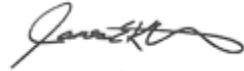
Public Comments

No public comments or questions.

Closing Remarks

Dr. Hildreth thanked members for their participation in the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 3:53 PM.

Prepared By: Nellie Mitchell, Designated Federal Officer, NAAC



Certified By: James E.K. Hildreth, PhD, MD, Chairman, NAAC

Appendix A: Attendance Records

Council members present:

Susan Bakewell-Sachs, PhD, CRNP, Vice President (Nursing Affairs) and Dean, School of Nursing, Oregon Health and Science University; Marjorie A. Bowman, MD, MPA, Chief Academic Affiliations Officer, Office of Academic Affiliations (Ex-Officio); Loretta Christensen, MD, MBA, MSJ, FACS, Chief Medical Officer, Indian Health Services (Ex-Officio); 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; Deborah German, MD, Vice President for Health Affairs, Founding Dean, University of Central Florida College of Medicine; David D. Henderson, MD, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Family Medicine and Associate Dean, Multicultural and Community Affairs, Connecticut School of Medicine; James E. K. Hildreth, PhD, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer, Department of Internal Medicine, Meharry Medical College (Chair); 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, Captain, United States Public Health Service (USPHS), Director, Division of Medicine and Dentistry, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) (Ex-Officio); 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; 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; 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; Anthony M. Stazzone, MD, MBA, FACP, Network Chief Medical Officer, VA MidSouth Healthcare Network, VISN 9 (Ex-Officio);.

Council members unable to attend:

Ryan Lilly, MPA, Network Director, VA New England Network, VISN 1 (Ex-Officio); Christopher J. Loyke, DO, FACOFP, Dean and Chief Academic Officer, Lincoln Memorial University–DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine (LMU-DCOM); Kelly R. Ragucci, PharmD, FCCP, BCPS, Vice President, Professional Development, American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP); and 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); Ramona E. Joyce, Executive Officer; Nellie Mitchell, MS, RHIA, Program Analyst (Designated Federal Officer for the NAAC); Erin Patel, PsyD, ABPP, Executive Director, Health Professions Education; Kanta Velamuri, MD, MEd, Associate Director, Graduate Medical and Dental Education; and Edward Walton, MD, Director, Medical Informatics Unit.

Presenters:

Brian Melewski, Director, Office of Capital Asset Management, VHA.

Members of the Public attending:

Christopher Jarvis, MD, Indian Health Services; Sheila Duffy, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine; Sidath Viranga Panangala, Congressional Research Service; Michelle Wynveen, Calumet County WI Veterans Service Office.