VA Diversity Council (VADC) Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2014, 1:00-3:00 pm

VACO, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Conference Room 830

1. Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for the Office of Diversity & Inclusion (ODI) and VADC Co-Chair, welcomed attendees, provided opening remarks, and introduced Karen Basnight, Director for Outreach and Retention, ODI.
2. Ms. Coffey led VADC operations:
	1. July 16, 2014, VADC meeting minutes approved.
	2. Yvonne Rannels, ODI, provided an update on the Secretary’s Fourth Annual Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards. The finalists have been approved but it has not yet been confirmed that they have been notified by their leadership. Once this occurs, the Council will be notified of the winners’ identities. The individuals who served as members of the Screening and Judging Committees were thanked for their service. *Follow-up: Read more about the winners and their accomplishments online at* [*http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/sec-awards.aspx*](http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/sec-awards.aspx)*.*
	3. The Council’s biennial report to the Secretary has been drafted. That draft was included as a handout to the meeting. Members were given one week to review the draft and action plan and to provide comments to Ms. Rannels. *Follow-up: The VADC Biennial Report has been entered into VAIQ for the Secretary’s review and signature.*
3. Michael Youngblood, ODI, provided an update on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Committee and the GLMA Conference. It was requested that a Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) representative be identified to address Veteran questions. *Follow-up: Nancy Hogan has been identified as the VBA point of contact for this Committee.*  Attendees were reminded that any local benefits specialist should be familiar with benefits questions but for those individuals not comfortable with addressing any issue face-to-face, there is a shared LGBT e-mail group that can respond to inquiries. *Follow-up: The e-mail address for the LGBT box is* *LGBTWorkgroup@va.gov**.* Mr. Youngblood also shared that this is the first year that the All Employee Survey collected and will report on LGBT statistics.
4. Rachel Brant, Office of General Counsel (OGC), provided a briefing on same-sex Veteran spousal benefits. *Follow-up: The web page address for VA benefits and services information for married couples is* [*http://www.va.gov/opa/marriage*](http://www.va.gov/opa/marriage)*.*
5. Carolyn Wong provided a briefing on the Office of Special Counsel’s (OSC’s) 2302(c) Certification Program. OSC certified VA on October 3, 2014. Ms. Wong thanked OGC, the VA Learning University (VALU), the Office of Information Technology and the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for their roles in ensuring that VA received this certification. *Follow-up: ODI is scheduled in January to brief the National Partnership Council on this program.*
6. The Council discussed the FEVS and how the survey results are shared in a transparent, objective way. ODI will be analyzing the demographics responses and report on these. It was requested that the Council be briefed on how the AES results are being examined.
7. The Council discussed the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program that has been certified by the Office of Personnel Management. ODI and VALU have partnered with the African American Federal Executive Association (AAFEA), and Asian American Government Executives Network (AAGEN) on a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a mutually beneficial partnership that fosters coordination, collaboration, and resource sharing between VA, AAFEA, and AAGEN to support their respective missions and to achieve the parties’ common aim of increasing diversity in the federal leadership candidate pool. It was requested that the Council be provided an updated from the Corporate Senior Executive Management Office on the status of VA’s efforts to ensure diversity in its leadership.
8. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for January 21, 2015.