VA Diversity Council (VADC) Meeting Minutes

January 15, 2014, 1:15-3:15 pm

VACO, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Conference Room 830

1. Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Diversity & Inclusion (ODI) and VADC Co-Chair, introduced Gina S. Farrisee, VA’s new Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration and VADC Co-Chair.
2. Ms. Farrisee provided opening remarks and discussed VA’s I CARE (Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence) values.
3. Ms. Coffey introduced attendees in the room including Loucious Hires, the new Director of Outreach and Retention in VA’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), and Lester Stephens, a new member of ODI’s Training and Communications Team who is working on VA’s guidance on religious expression in the workplace.
4. Ms. Coffey led VADC operations:
   1. July 17, 2013, VADC meeting minutes approved.
   2. Thomas Middleton, Analyst, Workforce Analysis, ODI, reported on the development of VA’s Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2013. The purpose of the report is to chronicle the Department‘s progress toward realizing the goals of VA’s Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, in alignment with VA’s Strategic Plan for 2011–2015. A copy of the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan is available online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/plan.aspx>. The Annual Report will provide a comprehensive view of the state of the agency with respect to workforce diversity and workplace inclusion with relevant accomplishments and initiatives identified for each administration and staff office within VA. A copy of the FY 2012 report is available at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/diar.aspx>.
5. Andre Castillo, MyCareer@VA Interim Program Manager, introduced the MyCareer@VA/ODI Pilot Program. Marni Mankuta, Consultant, MyCareer@VA, gave an update on the program. ODI partnered with VALU to target employees in pay levels at and below GS-9/equivalent and in wage grade positions who wish to progress in their field or move to a new field. This pilot program utilized cutting-edge career development tools and resources offered through MyCareer@VA and provided employees with knowledge and resources that can be used to achieve their career goals at VA. VADC members suggested that MyCareer@VA needed a better communications campaign. VADC members also asked MyCareer@VA to look at how Disabled Veterans in wage grade housekeeping positions could be helped.
6. Melissa Gibson, VA’s Acting National Disability Employment Program Manager, ODI, reported on the Secretary’s Employment Goals for Individuals with Targeted Disabilities (<http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#library-goal>), VA Handbook 5975.1 (<http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/files/pwd/Handbook_5975-1.pdf>), Centralized Funding for Accommodations for VA Employees with Disabilities (<http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#fund>), and the training schedule for Processing Requests for Reasonable Accommodation from Employees and Applicants with Disabilities (TMS: VA 3868350). \*According to VA’s Centralized Fund Memorandum dated January 9, 2014, facility modifications are to be paid for out of facility funds. These are not reimbursable expenses through the Centralized Fund.
7. Kelley Carameli, Health Science Specialist, National Center for Organization Development (NCOD), discussed “Exploring Disparate Perceptions on Diversity in the VA Workforce and SES 2013 Rich Narrative Report: Subset of VA Population.” Through site-based focus groups and interviews with senior staff, the Diversity Fairness Perception Study sought to:
   1. Explore perceived gender differences in employee satisfaction.
   2. Understand racial differences in employee satisfaction.
   3. Explore the relationship between the increasing White, non-Hispanic employee population and declining employee satisfaction among other demographic groups.
   4. Explore the discrepancy across Administrations of retention intentions and work/family balance of female employees compared to their male coworkers.

Carolyn Wong, Director, Training and Communications, ODI, discussed strategies to address the findings of the NCOD report. Ms. Farrisee charged the VADC with formulating more specific strategies. \*ODI distributed the final report to VADC members on 1/31 and called for volunteers to join the VADC Emerging Issues Committee which is addressing this charge.

1. The Administration representatives presented their Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan annual reports:
   1. David Rabb, Director, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Diversity and Inclusion Office, presented for VHA.
   2. Perdita Johnson-Abercrombie, National Cemetery Administration (NCA) EEO Manager, presented for NCA.
   3. Johnny Logan, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Office of Diversity Management & EEO, presented for VBA.
2. Meeting adjourned at 3:15 pm. The next meeting is scheduled to be held April 16, 2013.