**VA Diversity Council (VADC) Meeting Minutes**

March 7, 2012, 1-3 pm

VACO, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Conference Room 830

1. Introductions by Tinisha Agramonte, Director of Outreach and Retention, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, ODI, for Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for ODI, and VADC Co-chair.
2. Welcome by John Sepúlveda, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration (HR&A), and VADC Co-chair who discussed the following and highlighted the VADC’s progress in some of these areas:
   1. The VADC Biennial Report was signed off by the Secretary January 2012. Handout (electronic version of the signed report) provided.
   2. VA is on track to submit the revised Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) by the March 16th deadline.
   3. OPM's Office of Diversity and Inclusion is collaborating with ODI and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to develop diversity and inclusion indices and to make them standard metrics for all Federal Agencies.
   4. Hispanic employment.
   5. Two Percent Hiring Goal for People with Targeted Disabilities:
      1. As of January 31, 2012, VA exceeded the Secretary's two percent hiring goal for people with a targeted disability.
      2. More work to be done in the areas of Veteran hiring.
   6. Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP): VA has established a goal to hire at least 20 college students and recent graduates with disabilities as summer interns. Handout (memo and form) provided.
   7. 600 Veterans received tentative job offers as a result of the VA Hiring Fair.
3. Remarks by Ralph Torres, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for HR&A, and Alternate VADC Co-chair who discussed:
   1. Encouraged all present to assist with overcoming the FTE barriers to ensure greater WRP participation.
   2. People with disabilities and disabled Veterans leaving VA at a higher-than-expected rate. It was suggested that VA look further into the types of jobs these individuals held in VA, exit interviews, and performing adverse impact analysis.
4. It was noted that the Office of the Secretary believes the Council needs to do better on meeting suspense dates for documents requiring the Secretary’s signature/approval in the areas of diversity and inclusion.
5. December 7, 2011, VADC Meeting Minutes approved. There was more discussion on whether Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a targeted disability. Earl Newsome III noted that if PTSD is considered a “severe intellectual disability” (and is therefore a targeted disability) this is incongruent with OPM Form 256, Self-Identification of Disability. It was noted that VA may be losing credit towards the two percent hiring goal of people with a targeted disability. There was discussion of resurveying VA’s current workforce using Form 256. Only those hired under Schedule A must report their disability. Handout (draft minutes) provided.
6. Yvonne Rannels, ODI, led a discussion on the Secretary’s Third Annual Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards Program:
   1. ODI is coordinating with the Office of Resolution Management (ORM) to hold a joint awards ceremony in conjunction with the ADR Excellence Awards Program for the same time as last year (October).
   2. The criteria will align with VA’s newly-revised Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.
   3. There was discussion as to expanding the award categories to include one winner in each of the current categories (Manager/Supervisor, Nonsupervisory Employee, and Team) from each Administration.[[1]](#footnote-1)
   4. It was recommended that more than three individuals serve on the Screening and Judging Committees.
   5. So as to be inclusive, it was recommended that Screening and Judging Committee members do not have to be members of the VADC (but ODI would rely on VADC members to identify who these individuals will be).
   6. It was recommended that only members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) serve on the Judging Committee. [[2]](#footnote-2)
   7. It was recommended that there should not be a time limit on previous award winners before they may reapply.[[3]](#footnote-3)
   8. ODI will send out an email detailing the duties of Screening/Judging Committee members and requesting that VADC members identify Screening/Judging Committee members from their respective Administration/Staff Office.
7. Maxanne Witkin, Director of the Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication, discussed trends in findings. Handout (slides) provided.
8. Rosa Franco Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for ORM introduced the Executive Dashboard. Denise Bryant, Director of Executive Operations, ORM, provided a demonstration of the Executive Dashboard.
9. Dennis May, Acting Deputy Director for the Veteran Employment Services Office, provided an update on VA for Vets. Handout (slides) provided.
10. Arlene Gonzalez, Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist, ODI, was unable to complete her update on VA’s Hispanic Employment Program. She will complete her presentation at the beginning of the next meeting. Handout (slides) provided.
11. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm. The next meeting will be held June 6, 2012.[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. To preserve the understanding that these are the Secretary’s awards rather than Administration awards, Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for ODI and VADC Co-chair, decided that the award awards categories will remain the same. The Secretary will recognize one winner only in each of the three categories: Manager/Supervisor, Nonsupervisory Employee, and Team. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ms. Coffey decided that each committee should have at least five members (one from each Administration and two from the Staff Offices). Each Administration will have to identify two individuals: one SES to serve on the Judging Committee and one other individual to serve on the Screening Committee. Also, due to a conflict in interest, the members identified CANNOT be those individuals who will be receiving award nominations for their Administration (last year this was the staff of VHA’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion and members of the VBA and NCA Office of Diversity Management and EEO). Finally, Ms. Coffey decided that only members of the SES would serve on the Judging Committee and at least one member of the SES would serve on the Screening Committee. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ms. Coffey decided that prior recipients of the Secretary’s Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards must wait until one complete awards program cycle has concluded before they are eligible for nomination in ANY category. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Other handouts provided: National Diversity Internship Program (NDIP) memo and updated roster. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)