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

April 17, 2013, 1-3 pm

VACO, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Conference Room 830

1. Introductions of attendees in person and on the phone by Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Diversity & Inclusion (ODI) and VADC Co-Chair.
2. Diversity Council Operations by Ms. Coffey.
   1. January 16, 2013, VADC Meeting Minutes approved.
   2. ODI Updates:
      1. The winners of the Secretary’s Third Annual Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards were approved by the Secretary; congratulations to the Veterans Health Administration.
      2. Management Directive 715 was published and will be made available online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/reports.aspx>.
      3. VA’s Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report was published and will be made available online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/diar.aspx>.
      4. The call for quarterly accomplishments (January through Mar 2013) for the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan can be expected shortly via email from Brenda A. Martin, ODI.
      5. VA Directive 5975 was revised and is available online at <http://www.va.gov/vapubs/search_action.cfm?dType=1>; handbooks pending. Changes include:
         1. Change the name of the VA’s Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI).
         2. Update and align VA’s Diversity and Inclusion policy and programs with the Government-wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan under Executive Order (EO) 13583, and reflect VA’s Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan goals to: build workforce diversity, cultivate workplace inclusion, and facilitate outstanding public service through education and accountability.
         3. Designate the Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for ODI as the VA Chief Diversity Officer in accordance with EO 13583 and describe the role and responsibilities of ODI.
         4. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of Administrations and Staff Office officials, and their respective Equal Employment Opportunity or Diversity and Inclusion Offices.
         5. Establish new programs and initiatives to address emerging diversity and inclusion issues including, but not limited to, the VA Diversity Council; the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender special emphasis program; and Diversity and Inclusion training.
      6. Updates are being made to the Secretary’s EEO, Diversity and Inclusion, and No FEAR Policy. The major updates are in the area of Workplace Harassment, No FEAR/Whistleblower Protection. New Information Added: Prohibited Personnel Practices and Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 and Section 508. Administrations are expected to use the Secretary’s Policy as is but they may use a cover memo.
      7. Updates are being made to EEO, Diversity, and Conflict Management Training for Managers and Supervisors. The major update is the addition of two new sections: Disability Employment Program (Reasonable Accommodation & Schedule A) and Cultural Competency section added to the Diversity and Inclusion module.
3. Yvonne Rannels, ODI, reported on the Secretary’s Third Annual Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards Program.
   1. The Secretary has approved the winners. They are:
      1. In the Manager/Supervisor category: Dr. Rory A. Cooper, VA Senior Research Career Scientist and Director, Human Engineering Research Laboratories, VA Center of Excellence in Wheelchairs and Associated Rehabilitation Engineering at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.
      2. In the Nonsupervisory Employee category: Dr. Laura Johnson, Clinical Psychologist, Director of Diversity Services, and Transgender Liaison, who was nominated for various reasons including her work in promoting cultural competency and diversity at the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital in Bedford, Massachusetts.
      3. In the Team category: Truman VA’s Equal Employment Opportunity Committee at the Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans’ Hospital in Columbia, Missouri. The members are: Machelle Dykstra, Leigh Anne Fleck, Vicki J. Freelon, L. Stephen Gaither, James E. Grady, Sara Hake, Veronica Ramnarine, Darlayna Scott, Annette Velasco, Michael E. Whittier, and Paula D. Williams.
   2. This team and these individuals will each be recognized with an awards plaque on location at the awardee’s duty station.
   3. Ms. Rannels extended her thanks to those Council members who served as screeners and judges for these awards. ODI will be calling for volunteers from each Administration and the staff offices for the next awards cycle. VADC members are encouraged to consider this opportunity when that time arises.
4. Ms. Coffey led a discussion on VADC membership. The Secretary’s office has proposed that Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Staff Office Heads would be designated as the primary representative for their respective organizations; alternate representatives may act and speak on their behalf at these meetings. A few options were proposed including continuing with the current body and (1) inviting senior leaders either (a) to an annual meeting or (b) as needed as decisions need to be made or (2) securing time to discuss VADC matters during a recurring senior leadership meeting. It was recommended that the meeting platform would have to be changed (from current quarterly two hour meetings) if senior leaders would be expected to participate on this body regularly. **ACTION ITEM:** **ODI will issue a formal data call to obtain more specific recommendations from current members.**
5. Carolyn Wong, Director, Training and Communications, ODI, and Kelley Carameli, Health Science Specialist, National Center for Organization Development (NCOD), discussed the Diversity Fairness Perception Study.
   1. At the Emerging Issues Committee’s request, NCOD was commissioned to produce an analytic report that provided an initial overview of the impact of gender, race, and ethnicity in shaping VA employee perceptions about their job satisfaction and workplace climate. NCOD’s initial commissioned study (December 2011) identified gender and race/ethnicity differences within VA.
   2. The Diversity Fairness Perception Study seeks 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.
   3. ODI obtained funding to proceed with the optimal option as voted on by VADC voting members.
   4. ODI is working with LMR to notify the Unions of the study; Unions have 30 days to comment on the proposed interview and focus group questions and procedures.
   5. VADC Emerging Issues Committee members have reviewed the proposed interview and focus group questions and procedures.
   6. Ms. Carameli discussed her needs for VADC members to assist in paving the way for the NCOD team to conduct interviews and focus group session in the field. **The NCOD team judiciously selected the following proposed sites for the focus groups: Washington, DC (VACO, NCACO, VBACO, VHA VAMC); Houston, Texas (VHA VAMC, VBA RO, NCA); Seattle, Washington (VHA HCS, VBA RO); St. Petersburg, Florida (VBA RO); Tampa, Florida (VHA VAMC); Los Angeles, California (VHA West Los Angeles HCS, VBA RO); Riverside, California (NCA); and Chicago, Illinois (VHA FHCC North Chicago, VBA RO).**
6. Arlene Gonzalez, National Hispanic Employment Program Manager, ODI, announced that the VA Hispanic Employment, Outreach and Retention Strategic Plan was published and is now available online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/hispanic.aspx>. Ms. Gonzalez also reminded members that she holds monthly Hispanic Employment Program Manager teleconferences. Email her at [Arlene.Gonzalez@va.gov](mailto:Arlene.Gonzalez@va.gov) for more information.
7. Nanese Loza, EEO Specialist, ODI, provided an update on the Corporate Recruitment Outreach Group Committee. The Charter is being finalized. Ms. Loza reports this initiative has been successful thus far in ensuring that the Department is fiscally responsible and that individual VA offices are not duplicating efforts in conducting outreach at events such as the upcoming Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) Conference.
8. Bruce Gipe, Director, Office of Management, Planning and Analysis, Board of Veterans’ Appeals, presented a briefing on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Workgroup. Mr. Gipe reported that the email [LGBTWorkgroup@va.gov](mailto:LGBTWorkgroup@va.gov) is receiving an overwhelming number of inquiries from both from VA employees and Veterans. This email address is posted on the ODI internet at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/lgbt.aspx>. It was noted that the Office of Resolution Management does manage the Resolution Support Center to handle external complaints. These complaints are tracked through VAIQ until closure. **ACTION ITEM: The motion was made and passed with no opposition to recommend to leadership to establish a team or unit to address LGBT Veteran and employee concerns.**
9. David Williams, Director, Workforce Analysis, ODI, presented a briefing on the State of the Agency, summarizing the accomplishments of VA’s fiscal year (FY) 2012 EEO program, and the FY 2013 EEO planned projects/activities, which is contained in the VA-wide Memorandum Directive 715 Report. This is the final draft of the briefing to be presented to the Secretary, planned for late May 2013.
10. Christine Kluh, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Corporate Senior Executive Management Office (CSEMO), presented a briefing on Delegation of Authority for Details – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Memorandum dated March 27, 2013l, and CSEMO Letter No. 006-13-1, SES Selections dated March 5, 2013.
11. Thomas Middleton, Analyst, ODI, presented a briefing on applicant flow:
    1. Except for White women, all historically underrepresented groups have higher application rates than their Civilian Labor Force (CLF) measures.
    2. Selection rates for all groups higher than CLF except for White men and women.
    3. VA is doing well with Veterans recruitment and hiring.
    4. While Blacks and Hispanics are selected at rates higher than CLF, a statistically valid difference from application rates exists.
12. Ron Sagudan, President, VA FAPAC Chapter, informed the VADC that FAPAC will hold its 28th National Leadership Training Conference on May 6-10, 2013, in Long Beach, California. There will be a no-cost VA Agency Forum on Monday, May 6.
13. Meeting adjourned at 3:10 pm. The next meeting is scheduled to be held July 17, 2013.