VA Diversity Council (VADC) Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2014, 1:00-3:00 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, welcomed attendees and provided opening remarks.
2. Ms. Coffey led VADC operations:
   1. January 15, 2014, VADC meeting minutes approved.
   2. Yvonne Rannels, ODI, provided an update on the Secretary’s Fourth Annual Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards. The call memo for nominations was included as one of the handouts. Nominations are due to ODI on June 13, 2014. Ms. Rannels reminded VADC members that each Administration and Staff Office needed to nominate two representatives: one representative for the Screening Committee and one senior executive for the Judging Committee.
3. Michael Youngblood, ODI, provided an update on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Committee, the draft LGBT Workgroup Charter, and the VA Central Office LGBT Pride Month event scheduled for June 12, 2014.
4. Carolyn Wong, ODI, provided an update on the Emerging Issues in Diversity and Inclusion Committee and strategies and actions to address findings identified in the National Center for Organization Development Study, “Exploring Disparate Perceptions of Fairness and Empowerment by Gender and Race/Ethnicity within the VA Workforce and SES”. The Emerging Issues Committee met once since the last quarterly meeting. Committee members determined that is was necessary to brief VA executive leadership on this study.
5. Grace Spence and Ron Sagudan, VA Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) Chapter Representatives, provided a briefing on the VA Chapter of the Federal Asian Pacific American Council and promoted their initiatives including FAPAC White House Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Challenge Team Pilot, Career Development for Higher Performers Mentoring Program, and Business Advisory Partnership and their awards including the FAPAC Military Meritorious Award, the FAPAC Civilian Award, and the FAPAC Scholarship for Public Service.
6. Thomas Middleton, ODI, presented the State of the Agency, summarizing the accomplishments of VA's fiscal year (FY) 2013 Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program, and the FY 2013 EEO planned projects/activities, which is contained in the VA-wide Memorandum Directive 715 Report. This was presented to the Secretary on June 16, 2014. Ms. Coffey reported on the existence of a workgroup focused on disciplinary actions taken against those managers/supervisors who have been found to discriminate. This workgroup is no longer in existence since the final product has been delivered (that memo was included as a handout for the July 2014 meeting).
7. Dr. Sarah Scott, ODI, provided a briefing on correlating diversity and inclusion to organizational performance and a pilot study ODI is conducting with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). VBA was selected for this pilot study due to the availability of highly organized data sets.
8. Lester Stephens, ODI, provided a briefing on the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s “Religious Garb and Grooming in the Workplace: Rights and Responsibilities” and accompanying fact sheet, and on “Guidance for Language Use by Employees in the Department of Veterans Affairs”.
9. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm. The next meeting is scheduled to be held July 16, 2014.