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

July 17, 2013, 1-3 pm

VACO, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Conference Room 830

I. 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. II. Diversity Council Operations by Ms. Coffey.

a. April 17, 2013, VADC Meeting Minutes approved.

b. Ms. Coffey updated the Council on the status of the call for new members. On April 26, ODI distributed an email to VADC members requesting their feedback on a former member of VA leadership’s proposal 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. ODI did not receive enough responses to indicate interest in this type of change. ODI will proceed by requesting the Secretary to distributing a call memo asking for VA Administration and Staff Offices to identify new representatives or to reaffirm their current representatives.

c. Carolyn Wong, Director, Training and Communications, ODI, reported that the call for quarterly accomplishments (April through June 2013) for the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan can be expected shortly via email from Brenda A. Martin, ODI.

III. Ms. Wong and Kelley Carameli, Health Science Specialist, National Center for Organization

Development (NCOD), discussed the Diversity Fairness Perception Study.

a. 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.

b. Through site-based focus groups and interviews with senior staff, 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.

c. The study is currently about ½ complete. Ms. Carameli estimates that the draft report will be available before the next Council meeting in October.

d. The group discussed religion in VA ceremonies and email and phone salutations.

**Michael Hogan, Assistant General Counsel, will talk with Will Gunn and try to get an opinion on this matter.**

e. The group discussed employee perceptions about the fairness of hiring processes and favoritism. Ms. Coffey reminded the Council the Recruitment and Selection Best

Practices Guide is available online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/rsg.aspx>.

IV. Kenneth Hunter, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Program Manager, reported on the VA Central Office LGBT Pride Month Event. Mr. Hunter reported that the LGBT

Committee submitted a question to NCOD as to whether the ability to self-identify could be added to the All Employee Survey (AES). This question was already added to the demographics portion of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

V. Ms. Coffey provided an update on the motion that was made to establish a team/unit to address

LGBT Veteran and Employee Concerns. Joshua Mayer, General Attorney, Office of the General

Counsel, briefed on the “Defense of Marriage Act VA Policy Work Group White Paper for The

Secretary of Veterans Affairs.”

VI. Erin Andrews, Supervisor-Benefits, Office of Human Resources Management, discussed the U.S.

Office of Personnel documents: “Memorandum on the Guidance on the Extension of Benefits to Married Gay and Lesbian Federal Employees, Annuitants, and Their Families” and “Benefits Administration Letter: Coverage of Same-Sex Spouses.”

VII. Dr. Uchenna Uchendu, Chief, Office of Health Equity, provided a briefing on the Office of Health Equity (OHE) and on the results of the 2013 Healthcare Equality Index (HEI). Following the meeting, Lisa Red, Director, CCC OHE, shared the following web pages as requested: OHE SharePoint: [http://vaww.vha.vaco.portal.va.gov/SITES/OHE/Pages/Default.aspx,](http://vaww.vha.vaco.portal.va.gov/SITES/OHE/Pages/Default.aspx) OHE LGBT Inclusion Initiatives: <http://vaww.vha.vaco.portal.va.gov/sites/OHE/Pages/LGBT.aspx>, HEI Survey Results: [http://vaww.vha.vaco.portal.va.gov/sites/OHE/CCC/Shared%20Documents/HEI.aspx.](http://vaww.vha.vaco.portal.va.gov/sites/OHE/CCC/Shared%20Documents/HEI.aspx)

VIII. Carolyn Williams, Diversity Training Specialist, ODI, discussed the updates 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.

IX. Ms. Williams discussed the updates made to the mandatory EEO, Diversity, and Conflict Management Training for Managers and Supervisors. Revisions include updates on EEO laws and regulations, VA’s Disability Employment Program (Schedule A Hiring Process and Reasonable Accommodation), and understanding cultural competence and leveraging diversity for the best organizational performance. SES/Title 38, managers and supervisors have until September 20, 2013, to complete this course to meet the biennial requirement as directed in Secretary Shinseki’s EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Policy Statement issued May 31, 2013. TMS administrators should assign TMS Course # 1328672 (DVA-017) to the learning plans of SES/Title 38, managers and supervisors.

X. David Williams, Director, Workforce Analysis, announced training offered by ODI staff on the Veterans Health Administration's Support Service Center (VSSC) Human Resources (HR) Reporting Tools and Barrier Analysis.

XI. New Business

a. Renaee Allen, President, VA Blacks in Government (BIG) Chapter, informed the VADC

that BIG will hold its 35th Annual National Training Institute (NTI) from August 19–22,

2013, at the Hilton Anatole in Dallas, Texas. ODI, in collaboration with the BIG VA Headquarters Chapter, will present a no-cost VA Agency Forum on Tuesday, August 20,

2013, from 8 to 10 a.m.

b. ODI and MyCareer@VA are conducting a joint pilot to target up to GS9 for employees who believe they are experiencing barriers.

c. It was suggested that Veterans status be added as a demographic question on the AES.

XII. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm. The next meeting is scheduled to be held October 16, 2013.