Diversity and Inclusion in VA Council (DIVAC) Meeting Minutes

July 18, 2018, 1:30-3:00 pm

VACO, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Conference Room 830

1. Mr. Nathan Maenle, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, and Mr. Harvey Johnson, DIVAC Co-Chair and Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for the Offices of Resolution Management (ORM) and Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), welcomed attendees.
   1. The April 18, 2018, DIVAC meeting minutes were approved without objection.
   2. Ms. Yvonne Rannels, Training and Communications, ODI, provided an update on the Secretary’s Seventh Annual Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards Program. The nomination period is now closed. ODI received a number of nominations in each of the awards categories and across all three Administrations and some Staff Offices. DIVAC members were thanked for their participation. Next, nominations will be reviewed by the Screening Committee and finally the Judging Committee before winners are recommended to the Secretary. Committees include representatives from each Administration identified by Council members. This year, Union representation was invited to participate on the Screening Committee as result of the inquiry made at the last Council meeting. *\*Following this meeting, the Union representative did not serve on the Screening Committee this year.* Ms. Rannels anticipates that ODI is on track to hold a joint awards ceremony with the ADR Excellence Awards Program later this year. Ms. Perdita Johnson-Abercrombie, Regional Director, ORM, discussed the Secretary’s Seventh Annual Alternative Dispute Resolution Excellence Awards Program.
   3. Mr. Johnson discussed the possibility of an Outstanding Bystander Award to highlight the actions of those VA employees who speak out against harassment. Some DIVAC members expressed their preference to leverage existing recognition programs such as I CARE.
   4. Ms. Jolisa Dudley, Acting Settlement Chief, was not available to discuss VA's Settlement Program; the topic will be postponed to a future Council meeting.
   5. Mr. Johnson discussed the Harassment Prevention Training Video produced by ORM and ODI now available on VA’s Talent Management System.
   6. Mr. Johnson discussed the draft Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy Guidelines and the Secretary’s Annual EEO, Diversity and Inclusion, No FEAR, and Whistleblower Rights and Protection Policy Statement.\* *Following this meeting, the EEO Policy was revised, signed and reissued by the Secretary on August 27 and made available online at* [*https://www.diversity.va.gov/policy/files/EEO\_Policy\_Statement.pdf*](https://www.diversity.va.gov/policy/files/EEO_Policy_Statement.pdf)*.*
   7. There was discussion about VA’s Harassment Prevention Program (HPP) and the associated handbook currently in development. The question was raised as to what happens in VA when harassment is substantiated. Mr. Maenle clarified that sexual harassment is not tolerated in VA and encouraged attendees to review the July 17 House Veterans Affairs Committee testimony available online at <https://veterans.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=2212>.
2. The Council was provided briefings on several White House Initiatives:
   1. Mr. Johnson and Dr. Anne-Marie Duncan, Acting Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary, ORM, discussed the Federal Interagency Reentry Council (FIRC) and VA’s role in ensuring that Veterans are provided employment assistance and in preventing recidivism. *\*Following this meeting, the FIRC placemat discussed will be distributed to the Council.*
   2. Ms. Ruby Harvey, Chancellor, Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy (VAAA); Mr. Jim Woods, Director of Enterprise Shared Services, VAAA; and Ms. Erika Kennedy, Program Manager for Business Development, VAAA, presented VAAA’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) initiatives.
   3. Karen Sanders MD, Acting Chief Academic Affiliations Officer, and Kathleen Klink MD, FAAFP, Acting Deputy Chief Academic Affiliations Officer, discussed the Veterans Health Administration Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) and partnerships with HBCU and other minority-serving academic institutions.
   4. Mr. Johnson discussed VA efforts to advance HBCUs.
   5. Ms. Tynnetta Lee, VA's National Black Employment Program Manager, ODI, discussed the status of VA's Strategic Plan and Agency Report. *\*The Plan and Report were signed by the Acting Secretary on July 27.*
   6. There was discussion on how VA can tell if Veterans and Disabled Veterans are hired after going through the types of training programs discussed. Mr. Robert Waltemeyer agreed to look into the type of information VBA collects from schools such as HBCU that are required to collect such information under Title IX and GI Bill activities.
3. Ms. Nanese Loza provided updates on VA’s Disabilities Program, including VA Handbook 5975.1, Processing Requests for Reasonable Accommodation from Employees and Applicants with Disabilities, which expires in November 2018; the Selective Placement Program/Schedule A; and the draft VA Handbook Section 504 which requires accessibility of VA services and benefits to customers.
4. Mr. Keith Kirkpatrick, Management/Program Analyst, ORM, discussed the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and VA’s Submission of the FY 2019 Statutory Report of Federal Civil Rights Efficacy Review.
5. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm. The next meeting will be held October 17, 2018.