



Association of  
American Medical Colleges  
2450 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037-1127  
T 202 828 0663 F 202 862 6021  
www.aamc.org

Jordan J. Cohen, M.D.  
President Emeritus

September 8, 2014

The Honorable Robert McDonald  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

It is with great pleasure that I submit the minutes from the National Academic Affiliations Council's meeting held via conference call on July 24, 2014. The Council is impressed with VA's dedication in bolstering external relationships and partnerships to expand national training programs. The Council also applauds VA's leadership role in promoting the expansion of primary care and interprofessional education and practice. In order to further strengthen VA's national leadership in clinical education, the Council makes the recommendations contained in the attached minutes.

We look forward to your feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jordan J. Cohen".

Jordan J. Cohen, MD (Chair)  
VA National Academic  
Affiliations Council

Enclosure

CC: Carolyn M. Clancy, MD

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
Federal Advisory Committee  
National Academic Affiliations Council (NAAC)  
Meeting Minutes July 24, 2014**

**Conference Call - 11:00am – 1:00 pm**

**Council members present:** Jordan J. Cohen, MD, (Chair), President Emeritus, Association of American Medical Colleges; Geraldine D. Bednash, PhD, RN, FAAN, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, American Association of Colleges of Nursing; Malcolm Cox, MD (Retired) Chief Academic Affiliations Officer; David M. Irby, PhD, Professor of Medicine and former Vice Dean for Education, University of California San Francisco School of Medicine; Darrell G. Kirch, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer, Association of American Medical Colleges; Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; Kathleen A. Long, PhD, RN, FAAN, (Retired) Associate Provost and Dean, School of Nursing, University of Florida; Michael F. Mayo-Smith, MD, MPH, (Ex-Officio), Director, New England Healthcare Network (VISN 1), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; Claire Pomeroy, MD, MBA, President, Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation; Stephen C. Shannon, DO, MPH, President, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine.

**Council members unable to attend:** Norman B. Anderson, PhD, Chief Executive Officer, American Psychological Association; David W. Gorman, (Retired) Executive Director, Disabled American Veterans National Service and Legislative Headquarters; J. Lloyd Michener, MD, Chair, Department of Community and Family Medicine, Duke University School of Medicine; Wayne J. Riley, MD, MPH, MBA, MACP, Senior Advisor, Association of Academic Health Centers, Professor of Internal Medicine, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.

**VHA Office of Academic Affiliations staff attending:** Barbara K. Chang, MD, MA, FACP, Director, Medical & Dental Education; Gloria Holland, PhD, MBA, (Designated Federal Official for the NAAC), Special Assistant for Policy & Planning; Robert L. Jesse, MD, PhD, Chief OAA; William J. Marks, Jr., MD, Chief, Health Professions Education; Karen M. Sanders, MD, Deputy Chief OAA.

**Members of the public attending:** None

**Welcome and Roll Call**

Dr. Jordan Cohen, Chair of the NAAC, welcomed the members and guests to the Summer Conference Call, and thanked them for taking time from their busy summer schedules. Gloria Holland, PhD, MBA, Designated Federal Official for the NAAC, welcomed the members and guests to the NAAC call and performed a roll call.

**Introduction of New Academic Affiliations Chief Officer**

Karen M. Sanders, MD, Deputy Chief, Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) introduced Dr. Robert Jesse, the new Chief Academic Affiliations Officer, and provided a brief summary of his career and accomplishments in VHA.

Dr. Jesse thanked the group for participating in the Council and for their many accomplishments to date. He confirmed his commitment to serving as the Chief of Academic Affiliations and plans to pursue the role with great vigor. He sees many opportunities for new directions to expand the capacity and capability of VA's academic affiliations partnerships in many different ways.

Members of the Council congratulated the new CAAO on his appointment and engaged Dr. Jesse in a discussion of current VHA issues such as delays for Veterans accessing care. The members made suggestions about how academic affiliates can help to address the critical needs that the VA now faces.

### **Committee Discussion and Formation of Council Recommendations**

**Jordan J. Cohen, MD, Chair NAAC**

The Council discussed and formulated a number of recommendations to be made to the VA Under Secretary for Health and the Secretary of VA.

**Recommendation 1:** The Council endorses the work of the NAAC Joint Venture Work Group and the VHA OMB Modernization Integrated Project Team. The Council recommends the continued development of specific pilot programs with Academic Medical Centers and Accountable Care Organizations in which jointly administered clinical, educational and research programs individually and collectively serve Veterans' needs. Conjoint facilities in which Veterans and their families receive treatment would be especially valuable. The Council further recommends that VA explore the use of VHA health data to improve state, regional and local population health management.

**Recommendation 2:** The Council is pleased with the inclusion of external partnerships in both the VA and VHA strategic plans. However, it is concerned that while noted as important in their own right, partnerships with the academic community are not explicitly recognized as an integral and essential component of the provision of safe and effective care to Veterans. The Council recommends that VHA revisit this issue and revise its overall vision statement accordingly. In this regard, the Council notes that the rationale for the enduring relationship between VA and the academic community was made explicit in the Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on VA-Medical School Affiliations accepted by the Secretary on September 30, 2009.

**Recommendation 3:** The Council commends VA for its enterprise-wide implementation of Patient Aligned Care Teams, notes with interest the early data supporting a significant return on investment for this innovative model of primary care delivery, and believes that this will be further increased when longer term clinical outcomes are added to the already positive changes in service utilization. Within this overall major system redesign, the Council strongly endorses expansion of the Centers of Excellence in Primary Care Education project and the transformation of existing teaching primary care clinics into interprofessional, team-based "Academic PACTs". The Council further recommends that more "early learners" (for example, medical students and undergraduate nursing students) should be included in these innovative models of care.

**Recommendation 4:** The Council notes with concern that the primary care educational redesign effort was not afforded the same robust evaluation as was the larger primary care PACT project. This is especially surprising given the importance of joint clinical and educational system redesign and the general excellence of VA's health services research program. The Council recommends that an evaluation plan be jointly developed by the Offices of Research & Development, Academic Affiliations and Primary Care Policy & Operations in advance of the planned expansion of the Centers of Excellence and Academic PACT transformation. The Council further recommends the development of a specific VA Advanced Fellowship to expand the VA and national research workforce in the broad areas of learning outcomes assessment and program evaluation.

**Recommendation 5:** Given the reported lack of sufficient primary care capacity in VA and the Nation, the NAAC supports innovative education and care models based on interprofessional team-based care such as the Centers of Excellence in Primary Care Education. Education models and training programs in

VA should support the development of alternate providers who are trained to work at the top of their license.

**Recommendation 6:** The Council is pleased that VA recognizes the indirect costs of education through an “educational supplement” to the VERA allocation. However, it is concerned that the formula for calculating and distributing the educational supplement is solely dependent on the number of physician residents assigned to a facility. The Council recommends that VA explore reconfiguration of the VERA indirect formula to include all trainees at a facility.

**Recommendation 7:** The Council notes with alarm the underutilization of trainee stipend funds in some training programs and at some sites. The Council endorses the ongoing analysis by the Office of Academic Affiliations to identify the root cause(s) of this problem and emphasizes that individual facilities and their affiliates should be held accountable for the efficient management of training funds. The Council recommends that excess funds be redistributed to those sites and programs with documented need for additional support.

**Recommendation 8:** The Council notes with concern the relative lack of nursing trainee involvement in VA’s Mental Health Enhancement Initiative and the absence of a strong cadre of mental health nursing faculty in VA. The Council recommends that the VA work with the academic nursing community to implement a mental health nursing faculty development program analogous to that of the VA Nursing Academy. The Council further recommends that VA explore a more effective alignment of field educational leadership, especially in regards the roles of the Designated Education Officer (DEO) and the trainee-related activities of the Associate Chief Nurse for Education.

**Recommendation 9:** The NAAC notes the importance of effective local Academic Partnership Council’s (APCs) in maintaining and enhancing affiliation relationships, but believes that in many cases the Councils function more as information exchanges and less as joint planning bodies. The NAAC recommends that VA implement a standardized method of evaluating the effectiveness of APCs, perhaps through requiring an annual self-assessment.

**Recommendation 10:** The Council commends VA for its adoption of Non-Profit Research and Education Corporations (NPCs), which enhance joint research opportunities with the academic community and private sector. Noting the complexity and oftentimes idiosyncratic nature of local funds sharing and relationships, the Council endorses the principle that the administration of NIH funds by NPCs should remain a local, case by case decision.

**Recommendation 11:** The NAAC notes the strongly positive national reception of the Chief Residents in Quality & Safety Program, and strongly endorses the expansion of the program. The Council further recommends that VA consider a hub site model, analogous to the VA Quality Scholars program, to manage this program.

#### **Update on the Education Evaluation Fellowship**

William J. Marks, Jr., MD, Chief, Health Professions Education updated the Council on plans to form a new OAA Educational Evaluation Advanced Fellowship, and thanked the task force membership for their active involvement.

**NAAC membership renewal:**

Dr. Sanders reviewed the Advisory Committee Act requirements regarding renewal of Federal Advisory Committee membership. Membership of the NAAC must be renewed prior to its next meeting. OAA is working actively to prepare nominations for Under Secretary for Health approval for new and continuing NAAC members. Some current NAAC members will be rotating off and some new members will be added.

**Public Comment**

No members of the public spoke at the meeting.

The Council reviewed the letter from Academy of Family Practice recommending incorporation of civilian family practitioners to address the clinical needs of the VA. It was recommended that the topic of VA engagement with the Family Medicine community be added to the October 2014 meeting agenda.

The council reviewed a letter from an individual at the University of South Florida concerning improving partnerships between VA and academic affiliates through research collaborations. This input will be forwarded to the Office of Research and Development.

**Next NAAC meeting date** – October 16-17, 2014

The meeting was adjourned at 12:21 pm.