

Questions & Answers

This document captures the questions posed by participants during the *Minority Summit: Power of Collaborating with VA*, which was held June 9, 2021. Answers were prepared by VA's Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA).

Question:

I am a student at the Colorado School of Public Health and have noticed that social determinants and justice issues have come to the forefront of both public health and social work. I wonder if VA has any programs available to students who may be looking for thesis opportunities or even undergrad projects in these fields?

Answer:

OAA provides oversight and funding for clinical training programs, including Social Work students who may engage in research while rotating at the VA. OAA provides the infrastructure for facilities to host students in various degree programs who may engage in research opportunities. We encourage your academic program to reach out to local VA facilities to determine if an affiliation may be possible.

I'm from northwest Wisconsin. Nearly 10% of Sawyer County residents identify as Veterans. Despite having a relatively high rate of veterans, we have a very small percent go through our college. Do you have any suggestions to help recruit Veterans within our community? Is there some extra grant funding you might be aware of that our institution can utilize in increasing VA equity at Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College?

Please contact your local Veteran Benefits Administration (VBA) at 1-800-827-1000 or visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/milwaukee/> for more information on educational benefits for Veterans.

What is the process to initiate an affiliation between a university and the VA Caribbean Healthcare System for clinical practice? Are there opportunities for geographical rotations or visiting details as part of a residency?

The process for a residency to establish an affiliation with a VA is for the residency program leadership to contact the Designated Education Officer (DEO) at the local VA facility. The DEO will have the best knowledge on local VA training opportunities. If you send us your contact information, we can put you in touch with the DEO at the VA Caribbean Healthcare System.

Are there formal channels to identify or connect with mentors who are also from underrepresented backgrounds?

There are formal channels for identification of mentors through VA's National Diversity Internship Program (NDIP). For more details, please review: <https://www.va.gov/employee/programs/internship.asp>.

As a minority employee I am a Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice. Where does one look for other areas of the VA to get involved in? Or are there only available options in your area of specialty?

There are many opportunities in VA for employees to get involved in diversity awareness and to pursue their career goals. Please contact your local VA Medical Center (VAMC) leadership, your Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) and your Education service to learn about training opportunities and leadership development programs.

Dr. Matthews—our organization is planning to roll out affinity employee groups as part of our Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) initiative. One of the key groups identified is a Veterans affinity group—are there any resources that we can tap into to support our veterans?

There are a number of ways local organizations and communities can support Veterans. Contacting the local Veterans Service Organization (VSO) may help identify resources. Please visit <https://www.va.gov/vso/> for VA's Directory of Veterans Service Organizations.

Is it possible to receive a copy of Dr. Matthew's slide presentation and of Secretary McDonough's speech?

Minority Summit 2021 presentations are available at <https://www.va.gov/oaa/dei.asp>.

I am curious about pharmacy residencies in the VA. Do they partner with Colleges and Schools of Pharmacy? If so, how are they funded?

Pre-degree pharmacy academic programs may affiliate with VA to offer clinical rotations; these rotations are not funded. Pharmacy residencies do not require an academic affiliate, though some residency programs may partner with universities for teaching opportunities or offsite rotations. VA pharmacy residency programs are accredited by VA and managed by VA Pharmacy Residency Program Directors. VA pharmacy residency programs are funded centrally by OAA, and positions are available for PGY1, PGY2 and fellowship positions. For more information, please email assoc.health@va.gov.

This is my first exposure to OAA. Do the students have to be Veterans? We have several medical programs so I want to make sure I identify the correct students.

Health Professions Trainees at VA do not have to be Veterans. For information on affiliating with VA, please visit <https://www.va.gov/oaaffiliation-agreements.asp>. For more information on VA scholarship programs and VA careers, please contact hpspteam@va.gov or https://www.vacareers.va.gov/Content/Documents/Print/vhvmasp_flyer-vha-r3.pdf.

What are the suggestions to increase recruitment of culturally diverse trainees?

VA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan can be located at: https://www.va.gov/ORMDI/Diversity_Inclusion.asp.

What do you mean minority serving?

The Department of Education defines Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) as those institutions of higher education enrolling populations with significant percentages of undergraduate minority students, or that serve certain populations of minority students under various programs created by Congress. The most current list can be located at: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-minorityinst.html>.

What year was the stat of 43% of those who serve identifying as a minority?

According to the Department of Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion Report (2020), 47% of active duty enlisted servicemembers identify as minorities and 37% of active-duty officers identify as minorities. Additionally, Minority Summit 2021 presentations are available at <https://www.va.gov/oaaffiliation-agreements.asp>.

What is the percentage of VA's minority in the mental health providers?

VA's workforce data, broken down by occupation, can be located at: https://www.va.gov/ORMDI/DiversityInclusion/Workforce_Analysis.asp.

What is the percentage of African Americans as Director of a VAMC?

In FY 2018, employees identifying as Black comprised 23% of all employees, and minorities made up 41% of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) workforce. During the same timeframe, Senior Executive Service (SES) employees identifying as Black comprised 8% of SES in VHA and 14% of SES employees self-identified as minorities. VA's workforce data, broken down by occupation, can be located at: https://www.va.gov/ORMDI/DiversityInclusion/Workforce_Analysis.asp.

What minority agency does VA partner with? How can we find out who they are?

Please reach out to VA Center for Minority Veterans to locate a list of external partners at: <https://www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/>.

Who is responsible for finding information on minority mental health outcomes? Where can we find data on this subject?

Details on minority mental health outcomes may be available at: OMHSP-Mental Health Home ([va.gov](https://www.va.gov)). This website may be helpful https://www.va.gov/HEALTHYQUITY/Race_Ethnicity.asp.

Have you looked at offering scholarships for Veterans pursuing a degree in counseling psychology?

The VA Health Professional Scholarship Program (HPSP) program office reviews professions for inclusion in the program on a regular basis. Psychology may be considered in future scholarship offerings.

Are scholarships for medical students only for Veterans?

No, there are multiple programs available and not all require Veteran status. Please visit <https://www.vacareers.va.gov/Benefits/EducationSupport#scholarships> for more information.

Do you have any scholarships for practical nursing program students?

VA currently has a pilot program for practical nurses at the VA Medical Center in Temple, TX.

Do you only accept Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students for scholarship opportunity? What about the Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) and Vocational Nursing (VN) students?

Generally, VA scholarship opportunities are focused on Master of Sciences Nursing (MSN) students. VA currently has a pilot program for ADNs.

Are VA Nursing Scholarships global or just for the program at Malcolm Randall VA Medical Center?

Scholarship programs for nurses are available VA-wide. Recipients are placed in residency positions across the country.

For MD fellows with the VA who wish to work for VA after fellowship, do you offer assistance with loan repayment?

Yes, there are multiple loan repayment opportunities in VA.

For more information, please visit <https://www.vacareers.va.gov/Benefits/EducationSupport#repay>.

Are there any scholarship opportunities for pharmacy students?

The VA Health Professionals Scholarship Program (HPSP) program is not currently offering scholarships for pharmacy students. Make sure to check back in the future, as the list of included professions is updated annually based on VA need.

How can we find more information about scholarships for Veteran employees who want to learn more and return to school?

The VA has several programs and some are offered by other VA administrations, such as VBA. Veterans are eligible to apply for HPSP and are identified as Veterans during the review process.

In addition to these wonderful training and scholarships to increase access, how is VHA ensuring that diverse trainees are being hired and promoted to staff positions? How is VHA approaching to dismantle the structural barriers and implicit biases inherent in the hiring/promotion process?

There are a host of agency-level initiatives and workgroups examining those questions and action planning to address the issue around disparity at the middle and senior leadership levels. The data demonstrate those disparities and the groups most adversely impacted. Creating a diverse and inclusive workforce is a strategic business imperative for VA equal to its other priorities.

Is the HPSP Program an Active-Duty Obligation or a Reserve Obligation?

VA HPSP recipients are civilian employees without any military service obligations.

Is there a future for potential scholarships for mental health fields? Is there a scholarship for clinical psychologists?

Social Work, Marriage Family Therapists, Clinical Psychologist and Professional Mental Health Counselors are fields being considered for scholarships in the future. Other mental health professions may be added based on VA need and military service obligations.

Is there a list of scholarships for medical students that are directed specifically toward promoting diversity at the VA?

HPSP opportunities are widely available. Targeted efforts to medical schools with a higher diversity student population are being implemented.

Is there a website for VA scholarship opportunities?

Please visit <https://www.vacareers.va.gov/Benefits/EducationSupport#scholarships>.

What happens when a medical student takes the VA HPSP scholarship planning to go into a critically short specialty (like primary care) but then decides to apply to a specialty that is not critically short?

The only restriction at this time is that the students can not pursue pediatrics.

While partnering with MSIs is very important, the cost of getting into a PhD or PsyD program is expensive from the application through graduation. I spent over \$300 on one application and school is 200K+. Is there any idea of creating more inclusivity in that area?

This is outside the scope of authority for OAA and VA. We encourage applicants to speak with specific schools to seek financial guidance and assistance.

Wondering about recruiting medical students from the nursing staff? Nursing is more diverse than MDs. Support/scholarships?

U.S. Medical Schools have a wide range of recruitment activities that target staff working in the medical field, including nursing. OAA supports all qualified applicants to apply for available scholarships.

What is the percentage of VA's minority staff in the mental health providers?

VA's workforce data, broken down by occupation, can be located at: https://www.va.gov/ORMDI/DiversityInclusion/Workforce_Analysis.asp.

What minority agency is VA partnered with? How can we find out who?

This is outside the scope of this webinar and the VHA Office of Academic Affiliations. The following site may help you research the information you are looking for: <https://www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/>.

What is the rejection rate for Minority Veterans with similar claims?

This is outside the scope of this webinar and the VHA Office of Academic Affiliations. The following site may help you research the information you are looking for: <https://www.va.gov/disability/>.

I didn't see diversity on the Academic panel. Is that on purpose?

Diversity was considered when constructing the panels and each panel contained diverse members.

Why isn't there a chat room. This feels very controlling.

We appreciated receiving numerous questions through the Q&A feature.

OAA is a long-term solution, not short term. What are VA's short-term solutions to address lack of minorities in VA medical. What is percentage of minorities in the Benefits side of VA?

This question is outside the scope of the Office of Academic Affiliations. Please visit <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/> and contact the Veteran Benefits Administration.

What percentage of African American and Hispanic Veterans Military Sexual Trauma (MST) survivors?

This question is outside the scope of the Office of Academic Affiliations. The following site may help you research the information you are looking for: <https://www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/>.

I am trying to find the data on minority Veterans in my area, VISN 8.

Please contact Veterans Integrated Service Area (VISN) 8, <https://www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/> to request this information.