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

October 3, 2012, 1-3 pm

VACO, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Conference Room 830

1. Welcome by Rafael Torres, Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Management (HR&A).
   1. Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration John Sepúlveda resigned effective September 30, 2012.
   2. Mr. Torres will now serve as Acting Assistant Secretary and Acting VADC Co-chair.
   3. Mr. Torres intends to fully participate in future meetings.
2. Operational by Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Diversity & Inclusion (ODI).
   1. Introduction of attendees in person and on the phone.
   2. June 6, 2012, VADC Meeting Minutes approved.
3. Yvonne Rannels, ODI, reported on the Secretary’s Third Annual Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards Program.
   1. Ms. Rannels thanked Administration and Staff Office counterparts as well as Council members and volunteers who served on the Screening and Judging Committees.
   2. ODI is still waiting for the Secretary to approve the finalists and to select a method and date for presenting the awards.
   3. Ms. Rannels will keep the Council updated via email.
4. Ms. Coffey and Kelley Carameli, Health Science Specialist, National Center for Organization Development (NCOD) led a discussion on NCOD’s Qualitative Secondary Analysis Proposal. Two handouts provided: Exploring Disparate Perceptions of Fairness and Empowerment by Gender and Race/Ethnicity within the VA Workforce and the Senior Executive Service (SES) Final Report – December 2011 and Qualitative Study Proposal: Gender and Racial/Ethnic Differences in the VA Workforce and SES.
   1. The Council’s Emerging Issues Committee commissioned NCOD to produce an analytic report which provides an initial overview of the impact of gender, race, and ethnicity in shaping VA employee perceptions about their job satisfaction and workplace climate.
   2. Data for this preliminary analysis largely come from the VA All Employee Survey.
   3. NCOD proposes a qualitative analytic study to further understand and interpret the initial quantitative survey findings on disparate perceptions of fairness and empowerment by gender and race/ethnicity within the VA workforce and SES.
   4. This secondary follow-up analysis would apply qualitative methods of focus groups and key informant interviews. Minimal and optimal recommendations were made. The deliverable would be completed in time for the April quarterly VADC meeting pending the Council’s approval of the minimal or optimal study design.[[1]](#footnote-1)
   5. It was recommended that VA’s employee resource/affinity groups be involved as informants.
   6. It was recommended that we ensure this effort does not duplicate the efforts of other offices and to use resources available through other VA programs/initiatives to reduce costs if necessary (such as the Office of Resolution Management’s Organizational Climate Assessment Program).
   7. It was recommended that a return on investment (ROI)/business case be developed to justify funding the NCOD study beyond training applications. Such ROIs would include employee retention and improving overall workplace climate.
   8. A motion to proceed was made and unanimously approved. The vote as to which option is postponed. ODI will work with NCOD to provide options and to create a business case.[[2]](#footnote-2)
5. Thomas Middleton, ODI, informed the Council that the Management Directive 715 data call is out. Depending on the substance of the information contained in submissions ODI receives for the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan quarterly reports, ODI may go out with another call for submissions for VA’s Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report.
6. Arlene González, Equal Employment Specialist, ODI, discussed the Hispanic Employment Program. Two handouts were provided: Draft VA Hispanic Employment, Outreach and Retention Strategic Plan and a slide deck. Ms. González introduced the VA Hispanic Employment, Outreach and Retention Strategic Plan, highlighting two new initiatives: the student-focused Student Outreach And Retention (SOAR) and the community-focusedCommunity Outreach and Communications Initiative (COCI).
7. The Administration representatives presented their Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan annual reports. Three handouts provided: slide deck for each Administration.
8. Audrey Oatis-Newsome, Director, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) EEO/Affirmative Employment Office, presented for VHA. Additional information was requested about VHA’s Virtual Mentoring Pilot Program; this information is to be briefed at the next quarterly meeting. Additional information was requested about VHA’s EEO/AEO Survey; this information is to be briefed at the next quarterly meeting.
9. Perdita Johnson-Abercrombie, EEO Manager, presented for the National Cemetery Administration.
10. Lois Scoon, EEO Manager, presented for the Veterans Benefits Administration.
11. Tinisha Agramonte, Director, Outreach and Retention, ODI, briefed on the Diversity Council’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Workgroup activities and initiatives, including the coordination of four sub workgroups that will: 1) develop a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) sheet to answer frequently asked questions submitted to the workgroup; 2) develop an education awareness/public relations kit, 3) develop a Special Emphasis Program (SEP) starter kit, and 4) establish a share point or other forum where SEP Managers can post and share information on best practices, ideas, and training. Carolyn Wong, Director, Training and Communications, ODI, reported to the Council that VHA developed clinical training on transgender health care and established a SharePoint site.[[3]](#footnote-3)
12. Ms. Wong provided the status of a diversity and inclusion curriculum for executives, managers and supervisors. ODI is updating the online mandatory training for which there is a two year biennial requirement. The revised training will be online by December. Sections updated include reasonable accommodation, gender identity, and cultural competency. The training course will be cleared through the Section 508 certification process.
13. Ms. Agramonte provided a briefing on the Corporate Recruitment Outreach Group—a group established between ODI, the Veterans Employment Services Office, the Center for Minority Veterans, the Center for Women Veterans, and the Strategic Communications Outreach Service. The purpose of the group is to ensure there is no duplication of outreach efforts at affinity conferences/events. This is an integrated strategic approach to reduce VA’s fiscal footprint. The difference between outreach (for the purposes of promoting VA services) and employment outreach (for the purposes of promoting VA employment) was discussed and clarified. The motion to form a Committee was made and unanimously approved.
14. Robert Turtil, Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, discussed the Federal Interagency Holocaust Remembrance Program. This annual program is authorized through Public Law 96-338. The 20th annual program will be held in May 2013. There is a shortage of staff and interest in preparing for next year’s program. Planning the event requires attendance at two-to-three meetings throughout the year. Mr. Turtil is currently the only VA representative on the planning team. Mr. Turtil will provide ODI with some information via email to forward on to the Council for those who may be interested in participating.[[4]](#footnote-4)
15. The motion to form a Hispanic Employment Committee was made and unanimously approved. Ms. González called for committee members. Barbara Ward, CMV, expressed that someone from her office would also join this committee.
16. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm. The next meeting is scheduled to be held January 16, 2013.

1. Following the meeting, Ms. Carameli clarified that the report would likely be completed late summer/early fall due to the administration of the VA All Employee Survey in early 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ODI worked with NCOD to provide official voting VADC members with a business case and cost benefit analysis of the study approach options, minimal or optimal. Members electronically voted as to which option (minimal or optimal) they preferred. Vote results: six optimal, four minimal (18 members did not cast a vote). ODI is proceeding with an unfunded request with the Strategic Management Group based on the optimal request with the minimal as a fall-back back in the event of budget cuts. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Following the meeting, it was clarified that Drs. Jillian Shipherd and Michael Kauth led several national training efforts in early 2012 for VA clinicians on VHA Directive 2011-024 and transgender health care. PowerPoint presentations from those LiveMeetings are on the Patient Care Services (PCS) Transgender Education Resource SharePoint. A set of materials (PowerPoint Toolkits) was developed specifically for clinical staff who did not attend the national LiveMeetings. The group is currently working with PCS, Mental Health, and the Employee Education System to develop a clinical training program in the Talent Management System on transgender health care. The group is also charged by PCS to develop clinical trainings on LGB health care in fiscal year 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Following the meeting, the Office of Personnel Management called for agency representatives; Nanese Loza, ODI, was designated to officially represent VA on the Federal Interagency Holocaust Remembrance Program Planning Committee. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)