We begin the fall season on a high note: the overall VA Diversity Index increased to an all-time high of 86.65 percent for the year as we enter the new fiscal year. As you know, our Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) developed this groundbreaking metric to efficiently report on VA’s aggregate workforce diversity by race, ethnicity, and gender, as compared to the corresponding diversity in the U.S. Civilian Labor Force. We (and now other Federal agencies) use our Diversity Index to gauge progress in eradicating barriers to equal employment opportunity in the workforce. Our new high of nearly 87 percent represents an 11.5 percent net increase over the course of the last decade and is a testament to VA’s successful diversity outreach efforts. We are also proud to report that VA ended the last fiscal year exceeding the Secretary’s 3% hiring goal and 2% on-board goal for individuals with targeted disabilities (IWTDs), at 3.27 percent and 2.10 percent, respectively. Promotion rates for IWTDs also exceeded the overall workforce average. Thank you to all our partners and colleagues throughout VA who contributed to this achievement!

While we are proud of the fruits of our efforts, there is still work to do:

- IWTDs exhibited the highest voluntary and involuntary separation rates.
- Representation of all race, ethnicity, and gender groups except White males and Hispanic males in the VA Senior Executive Service (SES) are below the corresponding total workforce representation.
- The representation of White females, Hispanics, and Asians in the permanent VA workforce are below their expected representation, in comparison to the Relevant Civilian Labor Force.

Studies have revealed that workforce diversity is positively associated with high organizational performance. Continued on the next page.
DAS Message

Continued from Page 1

We know that with your partnership and commitment, VA will continue to make progress in this critical area of organizational development. ODI stands ready to assist you in these areas. We also know that commitment to diversity begins with leadership. To that end, VA’s ODI and VA Learning University recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the African American Federal Executive Association (AAFEA) and the Asian American Government Executives Network (AAGEN) to promote leadership development opportunities to diverse populations. The MOU establishes mutually beneficial partnerships that foster coordination, collaboration, and resource sharing between VA and AAFEA and AAGEN in support of our common aim of increasing diversity in the federal leadership candidate pool. Through diverse leadership and the diversity of perspective that comes with it, we can empower full inclusion in all of VA’s operations. We invite you to join us in this effort.

This month, VA stands proudly in the vanguard in the Nation’s commemoration of Veterans Day on November 11. We look forward to hearing more from our new Secretary, Bob McDonald, on his Road to Veterans Day Plan in the coming weeks. We also join the nation in celebrating National Native American Heritage Month throughout November. You can read about these and this month’s other observances including Military Family Month, National Family Caregivers Month, and National Family Week beginning on page 1. ~Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion

Training

Barrier Analysis

ODI is pleased to announce the FY 2015 Barrier Analysis Training schedule. Barrier elimination is essential for VA to become a model employer. To achieve this status, VA has to create a barrier-free environment where all applicants and employees have the opportunity to compete and work to their fullest potential. This training course covers all aspects of the barrier analysis process under MD 715 to include: analysis and interpretation of workforce statistics, trigger identification, barrier analysis investigation, preparing action plans, and following up on the action plan. This training, in its entirety, will allow the participants to work through the majority of the process using VA specific workforce statistics. To sign up for this training, use the following link https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=3844925&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=1368106800000.

Training Dates and Times:
- Thursday, October 23, 2014, from 1 to 4 pm
- Thursday, November 20, 2014, from 1 to 4 pm

If you have any questions regarding this training or the registration process, please contact Ryan Pugh at Ryan.Pugh2@va.gov or 202-461-4155 or contact Nanese Loza at Nanese.Loza@va.gov or 202-461-4049.

LULAC FTIP

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) held its 2014 LULAC Federal Training Institute Partnership (FTIP) at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, DC, on September 16 and 17, 2014. The FTIP is an intensive and structured career-development program for all government employees. This year’s FTIP offered plenary sessions, workshops, and executive coaching sessions. It was designed to enable government employees to enhance their leadership skills and develop the Executive Core Qualifications required for leadership positions and entry into the Senior Executive Service. For more information on LULAC and to access/view the FTIP workshop presentations, visit LULAC’s 2014 FTIP page at http://www.lulac.org/ftip and look at the bottom of the page under “Presentations.” Continued on Page 5.
It's fall, which means you are probably starting to write your Individual Development Plan (IDP) for the coming year. It's likely that you'll consider adding training courses to yours, but have you thought about other developmental experiences to include? If you are looking for more ways to support your professional development, consider adding these learning opportunities to your IDP.

**Read a Book**

Are you interested in learning Excel? Do you want to improve your communication skills? There are lots of great books available where experts share their experience and knowledge, and reading is often more convenient than taking formal training. You can read at any time, even if you only have five minutes to spare—and with the popularity of mobile devices, learning can truly happen anywhere.

As you consider book options, you may want to check out TMS's Books24x7 (http://go.usa.gov/vwnT), which gives VA employees easy and free access to thousands of titles. You’ll find a wide array of professional development books, from New York Times bestsellers like “Grounded: How Leaders Stay Rooted in an Uncertain World” to proven classics like “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.”

**Find a Mentor**

If you don’t have a mentor, you may want to add the activity of finding one—even an informal one (http://go.usa.gov/vvu3)—to your IDP. Mentors are excellent sources of one-on-one support as you build skills and navigate other important decisions for your career. If you are interested in finding a mentor, check out MyCareer@VA’s tips on how to build a successful mentoring relationship (http://go.usa.gov/vwUS5).

If you already have a mentor or trusted advisor, ask him or her for advice on what developmental activities could benefit you. Your mentor might be able to recommend a professional association you should join or give you ideas for stretch assignments that you could discuss with your supervisor.

**Learn New Skills from Your Coworkers**

Working with a co-worker or team member is an excellent way to learn new skills while completing your daily tasks and responsibilities. Think about teaming up with someone who is really good at a particular skill that you would like to learn or improve on. Working with a coworker this way allows you to learn and practice in a safe and comfortable environment. Talk with your supervisor or mentor if you are unsure of whom to seek help from.

**Review the VA Career Guides**

Still looking for ideas? Check out the VA Career Guides (http://go.usa.gov/vwqd), which recommends not only training but also developmental experiences for your current job and the next levels of your job. For example, if you are an accountant at VA, the VA Career Guides suggest developmental experiences like taking minutes for an audit meeting, working on process improvement requests, and participating in an internal audit. Search for your job in the VA Career Guides and see if there are other developmental experiences you can add to your IDP.

Have other questions about your IDP? Visit MyCareer@VA for more tips to create your IDP (http://go.usa.gov/vwqF) and for writing SMART goals (http://go.usa.gov/vw39). And don’t forget, TMS (http://www.tms.va.gov) offers great training courses to help you plan your career development, including “Pursuing Successful Lifelong Learning” and “Managing Your Career: Creating a Plan.”
Policy Alerts

Employee/Management Relations

Provisions of Public law 113-146, dated August 7, 2014, require a penalty be imposed for falsification of data regarding access to health care or quality measures. As a result of the new law, a change has been made to the Tables of Penalties contained in Appendix A of Part I and Part II, of VA Handbook 5021, for Title 5 and Title 38 employees. Specifically, the change adds a new penalty range for any employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs who knowingly submits false data concerning wait times for health care or quality measures with respect to health care, or requires another Agency employee to submit false data. The change will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5021 in the near future.

Enhancing Workplace Flexibilities

On June 23, 2014, President Obama issued a memorandum entitled, “Enhancing Workplace Flexibilities and Work-Life Programs.” The President’s Memorandum established a policy within the Federal Government to promote a culture in which managers and employees understand the workplace flexibilities and work-life programs available to them and how these measures can improve productivity and employee engagement. On August 22, 2014, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued supplemental guidance in a memorandum also entitled, “Enhancing Workplace Flexibilities and Work-Life Programs.” Both memoranda direct agencies to promote the use of workplace flexibilities and eliminate barriers or limitations on the use of these flexibilities. Existing VA policy in VA Handbook 5011, Part II, will be updated to reflect the new procedures below.

Employees have the right to request work schedule flexibilities, without fear of retaliation or adverse action as a consequence of making such a request. Work schedule flexibilities include alternative work schedules (e.g., flexible work schedule, compressed work schedule), telework, job sharing, and part-time employment. Use of these flexibilities can lead to improved productivity and increased employee engagement and satisfaction by helping employees to balance their home and work lives.

The following procedures are established to request work schedule flexibilities:

(1) Employees may submit a written request to their immediate supervisor for any workplace flexibility. The request must state the specific flexibility being requested (e.g., compressed work schedule, part-time employment, etc.) as well as the proposed work days, hours, etc. as applicable.

(2) The immediate supervisor must meet or confer directly with the requesting employee within 10 business days after receipt of a written request for a workplace flexibility to understand fully the nature of and need for the requested flexibility.

(3) The supervisor must carefully consider the request and any supporting information provided by the employee and provide a written decision to the employee within 20 business days after receipt of the initial request, or within the timeframes set forth in an applicable collective bargaining agreement. Supervisors must consider VA’s mission-related requirements and the impact on VA operations when rendering a decision. If the supervisor is unable to grant the employee’s request due to mission-related requirements and the impact on VA operations, the supervisor should work with the employee to determine if there are alternatives available that are beneficial to VA and the employee.

(4) If the supervisor denies the employee’s request for a workplace flexibility, the employee has the right to file a grievance in accordance with the procedures outlined in VA Handbook 5021, Part IV, or applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Flexible work schedules are encouraged as a tool to improve productivity and employee engagement.

(1) Flexible work schedules allow employees the ability to establish their own schedule within the limits set by the supervisor. Flexible work schedules split the workday into two distinct kinds of time—a core time band and a flexible time band. Under certain conditions, employees on flexible work schedules may elect to work hours in excess of their basic work requirement in order to vary the length of a work day or work week. Continued on the next page.
Policy Alerts

Continued from the Previous Page

(2) Overtime work of employees on a flexible work schedule must be officially ordered and approved in advance (i.e., no suffered and permitted overtime). Nonetheless, supervisors must remain vigilant about preventing employees from working unnecessary overtime and generating overtime costs without their knowledge.

Existing VA policy in VA Handbook 5011, Part II, will be updated to reflect the new procedures contained in this HRML.

Questions concerning this HRML may be directed to the Worklife and Benefits Service (058) at vaco058worklife@va.gov.

Training (cont.)

2015-2016 AAGEN SES Development Program

The Asian American Government Executives Network (AAGEN) Senior Executive Service (SES) Development Program is a tuition-free program that offers executive development courses, coaching in mock interviews, individual mentoring, and career counseling for candidates to gain the skills to effectively compete for SES positions. Each candidate will be assigned a SES or a Flag officer mentor who will provide guidance throughout the program. Other benefits include:

- SES application preparation
- Public speaking tutorials
- Leadership training
- Mentorship
- Networking opportunities

Eligible applicants must be at the GS-15 equivalent level or higher, have at least one year of supervisory experience, have the explicit approval and support of their current organizations to apply, and be registered as an AAGEN member for the current year of application. Current Federal government employees and qualified professionals from outside the federal government may apply. AAGEN will select up to twenty-four candidates for the class, up to four of whom may be selected from applicants outside the Federal government.

Registration ends promptly at 11:59PM on December 31, 2014, and the selectees will be notified prior to mid-March 2015. The next class will commence in April 2015 and the program will continue to March 2016. The training sessions will be held each quarter in the Washington, DC metro area.

Applicants must: (1) submit an online application available at http://www.aagen.org and (2) email supporting documents and materials including a completed Executive Development Plan (a sample is available online at http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/executive-development/edptemplate.pdf), a completed Executive Core Qualifications (see the OPM guidance at http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/executive-core-qualifications/#url=Fundamental-Competencies for further details), a current resume, and up to two written references (optional) to programs@aagen.org.

Both the online application submission and the e-mail with attachment are a part of your application package. Incomplete applications will be rated as "ineligible" and will not be considered.

Diversity News

Commemorate

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Additionally, AI/ANs have served and continue to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces with honor and distinction, defending and sacrificing their lives for the security of our Nation. VA commends those courageous AI/AN servicemen, women, and Veterans, including AI/AN employees VA-wide, for their continued commitment and dedication in service to our Nation’s Veterans, their families, and beneficiaries.

Employees are encouraged to participate in local activities that recognize the many contributions Native Americans have made to America. VA Central Office plans to commemorate National Native American Heritage Month on Thursday, November 13, 2014, in the G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery Veterans Conference Center, room 230, from noon to 1:00 p.m. For more information, contact Tynnetta Lee, Special Emphasis Program Manager, ODI, at (202) 461-7968 or Tynnetta.Lee@va.gov. VA is committed to providing equal access to this event for all participants. A sign language interpreter will be provided. If you need alternative formats or services because of a disability, contact Ms. Lee with your request by Friday, November 7, 2014. For additional information, contact Aurelia Waters, VA’s National AI/AN Employment Program Manager, ODI, at (202) 461-4124 or Aurelia.Waters@va.gov.

From the 2013 Presidential Proclamation (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/10/31/presidential-proclamation-national-native-american-heritage-month-2013): From Alaskan mountain peaks to the Argentinian pampas to the rocky shores of Newfoundland, Native Americans were the first to carve out cities, domesticate crops, and establish great civilizations. When the Framers gathered to write the United States Constitution, they drew inspiration from the Iroquois Confederacy, and in the centuries since, American Indians and Alaska Natives from hundreds of tribes have shaped our national life. During Native American Heritage Month, we honor their vibrant cultures and strengthen the government-to-government relationship between the United States and each tribal nation.

As we observe this month, we must not ignore the painful history Native Americans have endured—a history of violence, marginalization, broken promises, and upended justice. There was a time when native languages and religions were banned as part of a forced assimilation policy that attacked the political, social, and cultural identities of Native Americans in the United States. Through generations of struggle, American Indians and Alaska Natives held fast to their traditions, and eventually the United States Government repudiated its destructive policies and began to turn the page on a troubled past...As we observe Native American Heritage Month, we must build on this work. Let us shape a future worthy of a bright new generation, and together, let us ensure this country’s promise is fully realized for every Native American.

Veterans Day

VA joins the Nation in proudly saluting those who have served our Nation on Veterans Day, November 11. Information, activities, and resources concerning VA’s Veterans Day celebration can be found at http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday.

From the 2013 Presidential Proclamation (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/05/presidential-proclamation-veterans-day-2013): On Veterans Day, America pauses to honor every service member who has ever worn one of our Nation’s uniforms. Each time our country has come under attack, they have risen in her defense. Each time our freedoms have come under assault, they have responded with resolve. Through the generations, their courage and sacrifice have allowed our Republic to flourish. And today, a Nation acknowledges its profound debt of gratitude to the patriots who have kept it whole.

As we pay tribute to our Veterans, we are mindful that no ceremony or parade can fully repay that debt. Continued on the next page.
Commemorate

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We remember that our obligations endure long after the battle ends, and we make it our mission to give them the respect and care they have earned. When America's Veterans return home, they continue to serve our country in new ways, bringing tremendous skills to their communities and to the workforce—leadership honed while guiding platoons through unbelievable danger, the talent to master cutting-edge technologies, the ability to adapt to unpredictable situations. These men and women should have the chance to power our economic engine, both because their talents demand it and because no one who fights for our country should ever have to fight for a job.

This year, in marking the 60th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice, we resolved that in the United States of America, no war should be forgotten, and no Veteran should be overlooked. Let us always remember our wounded, our missing, our fallen, and their families. And as we continue our responsible drawdown from the war in Afghanistan, let us welcome our returning heroes with the support and opportunities they deserve.

Under the most demanding of circumstances and in the most dangerous corners of the earth, America's Veterans have served with distinction. With courage, self-sacrifice, and devotion to our Nation and to one another, they represent the American character at its best. On Veterans Day and every day, we celebrate their immeasurable contributions, draw inspiration from their example, and renew our commitment to showing them the fullest support of a grateful Nation.

With respect for and in recognition of the contributions our service members have made to the cause of peace and freedom around the world, the Congress has provided (5 U.S.C. 6103(a)) that November 11 of each year shall be set aside as a legal public holiday to honor our Nation's Veterans.

Military Family Month

VA joins the Nation in observing Military Family Month this November. From the 2013 Presidential Proclamation (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/10/31/presidential-proclamation-military-family-month-2013): Throughout our Nation's history, an unbroken chain of patriots has strengthened us in times of peace and defended us in times of war. Yet the courageous men and women of the United States military do not serve alone. Standing alongside them are husbands and wives, parents and children, sisters and brothers. During Military Family Month, we celebrate the families who make daily sacrifices to keep our Nation whole, and we remember a most sacred obligation—to serve them as well as they serve us.

Military families exemplify the courage and resolve that define our national character. For their country and their loved ones, they rise to the challenges of multiple deployments and frequent moves—spouses who care and provide for children in their partners' absence, kids who make new friends and leave known comforts behind. They are the force behind the force, patriots who support their family members in uniform while enriching the communities they call home.

While our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen are defending the country they love, their country must provide for the families they love...Joining Forces encourages the private sector to hire Veterans and military spouses, helps schools become more responsive to military children's needs, and expands access to wellness and education programs for military families. Since the initiative began in 2011, businesses have hired and trained more than 290,000 Veterans and military spouses...Time and again, our service members and their families have sacrificed to protect the promise that defines our Nation—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As we work to repay this enormous debt of gratitude, I encourage every American to do their part. Together, let us support our military children as they learn, grow, and live their dreams. And let us keep our military families strong and secure.

National Family Caregivers Month

Commemorate
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Across our country, more than 60 million Americans take up the selfless and unheralded work of delivering care to seniors or people with disabilities or illnesses. The role they play in our healthcare system is one we must recognize and support. During National Family Caregivers Month, we thank these tireless heroes for the long, challenging work they perform behind closed doors and without fanfare every day, and we recommit to ensuring the well-being of their loved ones and of the caregivers themselves.

Under the Affordable Care Act, patients and caregivers can benefit from a new Medicare pilot program that helps beneficiaries negotiate the transition from hospital to home. And through new Medicaid options, States can expand access to home and community-based services. With caregivers already balancing their own needs with those of their loved ones, and in many cases caring for both young children and aging parents, our Nation’s caregivers need and deserve our support. With this in mind, local agencies work to connect individuals with options including adult day care, respite care, training programs, and caregiver support groups—all shaped with the understanding that the generous women and men who take the health of their loved ones into their hands should not suffer from the toll caregiving can take.

There is no one to whom America owes more than our ill and injured service members and Veterans, and while many offer kindness and assistance, it is the caregivers who truly sustain our wounded warriors as they work toward rehabilitation or recovery...just as our loved ones celebrate with us in our moments of triumph, American families strengthen the fabric of our Nation by lifting each other up in the face of life’s greatest challenges. And as Americans put their loved ones before themselves, we must offer our appreciation and flexibility, in our healthcare system, our workplaces, and our communities. This month, as we reflect on the generosity, grace, and strength of family caregivers, we renew our commitment to matching their dedication to the health and wellness of families across our country.

**National Family Week**

VA joins the Nation in observing National Family Week November 24 through 30. From the 2013 Presidential Proclamation (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/22/presidential-proclamation-national-family-week-2013): Whether united by blood or bonds of kinship—whether led by a mother and father, same-sex couple, single parent, or guardian—families are the building blocks of American society. During National Family Week, we celebrate the spirit that moves family members to care for one another, to grow and dream together, and to instill in their children the character that keeps our Nation strong.

As we honor America’s families, we must also lift them up...This week, let us renew our family bonds. Whether by sharing a family meal, reading a bedtime story, or creating a holiday tradition, let us carve out a place in the lives of our loved ones. And as we do so, let us resolve that every family should have the opportunity to raise America’s next generation of innovators, scholars, and leaders.

**Whistleblower Rights and Protections**

Information Regarding Whistleblower Disclosures

Visit http://www.diversity.va.gov/whistleblower.aspx for information on VA's commitment to whistleblower rights and protections. If you believe you have experienced retaliation for filing a whistleblower disclosure, below are the avenues of recourse available to you:

- The Office of Special Counsel (OSC) at https://osc.gov.
- VA's Office of Resolution Management (ORM) at http://www.va.gov/orm. VA employees or applicants who believe they have been retaliated against for filing an equal employment opportunity complaint should contact ORM.
D&I Online

The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ diversity and inclusion program is to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated, and strategic focus on diversity and inclusion as key components of the Department’s human resources strategies. Here’s a sampling of online tools available at [http://www.diversity.va.gov](http://www.diversity.va.gov) that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

- National Native American Heritage Month and other observance resources.
- Training resources, guides, and reports.
- Links to professional and community organizations.
- Best practices for diversity management.

D&I In Your E-mail Inbox

ODI sends out NewsLink, an e-mail message with annotated links to current news items and other information related to leveraging diversity and building inclusion. For a FREE subscription to this electronic news service, e-mail odi@va.gov with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWSLINK in the subject line. Find a sample of NewsLink at [http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/newslink.aspx](http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/newslink.aspx).

D&I on Your TV or PC


November 2014 Calendar

[http://www.diversity.va.gov/calendar](http://www.diversity.va.gov/calendar)

November

**NOVEMBER**
National Native American Heritage Month
National Family Caregivers Month
Military Family Month
National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month
National Adoption Month
National Entrepreneurship Month
International Day of Tolerance November 16

Center for Women Veterans 20th Anniversary November 19 at noon; Washington, DC VA Central Office Room 230
Transgender Day of Remembrance November 20
National Family Week November 23–29
Thanksgiving Day November 27