

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN:

United States Department of Veterans Affairs

and

African American Federal Executives Association,

and

Asian American Government Executives Network



Memorandum of Understanding

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the African American Federal Executives Association (AAFEA), and the Asian American Government Executives Network (AAGEN) is to establish a partnership to collaborate, perform outreach, and share resources to promote diversity and inclusiveness in Federal sector leadership.

II. BACKGROUND

The Senior Executive Service (SES) comprises of the men and women charged with leading the continuing transformation of Federal government. These leaders possess well-honed executive skills and share a broad perspective of government and public service commitment that is grounded in the Constitution. Accordingly, it is imperative that the senior leadership of Federal government is reflective of the broad diversity of the public it serves. MOU supports President Obama's Executive Order 13583—Establishing a Coordinated government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce by leveraging resources to ensure that VA is reaching out to all segments of society, and enhancing its ability to recruit, hire, promote, and develop a more diverse workforce, starting with our leadership. Through this mutually beneficial MOU, VA seeks to promote diversity in its SES candidate pool while providing individuals of diverse backgrounds resources and opportunities to increase their ability to reach their full potential.

III. PARTIES

The parties of this MOU are VA, as represented by the VA Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) and the VA Learning University (VALU); AAFEA, and AAGEN, hereinafter together referred to as "the parties."

VA's mission is to fulfill President Lincoln's promise, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans. ODI's mission is to build a diverse workforce and cultivate an inclusive workplace to deliver the best services to our Nation's Veterans, their families, and beneficiaries. VALU is VA's corporate university that supports the agency's mission and business objectives through high quality, cost-effective continuous learning, and development that enhances leadership, occupational proficiencies, and personal growth.

AAFEA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association founded in February 2002 by several African American members of the Federal Senior Executive Service (SES). AAFEA promotes the professional development and advancement of African Americans into and within the senior ranks of the United States government. AAFEA also allies and partners with other

organizations and academia to leverage resources to develop intellectual capital to effectively execute the business of the Federal government. AAFEA sponsors programs and advocate policies that will enhance opportunities for African Americans to serve our nation in senior level positions.

The mission of the AAGEN is to promote, expand, and support Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) leadership in government. AAGEN, founded in 1993, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan organization of the highest-ranking Asian American and Pacific Islander career and appointed executives, Foreign Service officers, legislative and judiciary members, and military officers in government.

IV. BUSINESS CASE

In his Executive Order, President Obama stated: "Our Nation derives strength from the diversity of its population and from its commitment to equal opportunity for all. We are at our best when we draw on the talents of all parts of our society, and our greatest accomplishments are achieved when diverse perspectives are brought to bear to overcome our greatest challenges." Embedded in these words is the notion that the value of diversity in public service goes beyond the legal or moral imperatives; there is a business imperative to diversity and inclusion. A diverse and inclusive work environment in the Federal sector is an essential component for agencies to achieve their public service mission. Studies have shown that workforce diversity and organizational inclusion yield greater employee engagement, increased productivity, and better organizational performance.

VA, like the rest of the Federal government, is facing new and more complex challenges in the 21st century, including increased public demands, limited resources, demographic shifts, globalization, rapidly changing technology, and an imminent retirement wave. SES members are critical to providing the strategic leadership needed to meet these challenges effectively. The business case for diversity in leadership has three significant elements. First, the labor and talent market has become increasingly competitive. VA must ensure there are no barriers to equal opportunity and full inclusion to ensure it has the high-quality workforce that it needs to deliver its mission to Veterans and their family members. Second, the changing demographics of American society require that agencies must recruit, retain, and develop a globally diverse and culturally competent workforce in order to provide responsive public services, and this must begin with leadership. Finally, the diverse intellectual perspectives that accompany our human diversity provides an organizational asset that increases performance outcomes and advances the mission. For VA, this means that having a diverse and inclusive leadership cadre enables the VA to better serve our Nation's Veterans and their families.

V. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the MOU is to establish a mutually beneficial partnership that fosters coordination, collaboration, and resource sharing between the VA, AAFFEA, and AAGEN, to the extent such coordination, collaboration and resource sharing is consistent with law and policy, to support their respective missions and to achieve the parties' common aim of increasing diversity in the Federal leadership candidate pool.

To accomplish these objectives, the parties will:

- A. increase awareness of the parties' developmental programs and opportunities through targeted outreach and cross-marketing for the purpose of increasing diversity in the SES and leadership development candidate pools.¹
- B. leverage training assets when feasible to increase availability and exposure of these resources to the parties' membership.
- C. share opportunities for training, rotational assignments, mentoring and shadowing experiences.^{2 3}
- D. share resources for speakers, coaches, mentors and webinars to support each other's developmental initiatives.⁴
- E. explore and leverage collaborative opportunities to support the VA SES Candidate Development Program, AAFFEA's Fellows Program and Annual Training Workshop, AAGEN SES Development Program, and AAGEN's Annual Leadership Workshop.
- F. explore and exploit the use of technology to increase the sharing of electronic resources to include sharing of electronic documents, videos, and interactive training.

¹ The accessibility and use of VA resources are subject to legal guidelines, availability, and budget allocation.

² Security and access requirements will require proper coordination between the host organization, parent organization and the candidate. Ancillary agreements shall be entered into, as necessary, to clarify roles and responsibilities between the parties and the candidate.

³ All expenses are the responsibility of the candidates' parent organization.

⁴ Participation in ODI funded Webinars is subject to funding validation.

VI. RESPONSIBILITIES

Each party will appoint a person to serve as the point of contact for coordination of activities to carry out this MOU. In the spirit and intent of this MOU, the parties Agree to the following:

A. VA will:

- Without endorsing AAFFEA or AAGEN, make VA employees aware of AAFFEA and AAGEN SES candidate/leadership development initiatives, training conferences, special events etc., through notices, email announcements, all station memoranda, ODI newsletter articles, and other communications vehicles, as appropriate.⁵
- solicit VA speakers for AAFFEA and AAGEN development programs, training events, and/or conferences.⁵
- solicit VA executive mentors/coaches to support AAFFEA and AAGEN leadership development programs and initiatives.⁵
- offer non-reimbursable detail/shadow assignments to support AAFFEA and AAGEN leadership development programs and initiatives.⁵ share or make available educational resources, such as training materials, webinars, lectures, as appropriate and feasible under Appropriations law, regulations, and VA policy.
- review AAFFEA and AAGEN training offerings for consideration for satisfying a portion of VA's SES CDP required hours of creditable external training, in accordance with VA SES CDP approved criteria.

B. AAFFEA and AAGEN will:

- provide VA outreach and marketing opportunities for its SES Candidate Development Program and other leadership development opportunities to AAFFEA and AAGEN membership, including but not limited to print material dissemination, email distribution, and website postings.
- assist VA in its recruitment outreach efforts by posting VA vacancy announcements on their homepage for an agreed period of time.

⁵ The accessibility and use of VA resources are subject to legal guidelines, availability, and budget allocation.

⁶ Parent organizations are responsible for all cost associated with non-reimbursable developmental/detail assignments. Security and access requirements will require proper coordination between the host organization, parent organization and the candidate. Ancillary agreements shall be entered into, as necessary, to clarify roles and responsibilities between the parties and the candidate.

- provide VA the opportunity to participate in their National Leadership Training Conferences and SES Development/Executive program.
- recommend speakers on diversity, cultural competency, Equal Employment Opportunity, and other topics in support of VA programs, including but not limited to Special Emphasis Observance Programs.
- provide VA access to its membership in implementing internal surveys related to diversity, leadership development, and affirmative employment program objectives.

The MOU affirms the good faith commitment of the parties to develop and maintain mutually supportive relationships and collaboration with the other parties in order to implement the plan implied by this MOU. The parties recognize that developing this plan will require each party to develop its own plan and then integrate that plan with the plans of the other parties. The parties to this MOU further recognize that law and regulations limit some of their support for this partnership. The relationships established in this memorandum in no way limits the parties from establishing similar relationships with any other entity.

VII. PROGRAM FUNDING

Nothing herein shall be construed as obliging VA, AAFFEA, and AAGEN to expend funds on behalf of the purpose, objectives, and responsibilities set forth in this MOU except as stated herein, or agreed to in, writing by the signatures of the organizations they represent. All obligations of funds for expenditure by VA are subject to individual negotiation with the parties and the availability of funds.

VIII. EFFECTIVE DATE

This MOU is effective when signed by the parties and will remain in effect for a period of 12 months or until terminated by either party as specified in Section X.

IX. AMENDMENTS

This MOU may be amended only by the written consent of the parties. Nothing herein shall be construed as requiring the participating parties to expend funds above the authorized budget levels. Parties to this MOU recognize that each party will need to obtain approval to use funds in furtherance of this MOU, according to the party's governing laws and regulations.

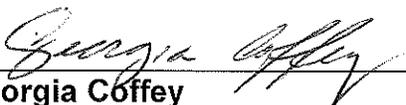
X. TERMINATION

One or more of the parties can terminate this MOU upon a sixty day (60) notice to the other parties.

XI. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Subject to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552), decisions or disclosure of information to the public regarding project(s) and program(s) within this MOU will be made following consultation by the parties to this MOU.

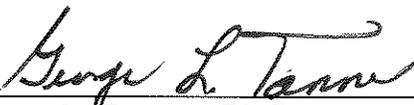
This MOU shall become effective on behalf of the parties by signature of the undersigned:



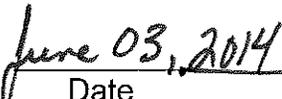
Georgia Coffey
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion
Department of Veterans Affairs



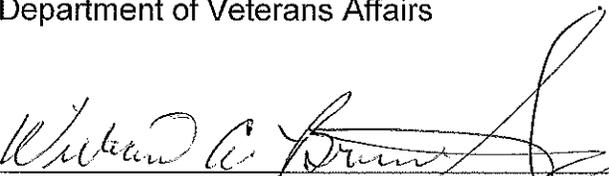
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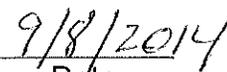
George L. Tanner, Ph.D.
Dean, VA Learning University
Department of Veterans Affairs



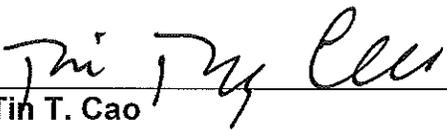
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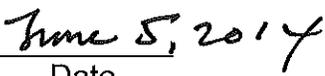
William A. Brown SR, P.E., Hon AIA, F.SAME, SES (ret.)
National President
African American Federal Executives Association (AAFEA)



Date



Tin T. Cao
Chair
Asian American Government Executives Network (AAGEN)



Date