



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20420

March 28, 2016

In Reply Refer To: 10P9H

Dear Health Services Research Leader:

We are reaching out to you in the hope you can help the Department of Veterans Affairs achieve our goal of increasing the diversity of our research community. As our nation becomes more diverse, it is paramount that our scientific workforce reflects that diversity. The continued underrepresentation of African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and other groups in science has been called a crisis and reports published by the National Science Foundation, the National Science Board, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science emphasize that continued success in science is contingent on building diversity in the scientific workforce.

These observations are particularly relevant for our Veterans Health Administration (VHA) scientific community where our mission is to improve the quality and access to health care services for our increasingly multicultural Veteran population. Mentoring has been identified by scientists across our nation as key to recruiting and retaining young scholars from underrepresented groups in scientific careers, including in health services research.

The VHA Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) Service funded the HSR&D Career Development Award (CDA) Enhancements Initiative (CDAei) program to strengthen the scholarly community for HSR&D Career Development Awardees. For the last year and a half, CDAei has implemented the following goals: (1) establishing a national cadre of senior mentors, called the National Mentoring Network (MNET) who are willing to offer supplemental mentorship to HSR&D CDAs, (2) offering a Cyber seminar series at the national level covering three areas: mentoring topics, research-in-progress by CDAs, and developing a CDA application, (3) facilitating in-person professional networking opportunities at national meetings and via conference calls, and (4) establishing a web-based CDA Resource Toolkit with resources for both CDAs and mentors.

VA HSR&D Service is committed to enhancing the diversity of the HSR&D CDA community by providing funds to the CDAei team to support implementation of this goal. **Please help us by joining in our efforts to increase diversity by (1) joining the cadre of senior mentors (MNET), (2) being added to a list of potential reviewers for research proposals submitted to the VHA Scientific Merit Review Board, or (3) providing the HSR&D Service with input or feedback on its programs and projects.** If you cannot help personally, consider identifying interested individuals with appropriate expertise in health services research and/or leadership in addressing diversity issues who would be interested in supporting the HSR&D CDAei efforts.

Please know that I am in full support of these efforts and I truly appreciate your help. Your participation is a wonderful opportunity to mentor promising young VHA investigators and to learn about health services research in the Veterans Health Administration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Atkins".

David Atkins, MD, MPH
Director Health Services Research
and Development