

OPAG Minutes 02/07/2018

Mission: Represent and advocate for the professional discipline of optometry and its Commissioned officers, civil servants, contract and tribal optometrists serving within the Public Health Service and affiliated services.

OPAG Voting members

Present:

- CDR Robert Chelberg (Chair)
- CDR Christopher Cordes
- CDR Robert Kesead
- CDR Craig Rennard
- CDR Patrick Britton
- LCDR Laura Alexander
- LT Jill Thompson
- LT Albert Licup

Absent:

- CDR Nima Desai

Liaisons/Co-Chairs

CAPT Dawn Clary
CDR Sarah Stienbarger

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve minutes from 12/06/17:

1st Motion: CDR Christopher Cordes

2nd Motion: CDR Robert Kesead

All in favor; Minutes approved.

Subcommittee Chair Reports

1. **Administrative Management:** CDR Christopher Cordes
No report.
2. **Awards:** LCDR Laura Alexander
Award recipients for Caplan, Hamilton & Hatch awards. Student award deadline is May 1. Deadline is February 15 for the PAG Unit award nomination so will be compiling information for that.
3. **Communications:** LT Jill Thompson/LT Emily Mathiak
Final approval for the elevator speech is pending, hoping to have it released to HS PAC in March. Also finalizing the one page template. Increasing social media use as a method of dispersing information. Subcommittees for Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are being formed and information will begin to be shared through those routes. HS PAC is switching to a quarterly

newsletter, instead of just the end of the year newsletter. Working on HSO in Action publications, which will be news briefs sent out to the PAC. First one will be on Ebola, then Zika and the hurricane responses.

4. **Data & Evaluations:** LT Albert Licup

Thanks to CAPT Nield for conducting a survey to gauge interest amongst non-Corps OD's of joining the USPHS. Survey was sent to 80 OD's via email and 36 completed it. 30/36 stated that they were already well informed about the Corps. None of those 30 were interested in joining. Five of the 6 that weren't well informed provided email addresses for further information. Three reasons for non-interest were starting pay, promotion potential and duration of application/accession process. A copy of survey results was distributed via email.

No new Data & Evaluation committee meetings have been conducted yet on the PAC level.

5. **Policy:** CDR Craig Rennard

Deadline for completing SOP's is March 1. Template was sent to all subcommittee chairs and 3 have been returned. Please complete any adjustment needed and return so they can be compiled ahead of the deadline. The next HS PAC Policy subcommittee meeting is in a couple weeks so nothing further to report at this time.

6. **Recruitment (Ad Hoc):** CDR Sarah Stienbarger

MG going to OBC in February and DS going in April. WT & AT waiting for security and medical clearance. KG is waiting for 1662, Presidential signature, security and medical clearance. These individuals are all currently working in CS IHS positions so won't be filling any vacancies. RS hasn't responded to any emails but is in the application process. AS & RA failed medical clearance and won't be reapplying. Both currently working CS and not planning to vacate their positions. Working with several other individuals in the Air Force, Navy and private practice on their applications. Sent advertisements to every school of optometry and the numbers received back have been small with the largest amount of interest coming from SCO in Memphis.

7. **Stakeholder & Community Engagement:** CDR Patrick Britton

No report.

8. **Technical Readiness:** CDR Robert Kesead/CAPT Larry Zobel

No report.

9. **Training, Education & Mentorship:** CDR Nima Desai

No report.

Liaison Reports

Chief Clinical Consultant: CAPT Dawn Clary

There will be a Save the Date flier coming out soon with the dates for the Biennial Eyecare Meeting at Marshall B Ketchum. Dates are June 4-7, which is extended from 3 to 4 days with the generosity and support of RADM Totes and HQ. Currently working on CE and residency workshop classes so agenda should be finalized the end of February and distributed for electronic registration. Spoke with Dr. Massey regarding the Navajo Area meeting, which was a success with 16 CE hours and a growing number of attendees. Nine out of 10 residents did their talks there. Recommend attending on alternating years as the Biennial Meeting.

IHS Loan Repayment program had 20 new awards and 32 extensions. There's a change this cycle with how they rank the sites. Previously, the sites were scored using a method agreed upon by the committee. The new site scores are coming from the Health Professional Shortage Area documentation, the HPSA. There are 3 categories: primary care, dental and mental health. All professions outside of dental and mental health are being lumped together in primary care. Scores will range from 0-25 instead of 0-100, with higher scores in the 17-25 range. Haven't heard where our sites are falling but expect awards to continue. Extensions will always be honored as long as paperwork is submitted but unsure what will happen with new applications. Funding is expected to stay the same though so confident that Optometry will continue to do well receiving those awards.

IHS Scholarship continues with 16 scholars currently being funded for this graduation year. Currently have 10 residents from 5 schools. Have been working with OPM to change the qualifications and standards for Optometrists. Currently bringing on new grads at the GS 9 level. As of last month, the GS 9 level was dropped for Optometry and new recruits can start at a GS 11. There was an issue with the residency program and were looking to keep residents at GS 9 but that was overruled by OPM and all Optometrists with a license and graduated from an accredited program will start at a GS 11, even the residents. This changes how positions are being posted so be sure to contact your HR and post new positions accordingly. Working on expanding to GS 14/15 for Optometry now and awaiting feedback from the OPM chair. Currently have a PD for a GS 14.

Current IHS staffing is about 50 commissioned officers and about 120 civil service/tribal. Thanks to CDR Stienbarger for her work with recruitment. New ICD 10 codes have been uploaded into DataMart so reports can be run by area consultants that are up to date and appropriate.

Sudden stop in special pay caught everyone by surprise but was actually authorized back in 2008 when Congress approved the National Defense Authorization Act, which amended Title 37 to consolidate special pays. Be watching your paystubs carefully over the coming months. No word on when this will be corrected but expect that it will be reimbursed and we will get the special pay back. Possible government shutdown in the near future as well. With history of working through extended government shutdown in the past, do not rely on letters being provided for creditors. Most financial institutes won't care what your circumstances are. Use the letter if you need to but don't rely on it and plan accordingly. Encourage everyone to fill out the COA survey regarding how you are being impacted financially by the special pay and possible shut down situations. If you are a member of USAA or Navy Fed, they are considering programs where they will extend a month's pay for a small fee so watch any information being released, especially regarding any monthly payments. Sister services were not affected by the changes in special pay.

JVN: CAPT Chris Nield

No report.

Discussion Topics

Dates to be aware of:

USPHS/COA Symposium June 4-7, 2018 in Dallas

IHS Biennial Eye Care Meeting June 4-7 – Fullerton

Always be aware of opportunities to get involved in the PAC. Be aware of any officers that you can mentor to help them add things to the CV and take advantage of leadership opportunities. Be involved and help get others there too.

There are some issues with the VA regarding telehealth and the TECS program in Georgia, which has become a hot topic with the AOA and AFOS. If anyone is wanting more information or to get involved with AFOS, feel free to contact CDR Cordes.

Meeting adjourned

Upcoming OPAG meetings

April 4, 2018

June 13, 2018 (2nd Wednesday)

August 1, 2018

October 3, 2018

December 5, 2018

All meetings are:

8:00 AM Alaska

9:00 AM Pacific

10:00 AM Mountain

11:00 AM Central

12:00 PM Eastern

Call in number for April 4, 2018 OPAG meeting: 1(877)267-1577

Meeting number 991 464 911