



# NAVREF

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF VETERANS' RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOUNDATIONS

ENVISIONING A NATION IN WHICH VETERANS  
RECEIVE THE FINEST CARE BASED ON INNOVATIVE  
RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

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# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

25  
YEARS  
1992-2017



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# A Message from the CEO

## NAVREF Board of Directors

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**Peggy Bradley**

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**Michele Packard-Milam, CAE**

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Executive Director

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**Gerhard Schulteis, PhD**

ACOS-R

**Alton Stocks, MD**

*US Navy Veteran*

Dear Colleagues:

Although the last 12 months have blurred together in the haze of working from home day-after-day-after-day, the year as a whole will surely be an unforgettable one. It was a "year without"—a year without live graduations, concerts, sporting events; a year without seeing grandparents, relatives, and other loved ones. For the NAVREF community, it was the first time in 28 years that we had a year without our in-person annual conference. It has been 18 months since the NAVREF Board of Directors held an in-person board meeting, a stretch of time during which we welcomed seven new board members and a new Board Chair. While we've grown accustomed to the virtual environment, we've been eagerly awaiting the day we can once again gather in person with colleagues and collaborators.

Living through a "year without" brought lessons to us all about resilience, about our ability to overcome challenges, and about recognizing what is most important. We learned that what we do as a medical research community is critically important to the world. The better we do our jobs, the more readily new treatments, therapies, and devices can be made available to veterans and ultimately to humankind. VA Research—with NPCs in critical supporting roles—stepped up to meet the challenges of the pandemic, cut bureaucracy, and leverage its varied assets to pursue timely solutions.

Despite the challenges of the last year, we have much to celebrate, as evidenced in this annual report. I am excited that we will be gathering both virtually and in-person for the 2021 NAVREF Annual Conference with a very appropriate theme of Partners in Progress. A year of physical distancing has reinforced the value of teamwork and partnership and I look forward to building deep and lasting connections throughout 2021-2022 in support of advancing research and education for veterans.

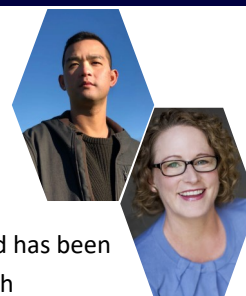
Sincerely,



**Mr. Rick Starrs**  
NAVREF CEO  
*US Army Colonel (retired)*

## NAVREF STAFF

We are a lean organization focused on meeting our members' needs. In addition to our CEO, Colonel (retired) Rick Starrs, the organization is staffed by two full-time professionals: Ms. Nicole Roberge, Clinical Trials Facilitator, and Mr. Hawk Tran, Operations Officer. Nicole joined us mid-pandemic last July and has been a major contributor to the great work of the Partnered Research Program. Hawk continues to be Mr. Indispensable at NAVREF with his imprint on everything we do.



# NAVREF ANNUAL REPORT 2021

## Top Highlights

The 2020-2021 membership year was unlike any other. Despite our inability to travel, it was an eventful year. This annual report captures some of the headline activities from each of our program areas, but the cornerstone of our daily efforts remains responsive customer service. We exist to support the needs of our member NPCs as they strive to improve the health of veterans.



## Member Services

- Overall Member Satisfaction increased for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.
- Dues reductions implemented in 2019 were extended into 2020 and 2021.
- NAVREF partnered with LIG Solutions, a division of Lighthouse Insurance Group, to offer members and families access to exclusive healthcare insurance coverages.
- NAVREF entered a master service agreement with Medix Staffing Solutions to offer members access to preferred terms for staffing support.



## NAVREF in the News

- [NAVREF recognized by Associations Now as one of “100 Associations that will Save the World” \(August 2020\)](#)
- Following an interview with the NAVREF CEO, [Good Day BIO](#) highlighted to thousands of BIO members across the biotechnology sector how VA has been accelerating COVID-19 research activities. (August 19, 2020)
- USVets.TV [interviewed](#) NAVREF CEO Rick Starrs on camera to discuss “some of the important work that NAVREF does and the breakthroughs in Veterans medical research NAVREF has facilitated.” (February 2021)
- DIA Global Forum published an online article [“NAVREF: Prioritizing Clinical Research Partnerships at the US Department of Veterans Affairs”](#) (March 2021)



## Education

- NAVREF’s 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference transitioned to a virtual platform where it achieved historic attendance levels with almost 400 participants.
- For the 4<sup>th</sup> year, NAVREF collaborated with ACRP to offer ACRP’s eLearning Program to all NPC-affiliated personnel (both NPC and VA personnel are eligible).
- The NAVREF monthly webinar series included 15 offerings over the last 12 months with average participation of more than 35 members per session.
- NAVREF collaborated with the Society for Research Administrators International (SRAI) to program two popular grants management workshops in June 2021.

**COVID-19 Response** – The VA nonprofits admirably pulled together as a community to combat the challenges of the pandemic. For example, over 60 sites have been involved in one or more COVID-19 clinical trials where study start-up timelines averaged less than 40 days. NAVREF heightened communication outreach to keep everyone connected and informed via weekly email updates and bi-weekly discussion rooms.

**NAVREF Industry Partner Consortium** – NAVREF launched its new Industry Partner Consortium with a Kick-Off Meeting on March 31, 2021 attended by 8 Founding Members and 7 VA-affiliated NPCs. The group was joined by special guests from VA’s Office of Research and Development: Rachel Ramoni, Wendy Tenhula, Molly Klote, and Krissa Caroff. We are excited to add new industry partners in pursuit of generating improved relationships to meet the health needs of veterans.

**Legislative Fix for IAA Woes** – On January 5, 2021 the President signed into law H.R. 7105, the *Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020*. The bill included Section 7006 which enables NPCs to handle funds from Inter-Agency Agreements (IAA) without regard to fiscal year expiration. NAVREF has been pursuing this legislative fix since July 2018 when VA OGC issued a clarification that prohibited a practice that had been in place for 25 years.

**Champion Level Sponsorship, Year 2!** – Cohen Veterans Bioscience re-upped its Champion Level commitment to NAVREF in 2021, providing generous financial support for our efforts to enhance access to clinical trials for veterans. We thank CVB for their unyielding support of NAVREF and the NPC community and look forward to continued collaboration in 2021/22.

# Program Highlights from 2020 - 2021



## Program Development

- NAVREF launched the **NAVREF Industry Partner Consortium** to establish a regular forum with bio-medical partners for exchanging information, sharing goals, and building relationships that will generate improved collaboration and drive solutions that meet the health needs of Veterans.
- Combined, the Partnered Research Program and NAVREF coordinated and disseminated **60** clinical study opportunities over the last 12 months.
- NAVREF partnered with the Association of VA Hematology and Oncology (AVAHO) and Cohen Veterans Bioscience to provide financial resources for NAVREF's support of the **Partnered Research Program** and activities to bring more clinical trials to Veterans.
- NAVREF formed a member-driven **Educational Advisory Work Group** to compile and disseminate best practices for education activities; develop tool kits for hosting education events; and explore potential revenue streams for education activities.



## Advocacy and Lobbying

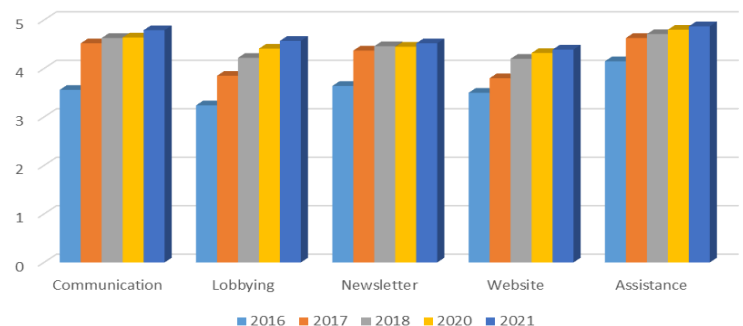
- NAVREF actively pursued a legislative fix for NPC administration of Inter Agency Agreements with successful passage of Section 7006 of the *"Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, MD Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020."*
- NAVREF led the "Friends of the VA" lobbying efforts, which last year helped increase the 2021 VA research appropriation by **\$28M** over the President's Budget Request.
- NAVREF worked closely with the House Committee on Veterans Affairs to produce a draft 2021 bill that will address items of critical interest to NPCs including the Paperwork Reduction Act, Other Transactional Authority, the Intergovernmental Personnel Act, expansion of hiring authorities, dedicated research time, and outside earned income for VA investigators.



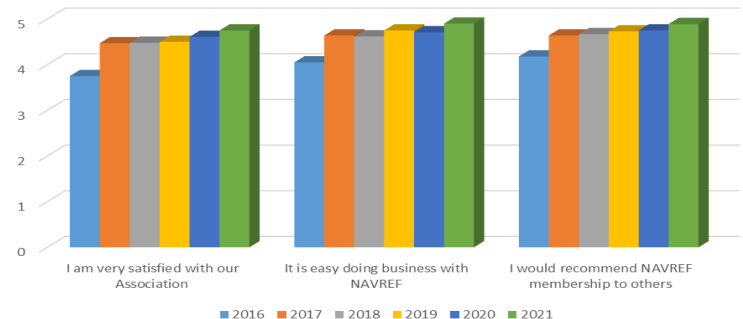
## In Appreciation

NAVREF is thankful for the generous contributions of time, energy, and passion from numerous individuals and organizations. Our success as an association derives from our members' willingness to volunteer and contribute their time and skills. Thank you to all the volunteers who participated in NAVREF-hosted activities as committee members, work group members, mentors, presenters, and subject-matter experts. Thank you to all the individuals who serve as NPC board members helping to govern and guide NPCs. We appreciate the NAVREF Board of Directors, a dedicated group of leaders with demanding schedules who still make the time to support research and education programs for veterans. We added five new Directors over the last 12 months—Tinesar Forrest, Gery Schulteis, Genet D'Arcy, Rebecca Rosales, and Alton (Mike) Stocks—who each add special individual talents and who collectively bring terrific energy and diversity. Thank you all for your selflessness and dedication to serving veterans—you keep us inspired!

Program Satisfaction



Overall Satisfaction



# NAVREF ANNUAL REPORT 2021



## 2020-2021 Recognitions

### 6<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NAVREF AWARDS

We were proud to recognize three deserving awardees for their notable accomplishments at our 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards Presentation during our Virtual Conference.

### THANK YOU TO OUR 2020 CONFERENCE SPONSORS

Janssen, Boehringer Ingelheim, Assurance Dimensions, RCM&D, Greenphire, OptumServe, Lincoln Financial Group



**The Barbara West Award for Distinguished Service**  
*Amy Kimball*  
*Boston VA Research Institute*



**The Board of Directors Distinguished Service Award**  
*Elaine Staats*  
*Palo Alto Veterans Institute for Research*



**The Innovation and Best Practices Award**  
*Margaret Tiktin*  
*Cleveland VA Medical Research & Education Foundation*



## Philanthropic Donors

*Thank You!*

NAVREF is truly appreciative of our supporters as their generous contributions have helped strengthen our community to provide cutting edge research and improve the quality of life for so many veterans.

**NAVREF Champion** | \$100,000 and Up  
**COHEN VETERANS BIOSCIENCE**

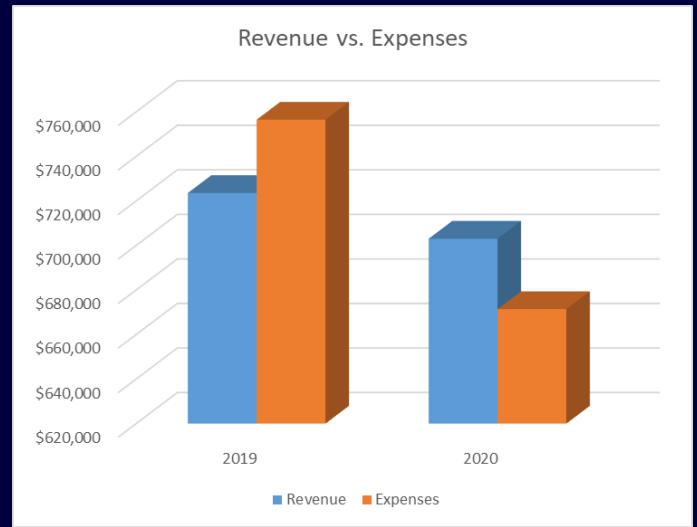
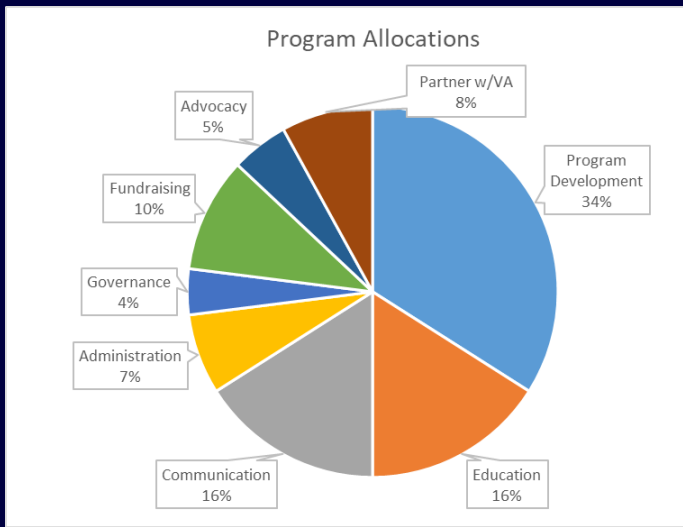
**NAVREF Star** | \$20,000 to \$99,999  
**ASSOCIATION OF VA HEMATOLOGY AND ONCOLOGY**

**NAVREF Hero** | \$10,000 to \$19,999  
***We still need a hero!***

**NAVREF Friend** | \$1,000 to \$9,999  
**Bob Forrester • Jeff Jakubiak**

**NAVREF Ally** | Up to \$999  
**Shelley Cobb • Matthew Collier • Danielle Fleumer • Scott Gruber  
Ron Hakes • Kevin Hull • B. James McCallum • Jeffrey Moore  
Mike Quinata • Cindy Reutzel • Robin Rusconi • Paul Russo**

# NAVREF Financials



NAVREF's finances remain strong. Although revenue decreased in 2020 due to the cancellation of the in-person conference, this decrease was more than offset by the drop in expenses associated with pandemic restrictions on travel, conferences, and workshops. The largest program increase was directed to fundraising where NAVREF is seeking to work more closely with firms and foundations who are committed to improving veteran health through research and education. Returns from this investment are not expected until FY2022.

## On the Horizon For 2021-2022

The upcoming membership year is filled with excitement and optimism as we emerge from our COVID cocoons and explore returns to offices and travel and conferences. NAVREF will continue to actively pursue enhanced access to clinical trials for veterans at VA facilities through the Partnered Research Program and the ACT for Veterans initiative. We will convene Industry Partner Consortium meetings to help VA become industry's partner of choice for research. We will energize our mentorship program for NPC executives. We will host an in-person national conference in New Orleans and training workshops throughout the year that will enable professional networking and personal interactions. Finally, we will remain laser-focused on our mission to advance the success of every NPC as we strive to achieve our vision of a nation in which veterans receive the finest care based on innovative research and education.

