




Partnering to Assist Disabled Veterans in Transition: ACE and NASPA


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 American Council on Education
The Unifying Voice for Higher Education

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- Membership organization
- Unifying voice for higher education
- Center for Lifelong Learning
- “What an individual learns is more important than when, where, or how.”
- www.acenet.edu

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An Overview

Severely Injured Veterans: Fulfilling Their Dreams

When veterans with severe injuries return to civilian life, they face difficult transitions and often lose the convenience of direct access to the government's educational support programs

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About the Program

- **Started April 2007**
- **Funded by contributions and donations**
- **250+ participants**
- **60 taking classes or enrolled**
- **13 completed program plans**
- **Numerous volunteers and volunteer organizations**

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Program Volunteers

- Individuals
- Organizations
 - › Veterans Upward Bound (VUB)
 - › National Association of School Personnel Administrators (NASPA)
 - › PrepMatters
 - › Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE)




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NASPA's Role

- Ultimate higher education “rolodex”
- Professional association with a broad scope (student learning, student life, co-curricular, more...)
- Research and collaboration
- Advising ACE about current trends and hot topics on campus



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The Advising Process

Walter Reed Army Medical Center (DC)
Bethesda Naval Hospital (MD)
Brooke Army Hospital (TX)
Naval Medical Center San Diego – Balboa (CA)

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Individualized Support

<p><u>General Advising:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying educational resources and programs• Applying a “high-touch” approach – no one model for support• Maintaining patience and flexibility (unknown recovery times, family issues, military obligations)• Brainstorming options and providing encouragement	<p><u>Pathway Planning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying varied academic and professional interests• Determining full-time, part-time, traditional “on-campus” and distance learning interests• Locating institutions across the country (state, private, and accredited)• Finding “champions” to engage with members
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Ryan Haerer, Army



- Owned and ran his own landscaping business before he joined the Army
- Medic w/ 10th Mountain Div
- Sustained injuries to his legs
- 2 years credit University of Florida / AARTS
- The Ohio State University
- Full-time student
- Interested in career in intelligence



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Natasha McKinnon, Army



- Injured in 2005
- Single leg, above the knee amputee
- Internship at the National Zoo during recovery and therapy
- North Carolina State University
- Animal Science (goal to be a Veterinarian)



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Corey Smith, Marine



- **Joined at 17, entered a day after turning 18**
- **Wounded September 2006**
- **Had to retake ACT**
- **Kent State University**
- **Full-time, living on campus**
- **Criminal Justice**
- **Earned 3.4 GPA first semester**



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Ashley McGonagle, Marine Spouse



- **Wife of wounded Marine, Brian**
- **Prior credits from University of Toledo**
- **Attending University of the Incarnate Word**
- **Bachelor of Arts**
- **Now Brian is ready to take courses; Ashley's influence and support from program**



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Scott Leifker, Army Reserves



- **Military Police**
- **Married with 2 kids**
- **Deployed twice, second deployment injured (August 2006)**
- **Severe burns**
- **Distance learning program**
- **Colorado Technical University**
- **Mentor for other soldiers**



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Feedback and Lessons Learned (Members)

- **Uncontrolled variables**
 - › Voc Rehab
 - › Medical Review Boards
 - › “Big Military” (Example: Raymond Hubbard)
 - › Medical recovery – setbacks and surgeries
- **Transition**
 - › Timing factors
 - › Plans change (Example: Jose Sanchez)
- **Memory challenges**



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Feedback and Lessons Learned (Members)

- Benefits
 - › Navigating myriad of resources
 - › Understanding VA / decision processes
- Overwhelming information and solicitation of services
 - › Build credibility – follow through
- Anonymity (for some)
- Academic culture, language, terminology
 - › Applications – deferments – transfer credit



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Campus Advocacy

***Provides sources of information,
encouragement and advocacy in
areas ranging from academics to
campus culture***



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What is a “Champion?”

- Someone willing to invest time and energy to help veteran is make informed decisions
- Provide the veteran with guidance on dealing with the chaos of college and assist in bridging the gap from the military mission-oriented structure to the academic environment
- Also serves as a resource to assist with matters such as study skills, tutor support services, Veterans Affairs issues, and enrollment challenges
- Will seek to build a community-based team of support for the veteran and/or family member
- Needs to be flexible and persevere, because, undoubtedly, the veteran or family member will face set-backs and obstacles on their journey, particularly when getting started.



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Excerpt from an e-mail to a NASPA colleague

“Can you think of someone who could be a ‘transition sponsor’ or ‘champion’ to assist [veteran] at [your school]? This volunteer will help the veteran deal with administrative hurdles, academic advice, and support for the emotional aspects of a transition to civilian life. My research shows that peers and former military personnel are likely to prove most helpful.”



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Program Volunteers

Sean-Michael Green, University of Pittsburgh



- Assistant Dean, College of General Studies
- USMC: 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines
- A licensed attorney in Pennsylvania
- Author of *Marching to College: Turning Military Experience into College Admissions* (Random House, 2004)



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Program Volunteers

Dan Allen, The Ohio State University



- Director, Student Affairs Fiscal Support Services
- Colonel (Ret.) in the Army Reserves
- Senior military liaison for Iraq reconstruction, US Embassy, Civil Military Operations Directorate in Baghdad (2005-2006)



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Feedback from “Champions” (Sponsor-Mentors)

- **Just offering the extra service to veteran bolsters confidence, whether they use the service or not**
- **ACE program advisors may want to periodically remind veterans to take advantage of the program and maintain regular and meaningful contact with their champion-mentor**
- **Vets voiced concern about fear of acceptance in college (older student, “liberal” campus, etc.)**



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Feedback from “Champions” (Sponsor-Mentors)

- **Getting them involved with veteran’s group on campus**
- **Symptom of PTSD is inability to complete necessary paperwork... and they often don’t know why?**
- **Many don’t want “learning disability” (LD) designation on their record... not seeking help**
- **Reluctance to retrieve mental health records from the military for use by counseling staff at school**



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Feedback from “Champions” (Sponsor-Mentors)

- **Misinformation about the “system” from military and others? Example: those diagnosed with PTSD will not be eligible to receive security clearance later?**
- **Some not talkative at first meetings w/champion**
- **Some students opted to not take advantage of pre-arranged mentoring opportunity**



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Challenges

- **Continuous change (members, programs and services)**
- **Individualized advising process**
 - › **Need more formal process to review academic planning in advance**
- **Constant flux of veterans and families**
- **Scholarships to veterans**
- **Fragmentation of programs and support (not just education)**
- **Unique nuances of each hospital location**
- **Volunteer coordination**



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Model Programs - Ideas

- Designate a group, committee or team
- Focus a commitment to process
- Connect and leverage local community and state resources
- Engage with VUB operations
- Learn to better understand the veteran profile



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Future Strategies

To be extraordinarily effective, providing accessible assistance to severely injured veterans and their families and ensuring that our nation's heroes can pursue their dreams of going to college



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The Need for Growth

- **Funding a sustainable plan**
- **Identifying other hospital locations**
- **Building program access and infrastructure**
- **Streamlining fragmentation of information on programs and resources**



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ACE Presidents' Summit Serving Those Who Serve: Higher Education and America's Veterans

- Sponsored by Georgetown University
- June 5-6, 2008
- Engaging from the top
- Limited to 300 participants
- Provide the opportunity to engage in a candid conversation on the issues faced by returning veterans with higher education leaders and student veterans

Summit Objectives

- Identify emerging issues and provide a forum for national cross-sector discussion
- Learn from first-hand accounts of student veterans
- Discover and explore innovative practices
- Encourage collaboration among institutions and with other organizations



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Let's Discuss...

- **Program(s) at your campus**
- **Veterans as an emerging student population**
- **Students with disabilities**
- **Other thoughts... the future... where do we go from here?**



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Questions or Comments?

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