

# 2015-16 Veterans Enrollment Report

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Prepared by the Office of Academic and Student Affairs  
Pursuant to *Nevada Revised Statutes* 396.507

November 2016

University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
University of Nevada, Reno  
Nevada State College  
College of Southern Nevada  
Great Basin College  
Truckee Meadows Community College  
Western Nevada College  
Desert Research Institute



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# Background and Purpose

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The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) is dedicated to supporting student veterans and their families in pursuing their educational goals. Student veterans are growing in number not only in Nevada, but across the nation. This particular student population often faces unique challenges in assimilating back into civilian life. It is the goal of NSHE and its institutions to provide the necessary services to support student veterans, in order to ensure their success in achieving their educational goals.

The purpose of this report is to meet the reporting requirements of *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 396.507. This provision requires the Board of Regents to submit an annual report to the Legislature, or to the Legislative Committee on Education when the Legislature is not in regular session, which includes: (1) the number of students who are veterans or who are receiving payments or benefits from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs; (2) information about how policy changes may have affected the number of students who are veterans enrolled in the Nevada System of Higher Education; (3) the number of students who are veterans who graduated during the immediately preceding academic year; and (4) the efforts undertaken by each institution within the System to retain and graduate students who are veterans.

NSHE institutions have undertaken a significant technical implementation to improve the collection of veteran enrollment data to make it possible for veterans to self-identify on their application for admission. Full implementation will be complete in time for the veterans to self-identify during the application process for the Fall 2016 semester. Since the application only collects data on new students, the institutions are also using various survey instruments to identify currently enrolled veterans.

Due to the implementation schedule as it relates to the deadline for this report, the data in this report is incomplete and should not be used to make policy decisions or to draw any conclusions regarding the performance of student veterans or the success of recently approved policy changes impacting such students. However, over time, the accuracy and reliability of this data will improve.



# Student Veterans Data

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## **Number of Identified Student Veterans: 5,259**

For academic year 2015-16, 5,259 student veterans were identified across the seven NSHE teaching institutions. This figure is unduplicated and only captures students whose veterans' benefits were certified by an NSHE institution, or who self-identified on an admissions application.

## **Number of Student Veterans receiving payments from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: 3,624**

For academic year 2015-16, 3,624 student veterans were certified by an NSHE institution for the purpose of receiving educational benefits. This figure is unduplicated and only includes students who have been certified by an NSHE institution to receive benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

## **Percent of Student Veterans by Gender: 66.8% Male, 33.2% Female**

Of the student veterans identified as enrolled at an NSHE institution in Academic Year 2015-16, 66.8 percent were identified as male and 33.2 percent female. Gender data is not available for all identified student veterans.

## **Average Age of Enrolled Student Veterans: 30 years old**

For the identified student veterans enrolled in the 2015-16 academic year, the average age of those identified students was 30 years old as of September 2015.

## **Fall to Spring Retention: 82.0%**

Of the identified student veterans that were enrolled in Fall 2015, 82.0 percent persisted and enrolled in the Spring 2016 term.

## **Number of Student Veterans Who Graduated: 783**

During academic year 2015-16, 783 student veterans received a degree or certificate. This number would exclude any veteran who did not receive benefits and/or self-identify as a veteran to the institution.

# Areas of Study

State law requires that NSHE report “the most common areas of study among the students who are veterans.”

This data is reported by the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) category for student veterans enrolled during the 2015-16 academic year. The CIP codes used in this report are based on a taxonomic scheme that supports the accurate tracking and reporting of fields of study and program completions activity. The CIP scheme was developed and is maintained by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. The CIP code is the accepted standard for the federal government on instructional program classifications in higher education and is used in a variety of education related surveys and databases within NSHE and across the country.

The top 15 CIP categories with the highest number of student veterans enrolled are noted in the following table.

Classification of Instructional Program Category	# of Students
52-Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	879
51-Health Professions and Related Programs	705
24-Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, and Humanities	683
41-Science Technologies/Technicians	342
14-Engineering	320
43-Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Firefighting and Related Protective Services	316
42-Psychology	260
41-Science Technologies/Technicians	321
42-Psychology	275
13-Education	258
26-Biological and Biomedical Sciences	251
45-Social Sciences	249
11-Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services	235
50-Visual and Performing Arts	186
15-Engineering Technologies and Engineering Related Fields	128
50-Visual and Performing Arts	201
15-Engineering Technologies and Engineering Related Fields	152
09-Communication, Journalism, and Related Programs	126
44-Public Administration and Social Service Professions	118



## Policy Changes

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State law requires reporting of any information necessary to determine the impact of policy changes on the number of student veterans who are enrolled in NSHE. Two significant policy changes have taken effect that merit measuring the impact: 1.) the federal Veterans' Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014, and 2.) Assembly Bill 260 enacted during the 2013 Session of the Nevada State Legislature. Both establish criteria under which a veteran may be deemed a resident for tuition purposes, therefore avoiding higher non-resident tuition charges under certain circumstances.

### The Choice Act

Under Section 702 of the Veterans' Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (H.R. 3230, "Choice Act"), public institutions of higher education that do not offer in-state tuition rates to certain veterans will lose federal veteran educational assistance dollars under the Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33 of Title 38 of the *United States Code*, which includes the Fry Scholarship) and Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty (Chapter 30 of Title 38 of the *United States Code*). Specifically, institutions must offer in-state tuition rates to veterans who are living in the state in which the institution is located; served in the active military, naval or air service; are pursuing a course of education with federal education benefits; and enroll in the institution within three years after their discharge from service. In-state tuition must also be offered to certain family members of the veteran or a member of the armed forces who died in the line of duty while on active duty if that family member enrolls within three years after the veteran's discharge or the service member's death and is using veterans education benefits.

To ensure NSHE institutions comply with this new federal law and do not risk the loss of federal veteran educational assistance by its students, the Board of Regents adopted provisions necessary to comply with the Act in March 2015 (*Board of Regents' Handbook*, Title 4, Chapter 15, Section 3.12). The adopted policy complies with Section 702 of the "Choice Act" by providing an exemption from tuition charges for a covered individual who enrolls within the specified three-year timeframe. Covered individuals must only start their program within the three years and then they will be covered for terms after the 3 year mark. In addition, the Board chose to extend the requirements of the Choice Act in Nevada to also include within the non-resident tuition exemption veterans and dependent beneficiaries who qualify under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) Program (See Chapter 35 of Title 38 of the *United States Code*). The DEA Program provides education and training opportunities to eligible dependents of veterans who are permanently and

totally disabled due to a service-related condition or of veterans who died while on active duty or as a result of a service-related condition.

**Assembly Bill 260 (Chapter 505, *Statutes of Nevada 2013*)**

*Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 396.540 provides that the Board of Regents may fix the tuition charges for students at NSHE campuses, but must not charge tuition to certain students, including for example, students who are residents of Nevada. Existing Board policy under *Title 4, Chapter 15, Section 3* (Tuition) and *Section 4* (Resident Students) of the Handbook recognizes the provisions contained in NRS 396.540.

The 2013 Legislature passed Assembly Bill 260 (Chapter 505, *Statutes of Nevada 2013*), which added “veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States who were honorably discharged within the 2 years immediately preceding the date of matriculation of the veteran at a university, state college or community college within the System” to the list of students for whom the Board must not charge tuition under NRS 396.540. In June 2013, the Board of Regents approved a policy revision under *Title 4, Chapter 15, Section 3* to reflect this addition. Subsequently, the 2015 Legislature passed Assembly Bill 76 (Chapter 13, *Statutes of Nevada 2015*) and amended this section of State law to increase the timeframe from two years to five years.

*Impact:* In 2015-16, 37 veterans were deemed residents for tuitions purposes. It is expected that with the expansion of the NRS 396.540 from two years to five years, the number of veterans seeking residency status under this provision will continue to grow.

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# Institutional Efforts

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State law requires a summary of efforts of each NSHE institution to retain and graduate student veterans through retention and other related programs. The following summaries, provided by the institutions and compiled here, detail those retention and related student success efforts on each campus.

## UNLV

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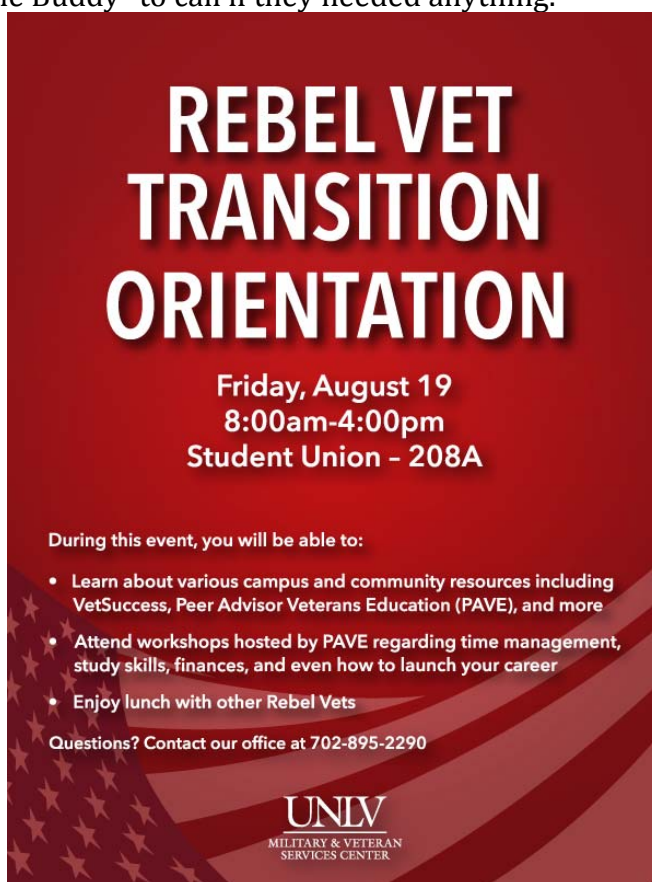
UNLV established the Office of Veteran Services, now called the Military & Veteran Services Center (MVSC) to better serve our growing student veteran and military family community by developing a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success. We understand the many challenges associated with pursuing a degree while serving on active duty, as well as the challenges associated with making the leap from the military to the civilian world. Working with the Student Veterans & Military Family Services Committee and our VetSuccess office on campus to meet these needs, MVSC is staffed with veterans and GI Bill®-experienced staff to assist more than 1,780 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members and reservists with answers to questions concerning admissions, GI Bill® enrollment certification, financial aid resources, campus and community support services, local veteran discounted-housing programs and various networks for veteran employment opportunities.

**A. UNLV Veteran Programs:** The following programs are nationally recognized as the model for welcoming, admitting, mentoring and providing resources to student veterans to help increase retention and graduation. The following list highlights the benefits of attending UNLV for veterans and includes the UNLV Military & Veteran Services programs:

- Nevada residency is granted to all “honorably” discharged veterans within five years of separation and three years for Military family members using GI BILL (NRS 396.540).
- Priority registration is provided to all veterans to expedite payment of the Chapter 33 GI Bill® housing allowance.
- UNLV is ranked as a Top 15% “Veteran-Friendly” University (GIJOBS.COM 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016).
- UNLV offers the VetSuccess program with a VA Benefits Counselor on campus.
- UNLV is a Yellow Ribbon program participant, which aids veterans or military family members who are charged out-of-state tuition fees. (In collaboration with the UNLV Foundation, we raised \$39,000 and, with VA matching funds, reached a total of \$78,000 in grant monies.)
- UNLV sponsors a nationally recognized Student Veterans Organization and a Rebel Women Veterans group.
- UNLV hosts “Safe Talk” suicide prevention training and an “Ask-a-Lawyer” legal aid workshop each semester.
- UNLV College of Education and Clark County School District are partners for the “Troops to Teachers” program at UNLV, which provides an accelerated licensing program to any veteran with a bachelor’s degree.

- UNLV participates in the University of Michigan Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE) peer-to-peer mentoring program.
- UNLV co-sponsors the semiannual Senator Reid Veteran Hiring Fair with local employers ready to hire veterans. (Our veteran career fairs were held on June 22, 2016, and January 14, 2016.)
- Since 2012 the Eleanor Kagi Foundation has funded five Rebel Vet Graduation receptions to honor our 754 student veteran graduates. Each Rebel Vet graduate received a Rebel Vet graduation coin; a red, white and blue cord; and certificates of recognition from the Governor and the Nevada Delegation. We also conducted a drawing of prizes from the local community.

**B. NEW: Rebel Vet Transition Orientation:** Using the PeopleSoft student information system, we are able to search for all newly admitted student veterans and military family members to send them an OVS welcome email, a VA resource email, a Student Veterans Organization (SVO)/Rebel Women Vets welcome email and a list of campus/community resources and orientations to assist them in their transition to campus life. Beginning August 2016, the MVSC will host the first Rebel Vet Transition Orientation. The Rebel Vet Transition Orientation will provide our new veterans with information, veteran resources, VA benefits, connection to our peer-to-peer network and some helpful classes in their journey for academic success. After providing these resources, our PAVE peer-to-peer mentors will reach out to these students. Each of our PAVE mentors will personally call and welcome each new student veteran and tell them about our peer-to-peer mentoring program, letting each one know they have support and a “Battle Buddy” to call if they needed anything.



**C. Faculty and Staff Veteran Awareness Training:** The Military & Veteran Services Center continues to provide faculty and staff veteran-awareness training known as Serving Every Returning Veteran

(SERV). This training is designed to explain the various challenges facing our returning veterans and to inform attendees about campus programs that are available to assist veterans in achieving their academic goals. UNLV offer this training monthly during the academic school year through UNLV HR Training and conducted more than 49 training sessions for over 375 employees to date. The Military & Veteran Services Center also conducted SERV training as part of the VA Hospital new staff orientation in July 2016.

**D. Campus Celebrations:** During 2015-16 we conducted a military author presentation with the Black Mountain Institute and hosted our fifth annual Student Life-funded Veterans Day week “Walk/Run to Remember” with more than 250 participants.

- ❖ **The “Walk/Run to Remember” 2015 celebration** consisted of the following: (a) a run/walk along a flag-decorated two-mile course, (b) a memorial wreath ceremony with an Army and Air Force ROTC combined color guard, (c) a special presentation to the fiancée and parents of Petty Officer Jared Day in honor of their son, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2011, (d) a team of UNLV band members playing the Navy song, (e) VA VetSuccess support services table, (e) an SVA table for students, faculty and staff to write veteran thank-you cards, and (f) a table where faculty, staff and students could donate to the UNLV Yellow Ribbon Fund. (This event raised more than \$250 for the fund.)



- ❖ **The 4th and 5th Rebel Vet Graduation Receptions:** On December 14, 2015, and May 13, 2016, the Military & Veteran Services Center and the UNLV Student Veterans Organization, with invaluable volunteer support from the Student Veterans & Military Family Support Committee, hosted two semiannual Rebel Vet Graduation Receptions. During the ceremonies we recognized the service and academic achievement of more than 201 graduating veterans and ROTC graduates. The ceremony included the following: (a) a slide presentation of the graduates set to music, (b) a UNLV welcome by AVP Mike Sauer, (c) a presentation of guests – Marine veteran and Clark County high school teacher Ruebin DiSilva (UNLV Graduate) and Student Veterans of America (SVA) CEO Jared Lyons – a Navy veteran, (d) a celebration cake cut with an Army saber, and (e) the recognition of graduates. We presented each graduate with a Rebel Vet coin and cord, a packet with certificates of recognition by each of the Nevada delegation, and a donated Garth Brooks Greatest Hits CD and tickets to Gordie Brown at the Golden Nuggett. We also conducted a drawing of community prizes that included show tickets, dinner coupons and weekend getaway packages. In addition we recognized all our graduates

by publishing the graduation list of student veterans, military family members, and Army and Air Force ROTC graduates on our office wall of honor.



**E. NEW - Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE):** UNLV is one of the few universities in the country that participates in the University of Michigan PAVE (Peer Advisors for Veteran Education) program. PAVE is a peer support program that connects incoming student veterans with student veterans already on campus in order to help them navigate college life, identify challenges they are facing, refer them to the appropriate resources on or off campus, and provide ongoing support for their academic and personal ventures. University of Michigan PAVE conducted a survey of all our veterans using the Post 9-11 GI Bill®. We had a 46% response rate and found the following key information about our programs at UNLV:

- The average age of our veterans is 30 years old;
- Military branches: Air Force 41%, Army 26%, Navy 19%, Marine Corps 16% and Coast Guard 2%;
- 70% had at least one deployment;
- 41% of our veterans are in STEM-related courses;
- 83% of our veterans feel supported at UNLV;
- 71% of our veterans are enthusiastic about UNLV;
- 62% of our veterans had a sense of belonging at UNLV; and
- 50% felt UNLV was one of the best schools in the nation.



## UNR

The following table includes information on the types of support programs that the UNR Veterans Services Office has in place for student veterans:

Program Name	Type of Retention And Effort	Description
Veterans' Orientation	Initial retention Group	Provided through Veteran Services office. Administered through staff and Vet2Vet Representatives. Initial brief of services offered, staff available, and events to engage in. Concept is success strategies and developing immediate network with our services.
Veteran 1-1 Intake	Initial retention/ Network building	All incoming students meet one on one with our Intake Coordinator. Benefits are set up, degree plans are confirmed, basic needs assessed, tailored services offered.
Vet2Vet Program *REVISED 6/2016	Long-term retention/Peer Support/Network building	Each incoming student (First year and Transfer) are assigned to a Vet2Vet Representative. The Vet2Vet Rep has been trained through our office to follow the student for the first academic year. Regular communication is established. Ongoing needs assessment for academic and integration success and tailored services offered. Workshops for success given by Vet2Vet Reps.  *REVISED: communication/marketing plans for college specific needs
V.I.T.A.L. Grant UPDATED: 10/2016	On-going retention/ Community Involvement 3 <sup>rd</sup> party partnership	Veteran's Integration to Academic Leadership has been a part of this campus for 5 years. It employs one Veteran Outreach Program Specialist and one Social Worker. Both provide services to our students to vest into the VA Health Care System, provide mental health/well-being, and collaborate with the Director on programming efforts with student veterans. They host several events during the year. *UPDATE: Originally brought on through a grant, it was absorbed this year through the local VA Health Care System to continue providing services to the campus.

Two Student Veteran Groups  *UPDATED: 6/2016	On-going /campus engagement/Community Involvement	Two veteran student groups' missions align with UNR Veteran Services office to support campus integration and retention efforts. Group Presidents report to the Director of Veteran Services to coordinate programming. Programming include Welcome to Fall Event, community outreach to VVA, DAV, VFW, American Legion, NNVR, homeless vets project.  *UPDATE: three groups consolidated into two. More intense collaboration between the two groups specifically for community/civic engagement as listed above.
Progress Reports	Intense One-on-One	Veterans that have dropped below 2.3 and/or show a pattern of dropping GPA are called into office for one-on-one assessment and customized help or referral.
Warning Term	Intense One-on-One	Veterans who have dropped to 2.0 or below are advised on benefit and/or financial aid impact. Customized assessment and referral given.
Academic Counseling	Intense One-on-One	Veterans who are not following academic plans are advised and plan confirmed to stay on track. Referral back to college advisor's always first step.
Class/Instructor Mitigation	Intense One-on-One	Veterans who have integration issues with a particular class or instructor are counseled on how to resolve. Veteran Services can assist in that mitigation if necessary.
VetSMART	On-going Campus-wide	Veteran Services and Vet2Vet Reps deliver professional development training and veteran awareness to faculty and staff. This builds a network of identifiable personnel on campus a veteran can seek assistance from.
REVISED MODEL 8/2016: CAREER CONCIERGE	On-going Career Preparation One-on-one	Career preparation that involves customized path per student. Intake is done to assess job search tools, preparation needs, plans for internships, interview challenges, networking strengths and challenges, etc. Plan of action is then developed per student with specific set-points that must be accomplished each term for long-term goal. Group workshops are still offered to the general student veteran population for those who do not want intense personalized services.

Welcome Events	On-going per term Networking Group events	Hosted by VITAL and in collaboration with SVA, welcome events are structured at the beginning of each term for current students to mix and mingle with new/transfer students over free lunch. Vet2Vet Reps market the event to the incoming students. Faculty and staff are also present
GI Bill® Success Workshops	On-going retention GI Bill management Group Events	VA SCO for the institution holds scheduled talks and walk-in time to help navigate both enrollment and GI Bill® use for successful payment and entitlement forecasting. Emphasis is given per benefit chapter to bring awareness of how to best navigate regulations with personal enrollment goals.
Employer Connect	On-going retention Employer Identification Group Events	In collaboration with Nevada Career Studio, simple marketing program to identify current employer partnerships through Career Studio that have veteran/military considerations in the hiring practice. These employers are then identified by a designated logo for veteran/military population to recognize them during career and internship fairs.
Veteran/Military Center OPENED: 3/2016	Dedicated physical space On-going retention Personalized and group engagement	Spring 2016 marked the opening of the first UNR Veteran/Military Center. This is an expansion of services, giving a second location to meet the needs of student veterans' integration both physically and programmatically onto campus. The physical space provides a group engagement context, study context, lab computer usage, workshops, events, and employment for 15 VA Work Study students. The Center also holds a dedicated office for VITAL (Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership) team, a Community Office that provides space for internal and external entities to bring services to the student for ease of access, and dedicated space for Veteran Services staff.

Community Partnerships	Dedicated space within the Center On-going retention through meeting non-educational needs, Personalized and group	The Community Partnership program invites external entities to bring veteran-related services to campus. Partnerships are identified through the assessment of basic student needs. Currently partnerships exist with NV DETR/JobConnect for resume development, NDVS Veteran Services Officer for filing disability claims, Nevada legal Services for pro-bono work. These services reserve the Community Office within the Center to be able to meet with students one-on-one.
Campus Partnerships	Dedicated space within the Center On-going retention Personalized and group	The Campus Partnership program invites other campus entities that lend to the retention and persistence of the veteran student population to bring their services to the Center. Currently other programs that provide ongoing services are: Academic advisors for advising in conjunction with GI Bill® regulation, tutoring, and writing center. Dedicated time is set up at the convenience of the partner and then marketed to the students.
Coffee with Non-traditional Women in higher education	On-going retention Group	In an attempt to engage women veterans on campus due to low turnout within the veteran groups, a coffee is set monthly for ANY non-traditional women students to engage in a casual coffee hour. Encouraging non-traditional women students (other than veteran only) expands the group as well as serves as greater integration.
November Veteran Recognition	Annual programming Group	Several events are offered and include, hosted lunch at campus restaurant for all students, 2000+ flags planted and ceremony, flag retirement, veteran recognition at a home football game, hosted speakers, free raffles/prizes such as ski passes and gift cards, free movie night for veterans and families on campus.



## NSC

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Nevada State College provides critical academic and financial support to student veterans, and the scope of this assistance continues to expand with the growth of our veteran population. This report describes new developments in this area along with existing support structures.

### **New Developments**

**Residency Code Update:** Currently, NSC identifies student veterans – and collects pertinent data – when these students self-identify by applying for benefits certification. Through this process, student veterans are placed into a student group in PeopleSoft with a corresponding residency code to help us track this population and capture relevant data. However, there are concerns that not all student veterans are self-identifying through this process. Consequently, NSC will begin capturing information from our Hobson’s application that identifies veteran data so that it can be added to our data warehouse. This information will be updated accordingly in PeopleSoft fields, which will improve our ability to track all student veterans, not just those who apply for benefits certification.

**Veterans Programming Update:** NSC is working to develop more robust services for our student Veterans. The Dean of Students, Director of the DRC, and Veteran Affairs Scholarship Specialist have been working to foster a more supportive campus community for veterans through relevant services, events, and resources. Currently, our Veterans Affairs Scholarship Specialist is responsible for the benefits certification process, and NSC also allotted a Student Veterans Lounge in the Rogers Student Center.

NSC is in the process of officially recognizing a Student Veterans Club, and our DRC Director and Veterans Affairs Scholarship Specialist volunteered to serve as the faculty advisors for the student organization. The student veterans involved with the organization drafted a constitution and are in the process of formally applying for official recognition from the Nevada State Student Alliance (NSSA). The formation of the Student Veterans Club is the first step in developing more robust veterans services at NSC, as we would like these efforts to be student-driven and developed through the feedback and information provided by our student veterans. The student organization can help to increase our student veteran presence on campus and with our student body. By increasing the campus engagement of our student Veterans, we anticipate that they will utilize their leadership experience and serve in NSSA or other student leadership roles (e.g., peer mentors, course assistants, student tutors).

In addition, our DRC Director worked to develop veterans’ specific programming during the week of Veterans’ Day. This includes a presentation by Paul Grossman, who is a nationally recognized expert and speaker in the area of serving wounded warriors in post-secondary education. Importantly, this event reflects a strong collaboration among UNV, NSC, and CSN, and it would not have been possible without meaningful contributions from each institution. The events surrounding Veterans’ Day also will include recognition for NSC’s faculty and student veterans and active duty service members, as well as a student veteran panel discussion.

NSC also recently collaborated with the Veterans Services Community Group and the Nevada Department of Veterans Services to host the first Henderson Resource and Community Fair at NSC on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. The college had 23 employers and service providers participate in this event, which helped to increase NSC's profile in the Veterans community and the community at-large. As we progress in the above areas, some future program ideas for NSC include early registration for student Veterans to ensure that financial aid and support will be funded prior to the start of the upcoming semester; having a VA Success Benefits Counselor on campus one time per semester; examining opportunities for work study programs through the VA; the development of a peer advisor program; and the development of a recruiting strategy targeted specifically at Veterans.

NSC also has general support programs that may be beneficial for our student veterans. While these programs are not veteran specific, they can provide additional assistance and support in addressing issues and stressors experienced by our student veterans. NSC's Student of Concern Committee (SOCC) was formed in response to an increasing need to manage "Students of Concern" – students who have exhibited worrisome behavior that may be indicative of escalating behavioral disturbance, mental health issues, a threat to campus or campus personnel, or excessive levels of emotional distress that adversely affect a student's ability to be successful in the classroom.

The committee has a relatively broad scope and attempts to address a wide range of student issues. Areas of concern include psychosocial and behavioral problems that may interfere with adequate and successful functioning that, if unaddressed, might lead to a dangerous outcome to the student or the community. The goal of the SOCC is to identify problems and intervene before they exacerbate and adversely affect the student's ability to be successful. The overarching mission of the SOCC is to promote: 1) the health and safety of the campus community, and 2) community member health, well-being, and successful experiences by coordinating information and developing support plans for students.

In addition, NSC currently contracts with UNLV Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to provide mental health services to our students. During the Spring 2016 semester, a mental health needs assessment was conducted to formally assess mental health needs on campus, utilization rates at CAPS, and barriers to accessing services. Based in part on these results, NSC is working to bring contracted mental health services on campus 1-2 days per week. Once in place, the college will assess student need and adjust accordingly. We anticipate having services on campus for the Spring 2017 semester.

### **Existing Support**

**Personnel:** Promoting the success of veterans begins with personnel, and NSC now enlists the following support staff to help veterans meet their financial, academic, and career goals:

**VA Specialist** – The VA Specialist in the Office of Financial Aid helps veterans navigate often complicated financial aid processes and obstacles with the provision of resources and one-on-one counseling

**Academic Advising** – The Academic Advising Center does not, at present, have a single advisor who is dedicated to student veterans, but we try to ensure that at least one advisor is trained to help veterans with degree planning and other aspects of navigating the college experience (while collaborating with the VA Specialist in Financial Aid).

**Career Services Specialist** - The support for veterans extends to our new Career Center, which now assists veterans – along with all other students – in the pursuit of internships and career opportunities and provides guidance in the development of relevant skills (e.g., resume writing, interviewing, and career planning).

**Financial Assistance:** We also try to ensure that veteran students capably overcome the many financial obstacles they are likely to face. This is achieved partly through the VA specialist described above, but it also manifests through special procedures that are only applied to veterans. NSC upholds rigorous tuition and fee standards that require students to make payments by specified dates, lest they get removed from their courses. However, because of the unique way in which veterans receive funding, our bursar's office protects these students from being removed from their courses until they receive their financial support from the government. To further enhance the financial well-being of veteran students, NSC has established a relationship with Nevada Partners, which provided monetary support to veterans in need.

### **Recruitment**

At present, NSC does not conduct recruitment efforts that are exclusively designed for veterans. However, our recruiters apprise prospective veteran students of the aforementioned support personnel and structures to encourage them to apply to NSC.

## **CSN Military & Veterans Alliance**

In Spring 2016, the Office of Community Relations, Diversity & Multi-Cultural Affairs and CSN faculty and staff created the CSN Military & Veterans Alliance (MVA). The Committee has quarterly meetings, hosts veteran and military related events, and offers a job/career fair in the Fall semester. MVA members and students will be participating in the 2016 Las Vegas Veterans Day Parade.

- The MVA seeks to unite the various service men and women who are students of CSN together to share and learn about one another's experiences and identities.
- MVAC, in direct collaboration with CSN's Office of Community Relations, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs will assist the organization inclusivity by focusing on service to those student veterans, faculty, and staff of the armed service communities.
- Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership and support educational opportunities, initiatives and activities, for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to veterans and active military service men and women.

## **CSN Vet2Vet Peer Mentoring Program**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the CSN Vet2Vet Peer Mentoring Program (V2V) is to provide assistance and resources to new and transferring student veterans in their scholarly pursuits. It will serve as an essential element of CSN's duty to promote the improvement of academic success, persistence, and graduation of veterans.

Note that peer mentor positions are strictly *volunteer-based*.

### **Mission Statement**

The CSN Vet2Vet Peer Mentoring Program (V2V) was created to provide a network of support linking new CSN student veterans in their transition to the CSN community by offering assistance, encouragement, and resources to enhance their opportunities for academic achievement and civic engagement.

### **Goals**

- Increase retention by minimizing initial isolation;
- Reduce the number of student veterans on academic probation/suspension;
- Increasing student veteran participation and communication; and
- Equip student veterans with additional encouragement and inspiration to be successful by bridging the gap between CSN services and support systems.

## **Objectives**

- Provide help and guidance to new and transferring student veterans;
- Introduce student veterans to CSN and Metropolitan Las Vegas community resources;
- Provide an environment that supports and encourages student veterans to cultivate an exceptional academic standing, and be active in campus and community based activities;
- Support team building and leadership development opportunities for mentors;
- Identify and put into action networking opportunities among and between mentors and mentees; and
- Provide support and resources to assistance student veterans improve academically and socially to the CSN campus community.

## **PROGRAM BENEFITS**

### **Mentors**

- Valuable leadership opportunities;
- Improved communication abilities; and
- Increased networking skills.

### **Mentees**

- Able to connect with other veterans and develop a sense of belonging;
- Knowledge of education/personal/social resources;
- Strengthened consciousness of CSN, government, and community resources;
- Personal gratification; and
- Increased self-confidence and self-worth.

### **CSN**

- Increased graduation, persistence, and retention for CSN student veterans; and
- Increased student veteran institutional satisfaction.

## **Mentee Qualification**

The Vet2Vet Peer Mentoring Program is open to new and transfer student veterans to assist in effectively connecting them to the CSN community. Upon acceptance into the program, new student veterans will be coupled with continuing student veterans who will serve as their peer mentor.

### **Responsibilities include:**

- Commitment to the success of the program;
- Weekly “contact” with peer mentor;
- Participate in V2V academic and personal development seminars;
- Attend at least two V2V community services activities each semester; and
- Attend at least one CSN program each semester.

## Expectations

- At the end of the Fall and Spring semesters complete a program evaluation;
  - Maintain confidentiality;
  - Comply with CSN Institutional policies and procedures;
  - **Anticipated Implementation: Spring 2017.**
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## GBC

The following table lists the efforts and other related programs that GBC is currently conducting to retain and graduate student veterans. GBC believes that a complete foundation is needed for student retention.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Retention Effort</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Great Basin College (GBC)</b>  <b>Veterans Resource Center (VRC)</b>	<p>GBC established the Elko Main VRC in October of 2014 to better serve our student veteran population.</p> <p>We provide <i><b>Intense Academic/Personal Support for Student Veterans &amp; their Families</b></i>, both during their time here at GBC and after they have graduated.</p>	<p>We provide an encouraging environment by acknowledging, honoring, and addressing all of our veteran's needs, all while helping them attain their educational goals.</p> <p>At the VRC we house the following: veterans lounge, study room, coffee &amp; snack bar, Elko Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) offices (Fulltime Veterans Service Officer, Administrative Assistant, &amp; VISTA Member).</p>
<b>VRC Study Room</b>	<i><b>Academic / Personal Support</b></i>	We provide a non-distracting, comfortable environment that the student veteran can concentrate on their studies. This space has computers & printers, used text books, as well as a reference library. Student Veterans utilize this work space all throughout the day.
<b>Regular Hours Tutoring /Study Hall Period</b>	<i><b>Academic/Personal Support-Peer/Instructor One on One</b></i>	We offer the student veteran various tutoring options, either with their peers or with our faculty/instructors as needed or requested.
<b>Afterhours Tutoring /Study Hall Period</b>	<i><b>Academic/Personal Support-Peer/Instructor One on One</b></i>	We offer peer to peer/faculty to student tutoring sessions/groups on the weekends and until 11pm on certain days of the week, as requested by student veterans. Some students have difficulty studying at home with their family routines and the afterhours resources provide them with other options.

<b>Academic Success Center</b>	<b><i>Intense One-on-One Academic Support / Network</i></b>	<p>GBC's Academic Success Centers (ASC) on the Elko campus and at GBC's rural centers offer the following services to GBC students, all at no cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live Tutoring - Free to all GBC Students;</li> <li>• Free Placement Testing;</li> <li>• Proctored Testing;</li> <li>• Open Computer Labs; and</li> <li>• Free Student Success Workshops (also available online).</li> </ul>
<b><u>B(S)<sub>3</sub>N</u> Biological Sciences Student Support Network</b>	<b><i>Intense One-on-One Academic Support / Network</i></b>	Math and science tutoring offered free of charge at the B(S) <sub>3</sub> N center. Tutors are comprised of students and instructors. Walk ins welcome. This has been made possible by Nevada INBRE and the GBC Science Department.
<b>SLC, UT VA VET CENTER Mental Health Services</b>	<b><i>Personal Support- Intense One on One / Comfortable Support Group</i></b>	<p>MSW/LCSW drives from Salt Lake City, UT to Elko on the first and third Tuesdays and Wednesdays of the month. We hold a veteran support group in the VRC at 12 noon on those Tuesdays.</p> <p>Individual appointments can also be made on those days.</p>
<b>Informal Mentoring / Peer Support</b>	<b><i>Academic/Personal Support- Peer/Faculty &amp; Staff Intense One on One</i></b>	Informal Mentoring is conducted by the Veteran Resource Coordinator, Veteran Certifying Official, faculty & staff, veteran volunteers, and by other student veterans.
<b>Nevada Department of Veteran Services (NDVS)</b>	<b><i>Personal Support- Intense One on One</i></b>	As of August 2016, the NDVS Veteran Service Officer (VSO) is housed in the VRC fulltime. This offers a struggling student veteran more resources and benefit information in one location. This greatly helps with student retention. By adding more services we also outreaching VA educational benefits to another agencies veteran clients.



<b>Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR)</b>	<b><i>Personal / Financial Support- Intense One on One / Group</i></b>	Elko DETR veterans representative visits the VRC several times per week to offer services and to update the current job postings. The representative also refers many veterans to us for their educational benefits. Various trainings are offered through DETR such as resume classes. Works with JOIN and has provided financial assistance for veterans training and employment.
<b><u>JOIN</u> Job Opportunities In Nevada</b>	<b><i>Intense One-on-One Personal / Financial Support</i></b>	Elko JOIN provides financial assistance for many student veterans for tuition, books, and tools. They work well with DETR and GBC to provide financial assistance for Veterans training and employment.
<b>Advising &amp; Career Center</b>	<b><i>Intense One-on-One Academic / Personal Support</i></b>	Provides assistance to students, alumni, faculty, staff, and the community in developing, implementing, and evaluating career/life plans. Hosts career fairs several times per year. All advising staff refers student veterans to our certifying official and to the VRC to complete their academic plans and set them up for success.
<b>VA Student Work Study</b>	<b><i>Intense One-on-One Academic / Personal Support</i></b>	Allows the student veteran to work a part time job at GBC (less travel between classes). This additional income helps to pay the bills while using VA educational benefits.
<b>Free Veteran Classes</b>	<b><i>Personal Support</i></b>	<p>GBC provides free classes teaching different coping mechanisms for veterans. 'Rest for Relaxation' is a painting class that encourages veterans to use the power of creativity as a positive coping skill in their lives.</p> <p>We have also teamed up with the Western Folklife Center and the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering. Each year we host a Veterans Writing Group Workshop here at the VRC to encourage positive coping skills for our veterans.</p>

<b>Battle Born Veterans Club (SVA)</b>	<b><i>Network / Personal Support</i></b>	Sanctioned by the Student Veterans of America and the Student Government Association, the Battle Born Veterans Club is a student veteran ran organization that builds comradery amongst the transitioning veterans.
<b>Financial Aid</b>	<b><i>Intense One-on-One Financial Support</i></b>	GBC Financial Aid assists veterans with all aspects of their VA educational benefits. They also encourage all student veterans to apply for FAFSA and Veteran scholarships. GBC is continuing to receive more veteran scholarships from our community.
<b>Accessibility Services</b>	<b><i>Intense One-on-One Academic / Personal Support</i></b>	It is the policy and practice of GBC to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and state and local requirements regarding students with disabilities. Under these laws, no qualified individual with a disability shall be denied access to or participation in services, programs and activities of Great Basin College. All services are at no cost to students and potential students of Great Basin College.
<b>The PRACTICE Counseling Service</b>	<b><i>Intense One-on-One Personal Support</i></b>	GBC and Communities in Schools partner to provide PRACTICE, free of charge to our students. The Partnership for Research, Assessment, Counseling, Therapy and Innovative Clinical Education — The PRACTICE — is a UNLV community mental health training clinic.
<b>Operation Bravo</b>	<b><i>Intense One-on-One Academic, Personal Support/ Career Networking</i></b>	Barrick Gold Corporation, Great Basin College, and the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development have teamed together to establish Operation Bravo, a Veteran Internship Program. Operation Bravo assists our transitioning Veterans by setting them up for success through education and employment. While attending GBC and receiving their VA educational benefits, student veterans will gain valuable work experience within their major fields of study, interning with partner employers. Operation Bravo believes that by investing in our veterans, we are investing in our communities.

## TMCC

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The mission of Truckee Meadows Community College's (TMCC) Veteran Services is to assist our student veteran population in their transition from the military into the academic environment. We are focused on retaining our veteran students and guiding them towards their graduation and professional goals. Our staff works diligently to identify areas of need for our student veteran population as well as areas in which we need to expand and improve.

### New Initiatives

- **New Veteran Resource Center** – The first massive improvement was the move to a brand new Veteran Resource Center (VRC) at the main Dandini campus on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The new VRC is roughly 4 times the size of the previous location and provides a number of new services for our veterans. The new location is equipped with a computer lab, study/conference room, veterans lounge, as well as a separate office for offsite personnel to utilize for veteran specific purposes. This larger space will provide the Veterans Services staff at TMCC a greater opportunity to assist student veterans in their transition from the military to the academic environment.
- **Professional Development Initiative** – The VRC also partners with the TMCC Career Center to produce a series of veteran specific professional development workshops and job preparation classes that are open to all student veterans at TMCC. These workshops include resumes, LinkedIn, networking, mock interviews, and business cards. Each one of these workshops is designed to assist veterans in their transition to the professional environment.
- **Veteran Job and Resource Fair** – Another collaboration between the VRC and Career Center is the Veteran Resource and Job Fair held every fall and spring semester which averages 60-70 vendors and is open to all veterans in the community. We held our first event in Fall 2015 and it was such a huge success that we decided to hold one every semester for the foreseeable future.

### Continuing Initiatives

- **Veteran Academic Advisor** – We currently have a .50 FTE veteran specific academic advisor who assists veterans in selecting their degree plans as well as ensuring that they are taking the correct courses
- **Veterans Pre-Admission Associate** – Serves .30 FTE as an additional academic advisor, assists in VA educational benefits certification, as well as evaluates military transcripts. This position is funded by the TAACCCT 4 grant and is due to expire either October 2017 or March 2018. Losing this position will have a detrimental impact on the quality of service that we provide our student veteran population.
- **Veteran On-Track Workshops** – These are detailed academic advisement workshops that assist our students by ensuring that they are following their educational plan in order to graduate on time.
- **Veteran specific Orientation** – We hold a minimum of 4 veteran orientations per semester that cover everything from their VA educational benefits to local resources and events going on in the area.
- **Early Enrollment** – TMCC offers priority registration to all student veterans to help ensure that our veterans are able to get into the classes that they need.

- **Veterans Upward Bound** – Located at Meadowood campus, VUB is a pre-college preparation program that offers academic skills development, testing, financial literacy, advisement, career planning, and transitional assistance.
- **TMVC (Truckee Meadows Veterans Club)** – Our nationally recognized Student Veterans of America chapter's presence in the VRC builds comradery with our veterans and gives student veterans a unified voice on campus. The club also holds student veteran events both on and off campus.
- **Early Alert** – TMCC recently implemented direct access to our student veterans who are identified in the college's early alert system. This early alert system gives us the opportunity to identify student veterans struggling in their classes and then refer them to campus resources on an individual basis.
- **Student Veteran Mentor Program** – The student veteran mentor program was designed to assist up to 60 student veterans who are in their first or second semester at TMCC with their transition to the academic environment. The program will link each veteran with an assigned faculty mentor that will personally assist them with any issues that they may be experiencing throughout the academic year. Each student who participates in the program will receive a \$250 book grant to use at the TMCC bookstore.
- **Veteran Leadership Academy (VLA)** – The VLA is a program that awards 10 exemplary student veterans with a \$1,000 grant. These students will be taking part in numerous community service events throughout the semester as well as take part in a number of workshops that are designed to help grow professionally.
- **V.I.T.A.L. Initiative** – TMCC has a VA social worker who serves an extremely important role by providing our veteran mental health services in our VRC on campus two days a week. We also have a veterans specialist who assists our students in enrolling in VA healthcare and works with them to understand their benefits.

**Veteran Outreach Events** – Veteran Services conducts numerous veteran outreach events at various dates throughout each semester. Thanks to an enormous amount of community support we are able to hold large veteran events such as BBQs where our veterans can interact with each other both on and off campus. The ability to do this helps the veterans revisit the comradery they once had while they were in the service. We also partner with community resources to offer workshops for faculty and staff in order better educate them on the military/veteran culture.

## New Initiatives

1. In addition to fine tuning the practices reported upon in 2015, Western Nevada College instituted a major effort at retaining and graduating veterans by opening a new Veterans Resource Center. While the first Center accomplished a major goal of establishment of a Veterans Resource Center, it was cramped, and the small space limited the number of student veterans who could actually utilize the center from a mentoring/tutoring standpoint. The new space is over four times larger, enabling the space to be divided into a general meeting room with distinct, separate areas for mentoring, tutoring, and study areas and a separate room equipped with computers and a whiteboard for group tutoring/access to online classes. In the first two months since opening, VRC usage increased threefold over the old space, enabling more veterans on campus to be served.
2. Student Veteran Workers, who are on duty the entire time VRC is open, are now all required to complete the Nevada Veteran Advocacy Program, administered through the Nevada Dept. of Veteran Services (NDVS). The Program consists of completing twenty modules on the State of Nevada website. The modules were developed to increase the knowledge of any individual on U.S. Veterans Administration benefits, ranging from VA home loans to burial benefits. The ability of student veteran workers to answer questions that student veterans have about their VA benefits assists student veterans get maximum utilization of benefits, which results in less lost time from classes while a student pursues a question on his or her own by traveling to the Reno VA, which is only open during normal working hours.
3. A Veteran Service Officer from the Disabled American Veterans visits the VRC every Tuesday to meet with and assist student veterans who need to submit disability claims or follow up on claims already pending. Again, having this service on campus negates student veterans from having to leave campus during normal class hours to get serious disability claims taken care of.
4. The Coordinator of the VRC is also the faculty advisor for all student veterans and has been given access to OnBase and Peoplesoft, which greatly assists in advising students, identifying potential problems and developing solutions before the problems become critical. The Coordinator gets a report at the end of the semester with all student veteran's grades and reviews them, calling in and meeting with all who do not attain a 2.0 GPA or who have shown a significant drop off in their GPA.
5. The Coordinator of the VRC is now an ASIST trainer who conducts two day training seminars on Suicide Intervention. The Pre-Admissions advisor is also ASIST trained. All Student Veterans workers are all required to attend safeTALK, a four hour suicide awareness seminar to combat the growing epidemic in the veteran community.
6. The WNC Veterans Resource Center and student veterans were very involved with the United Veterans Legislative Council during the 2015 Nevada Legislative session as advocates for the veteran and student veteran community. As a result of these efforts, a new Nevada Revised Statute is now in effect that allows veterans who have ended active service from up to five years ago to receive in-state tuition at NSHE institutions. WNC students were active as interns and advocates during the session, learning the legislative process from the ground floor up.

The following summarizes the approach taken by WNC in support student veterans:

1. Holistic approach to the individual
  - a. We have had vets check in who were homeless, without transportation or money for food.
  - b. We have developed many contacts in the community to assist these veterans.
2. Tutoring
  - a. Many veterans were not scholastic overachievers in high school.
  - b. Further, they have not been in the school environment in many years.
  - c. We assist the transition with remedial classes, individual and group tutoring and the Veterans Upward Bound program and constant monitoring of academic status.
3. Mentorship
  - a. Everyone who works in the VRC is a veteran.
  - b. The coordinator is a retired Marine Corps officer.
  - c. The pre-admissions advisor was an eight year veteran of the Marine Corps who graduated from WNC and is now finishing up his bachelor's degree.
  - d. All six of the student veteran workers have multiple semesters at WNC under their belts. Most are on the Dean's List.
  - e. Each incoming veteran is individually welcomed and counseled by the pre- admissions advisor and VRC Coordinator including review of a sixteen point checklist that includes common student veteran pitfalls and services provided by the Veterans Resource Center.
4. Advising
  - a. After an initial orientation to the Veterans Resource Center and Programs, we explore ways to be a successful student.
  - b. We explore ways to be a smart student regarding scheduling of classes, types of semester classes and load breakdown.
  - c. We have assisted student veterans with classes on how to plan a week from class time to merging work, family, and study time.
  - d. The VRC Coordinator is the student veteran's faculty advisor for their time at WNC.
  - e. Students not meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) meet with the Coordinator weekly to review previous week's work, current week requirements and upcoming semester projects for each class.
5. Career exploration/definition & Accelerated Technical Programs
  - a. For those students who do not have an academic direction or chosen career field, we work with SIGI 3 software to assist that process. SIGI 3 basically does an inventory of an individual's likes, dislikes, merges that with work experience /military occupational specialty, and gives possible career paths to explore based upon those answers and shows schools with those programs.