

2019-20 Veterans Enrollment Report

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

November 2020

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

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 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 was completed 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 who applied prior to Fall 2016.

Due to the implementation schedule as it relates to this report, the data in this report is not comparable to past reports.



Student Veterans Data

Number of Identified Student Veterans: 6,150

For Academic Year 2019-20, 6,150 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 admission application.

Number of Student Veterans Receiving Payments from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: 3,988

For Academic Year 2019-20, 3,988 student veterans were certified by an NSHE institution for the purpose of receiving federal veteran education 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: 69.5% Male, 30.5% Female

Of the student veterans identified as enrolled at an NSHE institution in Academic Year 2019-20, 69.5 percent were identified as male and 30.5 percent as female. Gender data is not available for all identified student veterans.

Average Age of Enrolled Student Veterans: 31.2 years old

For the identified student veterans enrolled in the 2019-20 academic year, the average age this student population was 31.2 years old as of September 2019.

Fall to Spring Retention: 71.5%

Of the identified student veterans that were enrolled in Fall 2019, 71.5 percent persisted and enrolled in the Spring 2020 term.

Number of Student Veterans Who Graduated: 1,308

During Academic Year 2019-20, 1,308 student veterans received a degree or certificate. The actual number may be higher as this excludes 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 2019-20 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	1,023
24-Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, and Humanities	980
51-Health Professions and Related Programs	870
43-Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Firefighting and Related Protective Services	465
41-Science Technologies/Technicians	435
11-Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services	286
13-Education	252
14-Engineering	250
42-Psychology	239
45-Social Sciences	213
50-Visual and Performing Arts	207
26-Biological and Biomedical Sciences	174
47-Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians	166
40-Physical Sciences	165
15-Engineering Technologies and Engineering-Related Fields	126

Policy Changes

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 passed at the federal and state levels in prior years impact the criteria under which a veteran may be deemed a resident for tuition purposes, thus avoiding higher non-resident tuition charges under certain circumstances: 1.) The federal Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014, and 2.) Measures passed by the 2013 and 2015 Nevada State Legislature amending NRS 396.540 to prohibit charging tuition to veterans honorably discharged within a certain number of years preceding their enrollment in an NSHE institution. An additional law was passed by congress late in 2018, amending the federal Veterans Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 to broaden the scope of veterans provided to include those utilizing VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment benefits. In 2019, the Nevada legislature passed Assembly Bill 427 permitting veteran recipients of the Purple Heart Award to register for credit without registration, laboratory, or other mandatory fees.

Spring of 2020 was the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Colleges and universities across the nation began switching to distance learning in spring 2020 and in other cases institutions closed; both these actions impacted student veteran benefit payments and entitlement. In response, several federal laws were passed mid-spring and early fall 2020 to amend certain regulations under Title 38 U.S.C. to provide relief for student veterans impacted by the pandemic. A summary of these policy changes follows. In addition, a summary of other military and veterans' education benefits under Board policy and state and federal law is available through the [NSHE website](#).

Impact: In Academic Year 2019-20, 725 new and continuing veterans were deemed residents for tuition 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.

Nevada Legislation

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. 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. Board policy also includes this exemption as set forth by the Nevada Legislature (*Title 4, Chapter 15, Section 3*).

The 2019 Legislature passed Assembly Bill 427 (Chapter 320, *Statutes of Nevada 2019*) requiring the Nevada System of Higher Education' starting July 1, 2019, to waive the payment of registration fees and certain other fees assessed against students within the System who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States who have been awarded the Purple Heart. This bill also provides for Purple Heart recipients receiving the waiver to be deemed a bona fide Nevada resident under NRS 396.540. The Board of Regents adopted the provision as set forth by the Nevada Legislature (*Title 4, Chapter 17, Section 4*).

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 original 2014 Act, as well as subsequent revisions at the federal level under *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 start their program within the three years and then they will be covered for terms after the 3-year mark. In addition, Board policy also extends the requirements of the Choice Act in Nevada to 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.

Late in 2018, Congress passed Public Law 115-251, and Section 301 of that legislation further amends 39 U.S.C. 3679(c) "Choice Act" to require that individuals using education assistance under Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Chapter 31 of Title 38 of the *United States Code*) also be charged the in-state tuition rate. Under this federal amendment, effective for courses, semesters, or terms beginning after March 1, 2019, a public institution of higher learning must charge the in-state rate to Chapter 31 participants, as well as the other categories of individuals already included. When an institution charges these individuals more than the rate for resident students, the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) is required to disapprove programs of education sponsored by the VA. To ensure compliance with the amended federal law, the Board of Regents adopted provisions to cover the Chapter 31 students under the *Board of Regents' Handbook*, Title 4, Chapter 15, Section 3.12.

Support for Veterans in Effective Apprenticeships Act 2019

The Support for Veterans in Effective Apprenticeship Act 2019 (S. 760) enables registered apprenticeship programs to better serve veterans. Enacted March 2020, this bill requires that the Department of Labor revise its registered apprenticeship programs to include additional program requirements for increasing the access of veterans and their survivors or dependents to such programs. The Department of Labor must acquire written assurance that sponsors of apprenticeship programs: 1.) are aware of the availability of educational assistance for veterans and eligible individuals for use in such programs, 2.) will make a good faith effort to obtain approval for such educational assistance for at least each program location that employs or recruits such recipients, and 3.) will not deny a qualified applicant to avoid making a good faith effort to obtain approval for educational assistance. In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor must require program sponsors to provide standards that contain provisions to grant advanced standing or credit and to provide increased wages commensurate to such standing or credit to individuals eligible for educational assistance.

Department of Veteran Affairs Educational Assistance Benefits for Certain Programs of Education Converted to Distance Education

In March 2020 Public Law 16-128 (S. 3503) was enacted to authorize the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to treat certain programs of education converted to distance learning by reasons of emergency and health-related situations in the same manner as programs of education pursued in-person at educational institutions. This includes payment of monthly housing stipends under Chapter 33 as well as subsistence

allowances under Chapters 30, 31, 32, and 35 of Title 38 U.S.C.. The same provision covers Chapters 1606 and 1607 of Title 10 U.S.C.

Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act 2020

The Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 (H.R. 6322) provides several improvements in the educational assistance benefits under Veteran Administration laws in the case of changes to courses of education by reason of emergency situation. This bill addresses education programs and assistance for veterans during the covered period of March 1 through December 21, 2020. The Act authorizes Veterans Affairs to 1.) continue paying work study allowances during the emergency periods under certain circumstances in which a student is unable to access work for up to four weeks, 2.) prohibit the charge of entitlement of students unable to pursue a program of education due to an emergency situation including temporary school closure or a termination of a course or program of study, and 3.) provide an extension of time limitation for use of entitlement to Chapter 30, Chapter 33 and transferees, and Chapter 31 who are prevented from pursuing a chosen program of education before the designated expiration period due to the closure of the institution under Executive Order of the President. The Act also amends Title 38 Section 3699 by including Chapter 31 students as covered individuals such that entitlement shall not be charged due to the closure of an institution during the covered period. Lastly, the Act provides for an extension of payment of vocational rehabilitation subsistence allowances for certain individuals during the covered period.

Continuing Appropriations Act 2021 and Other Extensions Act

Enacted October of 2020, the Continuing Appropriations Act of 2021, section 5202 provides for the extension of Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 by extending the covered period from ending December 21, 2020 to December 21, 2021.

Institutional Efforts

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.

NEW: Significant Achievements,

- Achievements include those from important collaborations.
- The VA completed a no-notice compliance inspection of the MVSC (Jan 2020) with **no deficiencies noted** that highlighted our 10-day payment record.
- Governor Sisolak recognized the MVSC as the Nevada Veteran Supporter of the Month (Feb 2020).
- Student Veterans of America (SVA) national headquarters recognized Maran Shaker (Army veteran) as the SVA Veteran of the Month for May 2020 out of veterans from 1500 chapters.
- UNLV was again ranked as a Top 15% or GOLD “Veteran Friendly” university (2011–2020). Source: GIJOBS.COM.
- UNLV is ranked in the nation’s Top 99/605 “Best for Vets” colleges for veterans using the GI Bill®. Source: *Military Times* 2019.
- SVA recognized UNLV as a leader in the veteran community at the 2020 SVA National Conference (out of 1500 chapters).

NEW: Home Depot Renovation – (October 2019- May 2020)

Completed a \$35,000 renovation of the MVSC office suites with new paint, flooring repair, carpeting, new cabinets, adjustable standing desks, chairs, cabinets and some office refrigerators. MVSC moved back in over the Summer.

NEW: Paperless System Development: Paperless: Since late 2019, the MVSC has been working closely with a tech team to develop a fully paperless VA benefit certification system. Some progress was made prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but remote operations during the pandemic period allowed MVSC staff a greater ability to focus on developing and testing this new system without the typical distractions of office activity. The paperless system will also remove much of the time and “busy work” currently required by our manual processes, simultaneously bolstering our certification efficiency and accuracy. For patron students, we expect to experience more clarity regarding the status of their certification request(s), while the MVSC certification team anticipates fewer back-and-forth emails and more straightforward certification requests, which will free the team to provide even more exceptional customer service than we currently deliver.

Retention: COVID operations - The entire MVSC operations were built around maintaining paper files and interacting face-to-face with our veteran and military-affiliated students at our main office. We had no plan or system to certify with our more than 1800 paper files.

Pandemic Operations Shift

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the certification team quickly developed a makeshift virtual certification processing system built on a series of Gmail folders. A general message was sent to active benefit users and UNLV academic advisors, requesting their assistance in specifically constructing emails from students requesting certification. These emails serve as virtual files in place of our paper files, which were locked in our office and inaccessible during our remote operation period. We also alerted students that we may have to re-request document submissions to offset our inability to access their paper files. Thanks to the ingenuity of the certification team and the boundless flexibility of our VA student workers, UNLV VA education benefit users experienced no lapse in either certifications or in incoming VA payments. Our team even welcomed six new student workers during this time: three just before going remote and three while in remote status. Our leads and other seasoned student workers rallied to train the new members, regularly adjusting our approach until we learned what worked best for each individual. The team produced several innovations over the Spring 2020 semester, including a new ability for our student workers to enjoy an even more flexible work schedule that, once fully trained, allows them to work a schedule not bound by our 8–5 business hours. This will assist more

of our team members in maximizing their VA contracted hours and is a practice we intend to maintain into the future.

Payments

- Fall 2020 payments applied in some respect - \$2,285,718.32
- Average payment time is 10 days.

PAVE Team Outreach

- **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-to-peer support program. Before the COVID-19 crisis, this service was predominantly a face-to face advising operation. After the move to a remote operation, the PAVE team, led by Dwayne Gordon (associate director of veteran outreach), shifted the PAVE operations to provide the following services:
 - Connect remotely with all new incoming veteran and military-affiliated students.
 - Connect remotely with student veterans already on campus to help them navigate college life and our new remote operations, identify challenges they may be facing, refer them to the appropriate resources on or off campus, and provide ongoing support for their academic and personal ventures.
 - The PAVE team also has partnered with the UNLV School of Social Work to allow its students to work with the MVSC as an approved practicum site.
 - Developed a new recruiting message, updated all of the VA education benefit checklists, and communicated with 145 new veterans planning to attend UNLV in the fall.
 - The PAVE team will present at the PAVE Virtual National Conference, Aug 3–4, 2020 (Ross, Dwayne, Alana, and Rayshawn).
 - **15 PAVE members have completed the national training and our introduction orientation**
 - **Conducted – 1,442 in outreach and 262 in interaction coaching call.**
- **Conducted 113 interactions with the new veterans National Guard and Army ROTC**

Mission Fulfillment

a) Unit's core mission

- i. Vision:** The MVSC is a student-veteran and military-affiliated student-centered, service-oriented, technology-driven unit that is innovative in spirit and strives to excel in all efforts to facilitate student success.
- ii. Mission:** The MVSC manages critical functions affecting the student-veteran and military-affiliated student experience, including community outreach, recruitment, enrollment, retention, and graduation. Working in partnership with the university and community, we aspire to develop comprehensive programs and services to impact student progression and completion.
- iii. Mission-critical programs or services:** UNLV established 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 Las Vegas Veteran Engagement Community Council for veteran resources and our VetSuccess office on campus to meet these needs, MVSC is staffed with veterans and GI Bill®-experienced staff to assist 1,699 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, and various networks for veteran employment opportunities.

iv. **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 also 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 within three years for military family members using GI Bill®.
- AB 76, signed by Governor Sandoval, grants in-state tuition to any dependents of KIA service members awarded the FRY Scholarship.
- Priority registration is provided to all veterans to expedite payment of the Chapter 33 GI Bill®.
- UNLV is ranked as a GOLD-rated “Veteran-Friendly” University (GIJOBS.COM 2011–2019).
- *Military Times* magazine ranked UNLV #99 (“Best for Vets”) out of 605 4-year schools.
- UNLV offers the VetSuccess program with a VA benefits counselor on campus.
- UNLV sponsors a nationally recognized Student Veterans Organization chapter, Rebel Vets.
- UNLV hosts “Safe Talk” suicide prevention training each semester.
- UNLV participates in the University of Michigan Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE) peer-to-peer mentoring program.
- UNLV co-sponsors the semiannual Veteran Hiring Fair with local employers ready to hire veterans. (Our next will be on January 23, 2021).
- Since 2012, the Eleanor Kagi Foundation has funded 12 Rebel Vet Graduation receptions to honor our 1,968 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.

Community Outreach

- Southern Nevada Veteran Engagement Community Council
- Nevada Department of Veterans Services
- NSHE Veteran Office Group
- VA VetSuccess
- MGM, Cosmopolitan, Caesar veteran programs
- VA Vet Centers
- Merging Vets and Players (MVP)
- Student Veterans of America –national headquarters
- Wells Fargo Veteran Club
- Raiders Foundation
- Nevada Veteran Support Alliance
- Eleanor Kagi Foundation
- Completed DoD MOU
- Completed Army Education MOU
- Completed Navy MOU
- Completed Air Force MOU
- Completed PAVE MOU and licensing agreement with University of Michigan

Recruitment

- Veteran career fair trips – Fort Irwin (June 2019)
- Cancelled travel during COVID 19
- Canceled *USA Today* advertisement due to lack of budget
- Canceled *Military Times* advertisement due to lack of budget
- Completed Victory Media survey
- Completed *Military Times* “Best for Vets” survey

- Completed DoD MOU
- Completed Army Education MOU
- Completed Navy MOU
- Completed Air Force MOU
- Joined College Recon website through our Student Veterans of America (SVA) membership

Enrollment

- Fall 2019 – 1,443 students with benefits (1,852 certifications)
- Spring 2020 – 1,350 students with benefits (1,717 certifications)
- Summer 2020 – 774 students with benefits (863 certifications)
- **Total payments posted – \$8,393,981.00**

Retention

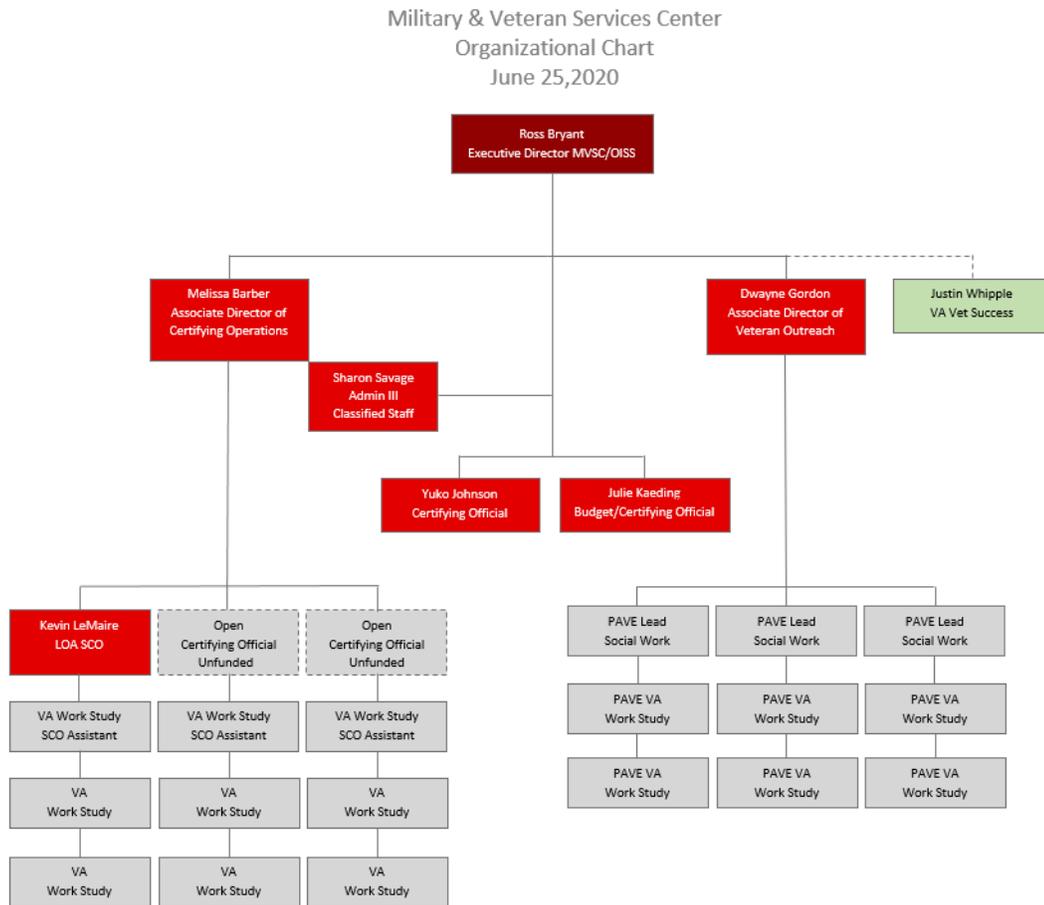
- **Welcome operations** – New students
- **Veteran Transition orientation**
 - January 2020 –on-campus
 - August – remote and online
- **Certification operations** (foundation of all MVSC operations)
 - SCOs certify @ 1,500 files per semester
 - Payments are posted within 48 hours of arrival
 - VA Education Benefit online courses
- **PAVE**
 - PAVE – new veteran connection
 - Probation outreach
 - Suspension outreach
 - Resource development
 - College of Social Work partnership
 - VA VetSuccess partnership
- **Student Veterans of America (SVA)**
 - SALUTE pool party welcome (Aug 2019)
 - SVA Leadership Symposium (Aug 2019)
 - SVA Leadership Summit (Sep 2019)
 - UNLV Concert for Heroes (Nov 2019)
 - Operation Battle Born (May 2020 – **canceled due to COVID-19**)
 - Monthly SVA meetings
 - Established monthly WebEx meetings
 - Established weekly hikes (social distanced)

Graduation

- Veteran Graduation Reception – December 2019
- WebEx Veteran Graduation Party – May 2020
 - Recognized MVSC student workers who graduated
- Veteran Engage Breakfast – April 2020 (**canceled due to COVID-19**)
- Veteran Career Fair – June 2020 (**canceled due to COVID-19**)

- v. **Staff: Current Organizational Structure:** The UNLV Military & Veteran Services Center is understaffed for our critical mission. The VA standard is 250 files per school certifying official (SCO). We are currently staffed for 500–600 files per SCO. Our office has seven employees (an executive director (responsible for two departments), an associate director of certifying, an associate director of veteran outreach, an administrative assistant, and three certifying officials) responsible for marketing, recruiting, orientations/welcoming veterans, certifying VA paperwork, retention, faculty and staff awareness training, campus celebrations, notifying faculty about the UNLV Student Veterans Organization, community outreach, fundraising for the Yellow Ribbon Fund, and graduation recognition. The VA funds 25 student veteran workers to assist with student veteran customer service and in-processing and up to 12 student workers to

assist in the PAVE program. We could not operate without these talented student workers. The current office structure follows:



vi. **Relevant metrics, indicators, and assessments**

- **Population:** The Military & Veteran Services Center (MVSC) in support of the 1,671 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, reservists, Army/Air Force Cadets and military family members attending UNLV.
 - 1,443 veterans and military affiliated students for Fall 2019. (an increase of 69 from Fall 2018).
 - We certified 1,852 total transactions to the VA
 - 1,350 veterans and military affiliated students for Spring 2020. (an increase of 111 from Spring 2019)
 - We certified 1,717 total transactions to the VA
 - 774 veterans and military affiliated students for Summer 2020. (decrease of 28 from Summer 2019).

vii. **Support of the UNLV Top Tier Strategic Plan**

- **Community Outreach:** The executive director of the Military & Veteran Services Center and our director of outreach are the outreach coordinators for all things veteran in Southern Nevada. Ross continues to be the co-chair of the local VA Southern Nevada Veteran Engagement Community Council. The committee consists of Goodwill, the Red Cross, the Las Vegas Urban League, Las Vegas PBS, the local Heroes2Hired program, UNLV Military & Veteran Services Center, the VA Hospital, and the City of Las Vegas. The various services available are listed below:
- **UNLV Student Veteran Resources**
 - Military & Veteran Services Center (SSCA-311) – (702) 895-2290/(702) 774-4611
 - VetSuccess Office (SSCA-315a) – (702) 895-5669
 - Student Veterans Organization (SVO) – svo.unlv@gmail.com
- **All UNLV Academic Advising Centers**
- **Student Services**
 - Student Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) – (702) 895-3627
 - The PRACTICE: A UNLV Community Mental Health Clinic – (702) 895-1532
 - Campus Housing – (702) 895-3489
 - Career Services – (702) 895-3495
 - Disability Resource Center – (702) 895-0866
 - Financial Aid and Scholarships – (702) 895-3424
 - Jean Nidetch Women’s Center – (702) 895-4475
 - Student Health Services – (702) 895-3370
 - Parking Services – (702) 895-1300
 - The Intersections – (702) 895-0459
 - Student Diversity & Social Justice – (702) 895-4099
 - Tutoring in all subjects – (702) 895-4782
 - Writing Center – (702) 731-3908
- **Las Vegas Community Veteran Resources**
 - Veteran Crisis Hotline – (800) 273-8253
 - Vet Center COMBAT Call Center – (877) WAR-VETS
 - State of Nevada Veterans Services – (702) 636-3070 or www.veterans.nv.gov
 - Veterans Assistance Office – (800) 827-1000
 - VA Health Care System in Nevada – <http://www.lasvegas.va.gov>
 - Service-Connected Disability Claims – (800) 827-1000 or www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/compensation
 - VA Claims Assistance – www.veterans.nv.gov/veteran_benefits.html
 - VA Mental Health Services – www.mentalhealth.va.gov/VAMentalHealthGroup.asp
 - Vet Center (Counseling) – www.vetcenter.va.gov/index.asp
 - Employment Assistance – www.dol.gov/vets/goldcard.html
 - Nevada Job Connect – (702) 486-0100
 - VA Home Loan Guaranty Program – <http://benefits.va.gov/homeloans/>
 - DD-214 and Military Records – to request a copy of DD-214 – (314) 801-0800 or www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records
 - Military Order of the Purple Heart – (702) 258-0148
 - Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) – (702) 258-8904 or www.vfw.org
 - Disabled American Veterans – (702) 636-3000
 - Goodwill Veteran Integration Program – (702) 214-2025
 - Work for Warriors NV – (702) 856-4951 support@workforwarriorsnv.org
 - Clark County Services – (702) 455-4270 ssadmin@clarkcountynv.gov
 - Las Vegas Rescue Mission – (702) 382-1766 admin@vegasrescue.org
 - U.S. Vets – (702) 366-0456

- Veterans Village - (702) 624-5792
- HELP of Southern Nevada - (702) 369-4357 info@helpsonv.org
- Merging Vets and Players - (702) 726-0204
- Safe Nest - (702) 646-4981 info@safenest.org
- Three Square (Food Bank) – (702) 644-3663 comments@threesquare.org
- Hope for Prisoners
- MGM Veteran Program
- Caesar SALUTE Veteran program
- Cosmopolitan Veteran Hiring Project
- Wells Fargo Veteran Connect
- The Raiders Foundation
- Home Depot Foundation – donated \$25,000 in renovation, paint, flooring and new desks.

Table 1. Special projects or new initiatives delayed or cancelled due to pandemic response.		
Name of Project or Initiative	Description	Status
Operation Battle Born	(Memorial Day Nevada March) SVA event	Canceled

Table 2. Routine programs and services delayed or canceled due to the pandemic response.		
Name of Project or Initiative	Description	Status
Veteran Engage Breakfast (April)	Veteran networking event	Canceled
Veteran Graduation Reception (May)	Veteran celebration for 150 vets	Canceled
Veteran Career Fair (June)	Hiring Fair for 200 vets with 100 employers	Canceled
Veteran Orientation (August)	Welcome event for new veterans	Moved to online
All veteran recruiting trips	Veteran recruiting	Canceled

University of Nevada, Reno

Brief of 2019-2020 Academic Year

Despite the numerous challenges all institutions experienced, University of Nevada, Reno maintained enrollment for students utilizing VA educational benefits and witnessed a 4% increase from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020.

Staff pivoted on March 18, 2020 when operations were moved to remote delivery due to the COVID -19 pandemic. Staff quickly realigned priorities and began student outreach on immediate physical, financial, emotional and technology needs in the weeks following campus closure. In addition to the students using the GI Bill®, the campus has 185 students in the NV National Guard that were activated as part of the Nevada COVID response team and later to assist in the wildfires in our region. Amidst this dynamic environment, we advocated with the professors for students on active duty orders regarding their new responsibilities, when appropriate. Veteran Services wanted to ensure all UNR students, registered with the office or not, were supported while they navigated active duty orders and completed course work simultaneously.

Beyond the students' well-being and health, the staff outreached regarding:

- Impacts with VA educational benefits with remote delivery
- Consequences for changing to a satisfactory/ unsatisfactory grading basis
- Effects from withdrawing due to active duty orders
- Opportunity for CARES act funding
- Procedures for laptop check-out for remote course delivery

Ensuring our students were supported and informed swiftly became our daily focus. We certainly had our share of concerns, however, we worked with students to address individual questions. Our operations moved to a virtual platform, and we continued to preserve and serve our diverse student needs. As we prepare for spring 2021, Veteran Services at the University of Nevada, Reno knows that our staff and students are resilient and will be continuing to traverse through the pandemic together.

Initiatives for 2019-2020

Program Name	Type of Retention And Effort	Description
New Initiatives		
Welcome Events <u>NEW</u>	On-going per term Networking Group events	The VMC hosted the traditional start of term welcome back brunch the first week of the term. In lieu of a welcome event and in conjunction with Office of Prospective Students, we created a <i>Welcome Letter</i> which introduced ourselves and services to new students on campus.
Class/Instructor Mitigation <u>NEW</u>	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. The university is implementing the Navigate software improve student persistent and success. Veteran Services is incorporating the Navigate features to identify when veteran

		students are experiences challenges in order to intervene sooner for student success and retention.
<p>Direct student outreach on student well-being</p> <p><u>NEW</u></p>	Student Well Being Support	<p>Management and student staff connected with students in the immediate weeks after the campus moved to remote delivery. Calls and emails were sent to students to connect regarding any financial, emotions or technical needs. Students were encouraged to apply for Federal CARES act funds.</p> <p>Additionally, we hosted a Virtual VMC for 3 hours daily as a remote place for students to continue to connect.</p> <p>Developed virtual programs that included workshops on physical fitness from home, study tips with remote learning, a remote NFL draft party, book group discussion on <i>The Tribe</i>, round tables with Senator Catherine Cortez-Masto, NV Census Specialist, and money management series.</p> <p>Continuing into the fall 2020 term, the vast majority of courses were delivered remotely, we witnessed a decrease in VMC attendance. Once again in an effort to address student needs, the staff called and emailed students to connect and inquire if they had needed resources. Two outreach campaigns were implemented at the start of the term and then again during midterms. We also instituted another Virtual VMC, midday, to provide an opportunity to connect for students that are physically on campus.</p>
<p>Ruptured Duck Fund</p> <p><u>NEW</u></p>	Student Well Being Support	<p>A generous donor has provided the initial funding for an emergency funds account for students with unforeseen financial circumstances. Awards will be allotted in \$50 - \$200 increments and will meet non-university fees.</p> <p>The Ruptured Duck was a cloth insignia depicting an eagle inside a wreath. It was worn on uniforms above the right breast pocket by WWII servicemen and women. It was issued to service personnel who were about to leave the military with an Honorable Discharge</p> <p>https://www.therupturedduck.com/pages/the-origin-of-the-ruptured-duck-insignia</p>
<p>Track & Analytics Program</p> <p><u>NEW</u></p>	Retention effort and programming initiatives	<p>Fall 2019 Veteran Services partnered with the senior students with Computer Science and Engineering degrees to develop a data gathering system and platform to enable the office to run more accurate reports. The data will be gathered by scanners and supported by Office of Student Persistence Research.</p> <p>The fall 2019 student team designed the data collection functionality, however, the project stalled in March. A new</p>

		student team is continuing the project and building out the reporting functionality.
NDVS Grant <u>NEW</u>	Student Academic Support/ Retention	NDVS provided a grant to purchase a printer and lapel pins for the students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The printer will allow students in the VMC to print for free. For students, this addresses two challenges, the financial hardship of printing plus avoiding high traffic areas. Design a UNR/ Veteran lapel pin to distribute to students as they participate in events and programs.
Continued Onboarding to Campus		
Program Name	Type of Retention And Effort	Description
Veterans' Orientation <u>COVID Response</u>	Initial retention Group	Campus orientations were moved to a virtual fair format. Veteran Services participated in 4 virtual orientations via breakout rooms with great success.
Veteran 1-1 Intake <u>COVID Response</u>	Initial retention/ Network building	All incoming students met one on one with our Intake Coordinator via zoom or phone summer 2020. Benefits are registered, degree plans are confirmed, basic needs assessed, tailored services offered and financial assessment advisement provided.
Vet2Vet Program <u>Modified</u>	Long-term retention/Peer Support/Network building	The program has been modified to peer mentoring through Wolf Pack Veterans and Omega Delta Sigma.
Continued Transition to Higher Education Support		
Program Name	Type of Retention And Effort	Description
Veteran & Military Center (VMC) <u>On-going</u>	Dedicated physical space On-going retention Personalized and group engagement	The Veteran and Military Center continues to evolve and meet the needs of the incoming students.
V.I.T.A.L. Grant On-going programming efforts <u>COVID Response</u>	On-going retention/ Community Involvement 3 rd party partnership	Veteran's Integration to Academic Leadership has been a part of this campus for 8 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. Our Social Worker was able to maintain appointments for students when the campus closed due to COVID. However, our Outreach Program Specialist, was re-assigned to assist the VA hospital address COVID needs. He returned to his V.I.T.A.L responsibilities in mid-September 2020. Due to the current environment, he was offering daily virtual hours to outreach and connect with students

<p>Two Student Veteran Groups Wolf Pack Veterans Omega Delta Sigma Co-ed fraternity</p> <p>COVID Response</p>	<p>On-going /campus engagement/Community Involvement</p>	<p>Two veteran student groups' missions align with UNR Veteran Services office to support campus integration and retention efforts. Group Presidents report to Veteran Services office to coordinate programming.</p> <p>Programming include: a welcome to fall event (2019), weekly meetings, socials, philanthropic efforts, community outreach, shared programming opportunities.</p> <p>Wolf Pack Veterans Treasurer and President attended the annual conference in January 2020 with their advisor to hear about national best practices.</p> <p>All programming efforts were cancelled from March 2020 to date with the exception of the Annual Truckee River Clean-up by Wolf Pack Veterans.</p>
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Continued Student Health and Well-Being

Program Name	Type of Retention And Effort	Description
<p>Interest and Engagement Groups</p> <p>COVID Response</p>	<p>Long-term retention/Peer Support</p>	<p>We are reframing student outreach to go outside the VMC walls and engage with students on similar interests.</p> <p>Activities were suspended due to COVID.</p>
<p>Veteran Graduation Celebration</p> <p>COVID Response</p>	<p>Career Service</p>	<p>2020 Graduation celebration ceremony canceled due to COVID.</p> <p>Veteran Services created a veteran celebration webpage with each student's photo, degree and personal message. We mailed certificates of appreciation from Senator Cortez-Masto, Senator Rosen and Director of the VA Sierra Nevada Healthcare System to all spring and summer 2020 graduates.</p>
<p>November Veteran Recognition Month</p> <p>COVID Response</p>	<p>Annual Programming/long-term retention</p>	<p>Fall 2019 - Several events are offered and include, hosted lunch at campus restaurant for all student veterans and family members, 2500 flags planted in honor of those who have served, veterans football tailgate, family centered night at the Reno Children's Discovery Museum. The flag retirement ceremony was a partnership with the Veteran Services office of Western Nevada College.</p> <p>Fall 2020 – In compliance with social distance requirements, 2500 flags will be planted in honor of those who have served. The flag retirement ceremony will be a partnership with Western Nevada College.</p>

Continued Academic Support		
Program Name	Type of Retention And Effort	Description
GI Bill® Success Workshops On-going	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.
Progress Reports At-Risk Students On-going	Intense One-on-One	Veterans that have dropped below 2.3 CUM GPA and/or show a pattern of dropping GPA are requested to participate in a one-on-one assessment and customized help or referral. Students dropping below a 2.5 in pre-professional tracks are notified of services available.
Warning Term Students on Probation On-going	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. Veteran Services policy changed this year to become proactive and interject academic support earlier in the Satisfactory Academic Progress system. Students have mandatory check in periods with office.
Express advising On-going COVID Response	Intense One-on-One	Each college on campus is invited to hold office hours in the Veteran & Military Center. Advisors work closely with School Certifying Officials to effectively advise students and navigate through specific college requirements. Services offered are major/degree workshops, information sessions on degree changes, ability to remove academic holds immediately, readiness to complete departmental paperwork for major/degree changes, exceptions, waivers and degree exploration for undecided students. Due to COVID, express advising was facilitated on Zoom and used breakout rooms for each advisor. Students receive priority registration
Continued Community and Campus Partnerships		
Program Name	Type of Retention And Effort	Description
Scholarship Opportunities On-going	Retention efforts	Competitive scholarship opportunity from the VFW Post #9211 Competitive scholarship opportunity from Wolf Pack Vets to an existing student and transfer student
Graduate School Workshop On-going	Career and Academic Support	The Graduate school provided a seminar in the VMC for students interested in a Graduate degree. The dean and faculty of the Graduate school discussed funding options, types of programs and entry paths

<p>VetSMART</p> <p>On-going</p>	<p>On-going Campus-wide</p>	<p>Veteran Services Coordinator delivers 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.</p>
<p>Community Partnerships</p> <p>On-going</p>	<p>Dedicated space within the Center On-going retention through meeting non-educational needs, Personalized and group</p>	<p>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. These services reserve the Community Office within the Center to be able to meet with students one-on-one.</p> <p>Partnership with Northern Nevada Veterans Resource Center and Pack Provisions to assist housing and food insecurities.</p> <p>Develop programs with Work for Warriors to assist with student's job placement</p>
<p>Campus Partnerships</p> <p>Continued</p>	<p>Dedicated space within the Center On-going retention Personalized and group</p>	<p>Campus partnerships 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.</p> <p>Due to COVID, the sessions were facilitated remotely.</p>
<p>NV Money Mentors collaboration with Financial Aid</p> <p>Continued</p>	<p>On-going retention/financial exploration</p>	<p>Nevada Money Mentors partner with Veteran Services to customize workshops to address life stages student veterans are most financially challenged with. Due to COVID, the sessions were facilitated remotely.</p> <p>Established relationship with Wells Fargo Bank to present on financial responsibilities and resources.</p>

Overview

Nevada State College continues to foster increasing levels of support and engagement for our student veterans. Led by our Veterans Affairs Certification Specialist and our Coordinator of Academic Advising (a former member of the Air Force), Nevada State's over-arching goal is to promote better outcomes for student veterans, including improved retention and graduation rates. To this end, NSC continues to develop and refine initiatives that address the needs and aspirations of this population. Our initiatives address several different facets of the student experience, including the allocation of physical space (a Veterans' Lounge), the provision of financial support (including emergency funding support), and community-building opportunities (the "ScorpionVets" club).

As with the 2019 report, the relevant initiatives had been disaggregated according to new initiatives – added since our last report – and pre-existing programs and initiatives. The proportion of new initiatives has lessened, primarily for two reasons. First, our focus has shifted from the development of new initiatives – which was essential as we built out our programming – to the maintenance and refinement of those efforts. Second, our ability to cultivate new initiatives has been stymied by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has added new obligations and redirected personnel to pertinent tasks. Consequently, our foremost new initiative has been the creation of virtual meetings/consultations that aim to provide quality support to veteran students under the present circumstances, as detailed below. Moving forward, we plan to continue expanding and improving our programs and services that support student veterans at Nevada State College.

New Initiatives

The pandemic has forced the college to invest more time and effort into the maintenance of quality services under the current circumstances, leaving less space for entirely new initiatives, but one emerging development is the creation of monthly Zoom meetings. These meetings have been established for student veterans to connect with the Coordinator of Veteran Services as well as other veterans. The primary purpose of these meetings is to discuss the challenges faced by our veterans during these times while balancing school, work and family responsibilities. Participants will discuss current issues and challenges, the VA Weekly Newsletter, and how they can access VA support services. The Veterans Monthly Zoom Meetings address topics that include:

- Welcoming new veterans to NSC
- Best practices for online learning
- Effective email communication in light of the provision of many services and courses in a distance format
- Keeping fit physically and mentally
- Social activities (e.g., playing trivia via Kahoot.it)
- Generalized question and answer sessions

We also are exploring new ways in which the Office of Student Life can support our student veterans (e.g., clubs and organizations, social and academic support), and expect that we will have more to report in the coming year.

Pre-existing Programs, Initiatives & Accolades

Peer mentorship

This program pairs new student veterans or dependent students with a current veteran or dependent student to mentor them from the first-year of college to graduation and beyond. The mentorship provides guidance to students to help them successfully navigate the college experience at Nevada State, including assistance with registration, advising, support services, student life, NSSA, and NSC software applications. The mentor is expected to organize monthly activities for mentees.

Professional development

Nevada State College sends student veterans to attend the Student Veterans of America National Conference in Orlando, FL (however, the practice is on hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic). By participating in the conference, students have an opportunity to network with other student veterans as well as learn more about available resources. Also, student veterans have attended the NASPA Symposium on Military-Connected Students which focuses on effective strategies to serve and support the success of veterans and other military-connected students.

Vet website

The NSC website now has a [specific page](#) for student veterans regarding their benefits. The page also lists important external support contact information.

Emergency funds

Nevada State College received funds to help support veterans in need of emergency financial assistance. Applicants were reviewed by the ScorpionVet officers and advisors and selected for support based on degree of need. Though the amount of funding was modest, this effort addresses a critical area of need for our student population.

Community service*

ScorpionVets hosts a formal Flag Ceremony that is attended by NSC administrators and City of Henderson dignitaries, including Mayor of Henderson Debra March. ScorpionVets are invited by the City of Henderson to be an active participant in the Henderson Veterans Day event. At this event, the flag from the ceremony is presented to the City of Henderson by ScorpionVet officers, where it is housed within the City of Henderson Mayor's Office. ScorpionVets also have worked with a number of other student veterans to provide information and support, and several members volunteered at the Boulder City Veterans Home Center for the 17th Annual Olympic Games hosted by the Center.

Professional development*

Each year, Nevada State College aims to send representatives from ScorpionVets to the national conference of the Student Veterans of America. Through participation in the conference, the officers are able to create a network of resources and colleagues and obtain professional development in strategies for leadership, the recruitment of additional club members, and national Best Practices for serving student veterans. To date, participation has provided guidance on the development of leadership abilities and has broadened our understanding of strategies that increase the retention, success, and graduation rates of student veterans.

Nevada State College ScorpionVets

The Nevada State College ScorpionVets Club was officially recognized in fall 2016. The club is focusing on promoting awareness of veteran issues, supporting an institutional culture of inclusion, facilitating the integration of veterans into the NSC community, and providing camaraderie for veterans among their peers. NSC viewed the development of the student organization as the most important step in facilitating more robust services at NSC, as we want to ensure that all initiatives and programs are student-driven. The student veterans are increasing their activity level on campus and are actively fund raising to develop a foundation for increased programming. In addition, their organization has been officially recognized by the Student Veterans of America.

Veterans' Lounge

Based on feedback from members of the NSC ScorpionVets Club, we adapted the veterans' lounge to be more attractive and accessible for veterans. This has resulted in an increased utilization of the designated space, and the student veterans are now working to expand their space on our campus (however, available space remains incredibly limited at present, both for veterans and across the campus as a whole).

Priority Registration

Student veterans now receive priority course registration. This helps to ensure that the certification process is expedited, which results in veterans receiving their benefits and funding in time for registration processing.

Textbook Loan Program

The student veterans have developed a pilot textbook loan program for students. They have collaborated with the Nevada State Student Alliance on this project and look to more fully develop this program after the pilot phase is assessed.

Student Veterans Wall of Fame

The NSC Arts and Culture Department created a Wall of Fame located just outside of the Student Veterans' Lounge. The wall features photos and stories of outstanding NSC Student Veterans.

Red, White and Blue Honor Cords

Student veteran graduates are honored by obtaining NSC's first Red, White, and Blue Honor Cords for veterans.

NSC Ruck March*

The NSC Student Veterans' Club continues to hold an annual Ruck March each spring semester. In addition to NSC faculty and staff, UNLV Student Veterans and other veteran organizations in the community participate.

Volunteer Efforts with US Vets

Nevada State College ScorpionVets continue to be active within the veterans' community in the Valley. ScorpionVets have volunteered at the Boulder City Veterans' Home Olympics, providing support and camaraderie for the veterans living in the home, and have hosted Formal Flag Ceremonies that involve NSC administrators, students, faculty and staff, as well as community organizations and dignitaries from the City of Henderson.

City of Henderson – Veterans' Day Programming

The ScorpionVets Club continues to collaborate with the City of Henderson to participate in Veterans' Day programming.

Mental Health Resources/Student CARE Team (Concern, Assessment, Referral and Education)

While these programs are not veteran specific, Nevada State College has additional support programs that benefit student veterans. The Student CARE Team utilizes a case management model to serve as a hub of existing resources focused on prevention and early intervention for students experiencing distress or engaging in harmful or disruptive behaviors. NSC hired its first full-time case manager in fall 2016, and we continue to see annual double-digit increases in utilization.

Nevada State College also has established a contract with All About You Counseling services to provide on-campus therapy services for our students four days per week, up from two days a week when the contract was initiated two years ago, and is about to begin a search for our own Licensed Clinical Professional who can provide additional support to our students. NSC also contracts with UNLV's Counseling and Psychological Services to offer therapy services.

** Denotes an item that is on temporary hiatus due to COVID-19 restrictions.*

Veterans Education & Transition Services (VETS)

Mission: To provide exceptional services, programs, and learning experiences for current and former service members and their dependents that shape and support a seamless transition to civilian life.

Vision: The College of Southern Nevada VETS Center is the preeminent military and veteran service provider among institutions of higher learning in Nevada.

Goals: To efficiently and effectively administer Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Education Programs; To improve and better track persistence, retention, and graduation rates for VA beneficiaries; To create and implement transformational programming that increase student opportunity for success.

Initiatives since October 2019

The VETS Center has focused on several key initiatives to support the healthful transition to the college as well as long-term success in graduation, career, and transfer by our VA beneficiary population.

Initiative	Type of Retention and Effort	Description
USAA Grant (Continued from 2017)	CSN VETS administers a grant awarded by USAA to provide retention services to VA beneficiaries.	The CSN VETS Center works closely with internal and external stakeholders to provide relevant services and programming designed to: 1) Increase VA beneficiary retention, persistence, and graduation rates; 2) Make CSN faculty, staff, and students aware of the challenges that veterans face making the transition from military to civilian life; and 3) Improve access to the college by engaging in outreach and targeted recruitment activities for prospective students.
Advising (Continued from 2017, updated 2019)	The VETS Center houses three full-time academic advisors dedicated to the VA beneficiary population.	In a typical week, a Veteran Advisor conducts eight appointments per day each week, serving new and returning students. The VETS advising team has expanded to three effective, the Spring 2020 semester. The VETS Advising team coordinates the orientation program for veteran students each fall and spring semester and attends institutional orientations to be available to all incoming students.
Coyote Team Six (Continued from 2017)	VETS Center staff created and conducts a training program for faculty and staff on how to best serve the military population at CSN. This program is supported by the USAA grant.	The training program, offered through the Center for Academic and Professional Excellence (CAPE), affords faculty and staff an opportunity to learn about military culture, the VETS Center, VA education benefits, and ongoing developments related to military students at CSN. VETS Center staff lead this presentation on a semester basis, allowing maximum opportunity for participation among faculty and staff across campus.
Collaborative and Expanded Orientation	VETS Center offers an orientation program each fall and spring to VA beneficiaries.	Since October 2018, the VETS Center expanded its orientation to include returning students in an effort to further connect with this population. Additional

<p>(Continued from 2017, updated 2019)</p>		<p>content included GI Bill updates and returning student claim submission process.</p> <p>The VETS Center continued its collaborative efforts with other departments in an effort to connect VA beneficiaries with campus and community resources via the resource fair portion of the orientation.</p> <p>This event is incentivized to provide expedite processed to receive their benefits in a timely manner to encourage them to attend and gain the knowledge needed to be successful at CSN.</p>
<p>Assessment Protocol (updated 2019)</p>	<p>VETS Center created a protocol for assessing services and processes for all office efforts</p>	<p>Along with the Division of Student Affairs, VETS Center staff engaged in a process of exploring its mission, goals, and objectives in order to create ways in which we assess our successes and failures to create greater VA beneficiary success.</p> <p>This process allowed us to identify which of our services and objectives were most important and create a long-lasting standing plan to determine our performance level in these areas. Primarily, we want to measure our VA benefit processing time, advising availability, complaint resolution, persistence, retention, and graduation. We determined key personnel for measuring each of these Key Performance Indicators (KPI), when to measure, how to measure, and how these results will be recorded and analyzed.</p> <p>Over time, we reviewed gathered data to determine foundation to move forwards with unit plans for improvement. We create a yearly summary, with recommended changes, and amended goals as needed, to meet the needs of our department and students.</p>
<p>Employer Contact (Continued from 2018)</p>	<p>Career exploration/group</p>	<p>In coordination with Career and Transfer Services, CSN VETS Center, along with government, private, and non-profit employers, is working to create a panel of employers, with time for veterans to meet briefly with employers for discussion. Speakers from selected job industries based on job interest, such as MGM to share insight with veterans and military spouses.</p>
<p>Specialized Application for Admission (Updated 2019)</p>	<p>To identify this population from the point entry</p>	<p>CSN launched a new application software called Radius. A Veteran beneficiary's application was created to allow these student to self-identify. They receive specialized communications and clear expectations to create a seamless process to receive their education benefits.</p> <p>During the COVID-19 pandemic, this has served as a resource to provide students the necessary guidance needed to activate their benefits successfully due to difficulties related to campus closures.</p>

<p>Veteran Readiness and Employment Partnership</p>	<p>Provide a more accessible avenue for students utilizing Veteran Readiness & Employment benefits through the VA to meet with a VR&E counselor</p>	<p>The CSN VETS Center entered a partnership with the Veteran Readiness & Employment office out of the VA hospital in Las Vegas. The counselor assigned to CSN students utilized office space in order to meet these students where they spend a majority of their time and to lessen the burden of travel to the VA hospital for appointments. The VETS Center is communicating the possibility of VETS Success on Campus (VSOC).</p>
<p>Legislative Involvement (Updated 2019)</p>	<p>National Representation for VA beneficiary Advocacy</p>	<p>A CSN VETS Center representative served on the board for the National Association of Veteran Program (NAVPA). In this position, they met with leadership representatives for the Department of Veteran Affairs, National Association for State Approving Agency (NASAA), and Student Veterans of America (SVA) to advocate for necessary change and provide recommendation for implementation of new policies. This representative also met national-level legislators in Washington D.C. to push resolutions presented by institutions nationwide. The CSN VETS Center team also is active in discussions with Congresswoman Susie Lee to discuss challenges facing VA beneficiaries in Nevada.</p>

The Veterans Resource Center (VRC) has expanded student services providing greater administrative and social support to military students from within the department. Forward progress towards the offering of primary academic advisement to veteran students, evaluation, and processing of Joint Service Transcripts (JST), Bootcamp Credit, and intake assessment for the peer to peer mentoring program are a few of the areas of growth. Creating successful programs for student veterans includes effective strategies, more importantly, top-down support is vital. Support of military students brings diversity and leadership to the institution. Ultimately at Great Basin College the commitment and high-level support are aiding in the growth and development of military students.

New-VRC Lead Enrollment Management for Military-Service Connected Students

A centralized direct point of contact is challenging in any environment and can be frustrating for veterans transitioning to college. The VRC has established the ability to be the front line for service-connected students. While service members have life experience, how and when to apply to college is typically not in the repertoire. In providing direct contact to the VRC staff, a secondary benefit to students has been revealed. This revelation has stemmed from the fact that the VRC is staffed entirely by veterans. Many students have spoken of the instant connection to the institution due to the comradery of working with fellow veterans.



Since retention begins with the admissions process, the move to be the front line for service-connected students is a move in the right direction, while continuing to provide effective support and counseling throughout the academic journey. This process has allowed for VRC staff to learn proper academic advisement processes, articulation processes for Joint Service Transcripts, in addition to the support of the Veterans Affairs School Certifying Officials role and duties. Designed for an initial consultation with a primary academic advisor who is a veteran to review: Educational goals, career goals, communication preferences, build rapport, discover potential obstacles. During the academic journey, checkpoints have been established, to monitor students at different credit points to ensure continuing success.

New -Creation of a Veterans Advisory Committee

Created from the request of the VRC Coordinator, the newly formed committee has a promising future to provide support on a greater institutional level. Currently prepared for presentation to the committee is a veteran-specific scholarship designed to address out-of-State fees not covered by Veterans Affairs for consideration by the committee. Another committee action for review, military award recognition at graduation, and overall greater recognition of service-connected students. The creation of the advisory committee will allow for a greater understanding of military culture and diversity within the veteran population and how to apply that understanding to the benefit of our students. Increasing interdepartmental knowledge regarding military students and their specific needs and the use of best practice, to ensure military students feel welcome. The goal of the committee will be an expansion of services, commitment, and understanding of military-connected students attending Great Basin College.



New- Veteran- Specific Orientation

Military to civilian life comes with adjustments, college life adds another layer. By providing a veteran-specific orientation, matters that only apply to service-connected students can be addressed. While college comes with the completion of forms and processes, the additional requirements from the office of Veterans Affairs to use educational benefits creates yet another layer. Navigating these processes for new students, lessens any frustration, and ensures all the requirements are complete in a timely fashion. Orientation implementation will commence Spring 2021, with consideration for COVID restrictions.

New- Continuing Education Department- Highlight Military Friendly Programs

Recently in conjunction with the Continuing Education Department, work was established to discuss the offering of programs regarded as appealing to veteran students and their dependents. Marketing specific to the appeal of the programs to military-connected students has been established. The programs offered through the Continuing Education Department are career-specific, convenient, certificate training programs, designed to fast track to completion. The programs offered are Dental Assistant, Hemodialysis Technician, EKG Technician, Pharmacy Technician, Physical Therapy Aide, Veterinary Assistant. The programs do not qualify for use of Veterans Affairs Educational Benefits, however, there are other military discounts offered and My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) is a Department of Defense Scholarship that offers eligible spouses up to \$4000 of tuition assistance for. The consideration of creating other programs to appeal to military-affiliated students could extend further throughout the institution



New- Active Duty- Tuition Assistance (TA) Student Focus

Historically, Active Duty students make-up a small portion of Great Basin College demographics. Established as another area of potential growth the current process and outreach to the particular demographics are currently underway.

Continued- Experience Workshops

Providing workshops is not new to the VRC, however the expansion of what workshops are offered and how they are offered considering COVID restrictions. Furthering our commitment to hosting programs or workshops that help to optimize professional and personal success in an online learning community. Providing programs that best address the interest of veteran students and promote successful adjustment to civilian life are important. Examples are military to civilian resume workshops, presentations by employment leaders in the community, and continued financial planning workshops. The use of electronic platforms and social media networking is providing the communication needed for outreach and delivery during current conditions and requirements.

The Veterans Resource Center will continue to remain the key to finding effective ways to support and retain military students. In addition to external fundraising to ensure continued activities to support veterans and sustain veteran-specific scholarships. To be successful, institutions at all levels need to embrace veterans' services as a priority for student success.

Truckee Meadows Community College

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 and determined 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

- **VRC Virtual Lounge** – TMCC Veteran Services had to close its doors during to the COVID-19 pandemic but was still available to provide assistance to student veterans. By offering a virtual veteran center where new and current students can log on using Zoom and ask any questions related to education benefits. Also, this virtual center helps promote connectedness throughout the student veteran community at TMCC.

Continuing Initiatives

- **Veteran Resource Center** – TMCC's Veteran Resource Center (VRC) in RDMT 241 at the main Dandini Campus. This space provides a number of new services to our veterans. This location is equipped with a large computer lab that provides internet access and free printing for our students, a study/conference room for student use, a veteran's lounge, as well as a separate office for offsite personnel to utilize for veteran specific purposes. This space provides the Veteran Services staff at TMCC a greater opportunity to assist student veterans in their transition from the military to the academic environment by creating a one stop shop on campus.
- **Student Veteran Mentor Program** – The Student Veteran Mentor Program was designed to assist up to 60 student veterans each semester who are in their first or second term at TMCC. The purpose of the program is to connect new student veterans with established faculty members in order to ease the transition into the academic environment. Every student in the program is assigned a faculty mentor based on the particular campus where the majority of the student's classes are located. Each mentor will provide guidance and academic assistance to the student throughout the year.

Every student that participates in the program will be required to attend a minimum of three veteran specific workshops or events each semester that are designed to enhance their academic and professional success. For their efforts, each student will receive a book stipend of \$125.00 each semester in order to help ease the financial burden of attending school.

- **Veteran Leadership Academy** – The TMCC Veteran Leadership Academy (VLA) provides the opportunity for a select group of 10 exemplary student veterans to enhance their leadership skills while applying the lessons they learned from their military service to serve the broader community. Each veteran that participates in the program will be required to work in a collaborative team environment with fellow veterans in the program to identify and solve a particular issue in the community.

In order to qualify for this program, each interested veteran fills out a detailed application in order to determine academic eligibility, community service experience, and previous leadership experience. Each student that is selected and participates in the program will be given a \$1,000 grant for the academic year with a maximum of 10 students participating. The grant will be split up between the fall and spring semesters and will be paid \$500 at the end of each semester while in the program.

- **Professional Development Initiative** – Every semester TMCC Veteran Services 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 and dependents at TMCC. These workshops include resume writing, LinkedIn profile creation, effective networking, and mock interviews. Each one of these workshops is designed to assist veterans in their transition to the professional environment once they graduate.
- **Veteran Job and Resource Fair** – Another collaboration between TMCC Veteran Services and the TMCC Career Center is the Veteran Resource and Job Fair. Created specifically for veterans and their families, the fairs are held every fall and spring semester and typically have 50-60 employers and community resources on hand to fulfill the needs of our veterans. These fairs play a very important role for both the students and the veteran community as whole and helps highlight TMCC's never-ending dedication to our nation's veterans.
- **Veteran Academic Advisor** – TMCC employs a veteran specific academic advisor who assists veterans in degree and course selection, transfer workshops, financial aid applications, and scholarship information. Having a dedicated advisor helps ensure that our students have a detailed education plan in order to graduate on time.
- **Veterans Pre-Admission Associate** – Our Veterans Pre-Admission Associate serves as an intake coordinator, assists with the Gateway Initiative for student veterans, as well as updates military transcripts, and excess credit fees in accordance with SB 457. This position was funded by the TAACCCT 4 grant but was made permanent in March 2018. This position is vital to the overall mission of TMCC Veteran Services and helps ensure that the department maintains its high quality of service that is currently provided our student veteran population.
- **Early Enrollment** – TMCC began offering priority registration to student veterans and eligible dependents back in spring 2013. Priority registration is essential to ensure that our students are able to enroll in the necessary classes in order to avoid delays in their GI Bill payments.
- **Veterans Upward Bound** – TMCC houses the only Veterans Upward Bound program in the state of Nevada. Located at the TMCC Meadowood Campus, Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) is a pre-college preparation program that offers academic skills development, testing, financial literacy, advisement, career planning, and transitional assistance to eligible student veterans.
- **Truckee Meadows Veterans Club (TMVC)** – TMCC has a nationally recognized Student Veterans of America chapter (SVA) on campus, Truckee Meadows Veterans Club (TMVC). TMVC's presence in the VRC helps build comradery and gives the student veterans a unified voice on campus. The club is very active in the community and holds many student veteran centered events both on and off campus.
- **Early Alert** – TMCC has implemented an early alert system that grants TMCC Veteran Services direct access to the portion of the student veteran population at TMCC that is struggling academically. This early alert system gives the staff the opportunity to reach out to students in order to identify issues that may be causing them to fall behind in their classes and refer them to campus resources that can assist them.
- **Application Fee Waiver** – TMCC values the extraordinary talents, experiences, and diversity that United States Military Veterans bring to our campus. In recognition of their service, TMCC has committed to waiving the admissions application fee for all honorably discharged U.S. Military Veterans beginning the Fall 2017 semester.
- **SB 457 Compliance** – As of August 1, 2017, TMCC is in full compliance with SB 457. We have updated our webpage to reflect the bill as well as added a detailed list of all accepted military credit along with their corresponding ACE exhibit number for reference. Our Veterans Pre-Admissions Associate closely monitors

all excess credit fees for our entire student veteran population on a daily basis to ensure that military credit is not being counted against their completion rates.

- **V.I.T.A.L. Initiative** – TMCC Veteran Services has continued a tremendous partnership with the VA Sierra Nevada Healthcare System. Aside from their presence at our many resource fairs, TMCC has a VA social worker on campus a minimum of two days per week who serves an extremely important role by providing mental health services to our student veterans in the VRC. The V.I.T.A.L. Initiative also have a veteran 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.
- **Purple Heart School** – On May 2, 2018 Truckee Meadows Community College officially became the first Purple Heart College in the State of Nevada. With this designation, TMCC issued a proclamation highlighting the college's commitment to our combat wounded students and dedicated a parking spot specifically for Purple Heart recipients.
- **Operation Battle Born: Ruck to Remember** – Continuing our partnership between TMCC's Veteran Leadership Academy (VLA), members of the Truckee Meadows Veterans Club (TMVC) and University of Nevada, Las Vegas Rebel Veterans have executed two statewide Operation Battle Born ruck march in honor of the fallen heroes from the Global War on Terrorism.

Veterans and volunteers from across the state take turns carrying nearly 7,000 service member dog tags, including the 57 fallen Nevadans who made the ultimate sacrifice since September 11, 2001. Participants were asked to challenge themselves physically and mentally, facing the weather and the weight of the fallen heroes on their backs.

This event not only brings awareness to the sacrifices that were made during the War on Terrorism, but it also continues to bring the student veteran community across the state together with an event between UNLV and TMCC.

- **Operation Battle Born: Ruck for Life** – TMCC Veteran Services and Nevada's Veterans community are committed to building strong community bonds between all members of our society. We welcome everyone affected by suicide and those dedicated to the prevention and education to join us for a hike from the TMCC Plaza along the campus par course path and into the Dandini Gardens. Participants are asked to carry 20 dog tags in the representation of the 20 veterans who lose their life by suicide each day. This event helps us honor those lost and remain committed to supporting each other, especially those who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide. The event affords the TMCC student veterans another opportunity to connect with their peers and community.

Western Nevada College is committed to serving veterans in our community. This commitment is personified by our Veterans Resource Center. At Western Nevada College, our mission is to aid the student veteran in the transition from military service to higher education by providing support and guidance during the application, admissions, and academic processes. The Veterans Resource Center allows Western Nevada College to uphold our mission. Each member of the Western Nevada College team has a role to play in the success of our student veterans and the family members of veterans. Western Nevada College has two certifying officials and an academic counselor explicitly assigned to veterans and a Veterans Resource Center Coordinator.

Each veteran student receives services and assistance, including:

- Individual welcome and counseling by the Veterans Resources Coordinator, which includes: A thorough walkthrough of VA Educational Benefits, explanation of resources on campus, and a tour and orientation session to the Veterans Resource Center
- WNC new student orientation
- Completion of placement examinations
- Assistance in the admission application and registration
- Financial aid literacy assistance
- Advisement including selections of classes to ensure classes are eligible for veteran educational benefits
- Assistance with time management and stress management skills.
- Access to tutoring and academic coaches.
- Continual monitoring of academic status by VCR staff
- Early Alert system to identify and offer remedies to academic issues. Along with monitoring of graduation requirements
- Career exploration
- All students who receive veteran educational benefits have a hold placed on their student account, preventing the student from withdrawing without first receiving counseling on how the withdrawal may affect their benefits and academic plan
- All student veterans not meeting satisfactory academic progress have a meeting with both the Veterans Resource Coordinator and the Veteran Academic Counselor.

Brief of 2019-2020 Academic Year and New Initiatives

Our work the last several months has focused on successfully transitioning our student veterans to online and remote learning environments, working to ensure that every student had the technological support to complete their coursework, and transforming the Veterans Resource Center into a supportive environment while maintaining the health of our students as our main priority.

Sept 11th Commemoration

To remember the 2,977 lives lost in that tragedy, the Western Nevada College Veterans Resource Center and Wildcat Veterans Club invited students, staff and the community to attend commemorative 9-11 anniversary events on Sept. 10-11 on the Carson City campus while maintaining social distancing.

On Thursday, Sept. 10, the public was invited to join the WNC campus in a Flag Planting event at 8:45 a.m. in front of the Bristlecone Building. To honor the lives lost in this tragedy, 2,977 mini American flags were planted in the lawn near the flagpole by the roundabout that fronts Bristlecone.

On Friday, Sept. 11, an exhibit looking back at the event was presented on the second floor of the Cedar Building.



Figure 1 Flag Planting

Constitution Day

Following the guidelines set forth due to the COVID Climate, Western Nevada College celebrated Constitution Day in a virtual manner.

Western Nevada College's Student Life in partnership with the Wildcat Veterans Club were proud to present an exploration of the Constitution with our webpage:

<https://www.wnc.edu/wildcat-life/constitution-day/>

On the webpage visitors found video segments from Administrative Staff, Academic Faculty and Students of Western Nevada College. These segments consisted of their interpretations of some of our founding principles.

Following the segments visitors found some resources to learn more about the Constitution, as well as a card game you can play to learn more about the rights granted by the Constitution.



WNC NEW INITIATIVES 2019-2020		
Program Name	Type of Retention and Effort	Description
Virtual Veteran Resource Center	Virtual Space/Campus Resources/Community Involvement	Provides a Virtual location for student veterans to reach academic, social and outreach resources. The Virtual center helps connect students during the COVID 19 online adjustment.
AWOL (Acclimate with Online Learning)	Mentorship/Tutoring/Motivational Support/Learning Tools	Students may sign up for a workshop put on by Veteran Resources on tips for online learning. These workshops provide notetaking skills, time management skills, and tools for adjusting to an online learning environment.
Veterans Community Advisory Committee	Community Involvement	The mission of this advisory committee is to promote a strong, healthy and cooperative relationship between our community and service members, veterans and their families; to recognize the role played by veterans in the defense of this country; to promote equal and inclusive opportunities for veterans and their families in all aspects of society and to identify and support all individuals and organizations that contribute to this mission.
WNC CONTINUED INTIATIVES 2019-2020		
Program Name	Type of Retention and Effort	Description
Student Intake	Initial retention	Administered by the Veterans Resource coordinator in conjunction with the Certifying Official
WNC Vet Monthly Student Newsletter	Informational/Motivational Support	A Monthly newsletter containing information about benefits for student veterans, news on national issues facing student veterans, and club networking events.

Student Club Western Nevada Wildcat Veterans	Campus Engagement/Community Involvement	The student club allows our student veterans and the supporters of student veterans to rally around a common cause and interest, increase community awareness, and create vital social connections.
Progress Reports for At-Risk Students	On-going Retention	Progress reporting is a critical tool to reach students who may be in academic or personal difficulty at a point where positive intervention may be provided. The intervention allows the student to be reminded of support services available and ensures the effects of negative grades may have on veteran benefits.
Veteran Resource Center Computer Lab	Physical Space/Campus Resources/Community Involvement	This provides a central location for student veterans to reach academic resources, social resources and outreach resources geared toward veterans. The VRC helps guide student veterans and family members through the adjustment of military life and higher education while allowing for social distancing and safety of students.
Turn-V Teachers Understanding and Recognizing New Veterans	Faculty/Staff Development	Professional development training for academic faculty and college staff on student veteran culture and awareness.