

House Committee on Veterans Affairs
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

Field Hearing

Best Practices in Veterans Education and Transition to Civilian Life

Texas Tech University

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Witness Statement

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We also administer the State of Texas Hazlewood Act (Exemption) for Texas veterans as well as DoD Tuition Assistance Programs for students who are on active duty.

Beyond our core benefits role, the Military & Veterans Programs Office serves as an integration and resource office for all military and veteran related organizations, activities, events on the main campus. We work hand in hand with the Student Veterans of America Chapter, Veterans Association at Texas Tech, Tech Law Military Association, Faculty & Student Veterans Association, Army and Air Force ROTC, and the Military Veterans National Alumni Chapter. We also partner and coordinate with veteran support organizations and resources throughout the local community. We place significant emphasis on providing a supportive environment and culture by instituting programs at three key stages for veterans at Texas Tech University—transition to campus, campus support, and job search and employment.

1. Transition from Military to Academic Life

- a. Tech Vet Boot Camp – Before the start of each Fall S6 0 oTw [(B)J 29 (r)-1/TT0 12 (m)-23

b. Stars and Stripes Lounge – Centrally located in the Student Union Building, our Stars & Stripes Lounge opened in Spring 2014. It serves as a study and social area for military and veterans and is furnished with tables, computer terminals, a big green TV.

2. Providing a Support System and Culture for Veteran Success on Campus
As a preface to outlining veteran support, I must tell you that the vast majority of our military and veteran students are emotionally mature, goal oriented, mission driven, and self-sufficient role models. Academically, they perform equal to or better than our general student population. However, based on their unique military service experiences they may include combat, some veterans experience social, administrative, financial, physical or mental health challenges transitioning from military to the classroom.

As a starting point for campus support there are over 300 faculty and staff members who are veterans at Texas Tech. These faculty members serve as role models, advisors and mentors for current student veterans.

Another key component of our support structure is a comprehensive Green Zone

- i. Module I: Core Trainings is open to all faculty and staff members as the first module of veterans' advocacy training and a prerequisite for all other modules. This course is designed to assist faculty and staff to better serve student veterans and their family members on campus. Attendees learn about the transition issues veterans face as they as they leave military service and enter campus life, specific information about Texas Tech's veteran students, and insight about campus and community resources. Green Zone module I must be taken before subsequent training modules can be scheduled.
- ii. Module II: Understanding Benefits is taught by MVP certifying officials for faculty and staff who are interested in an overview of how federal and state veterans' benefits work. Learning objectives include having a basic understanding of federal, state, and DOD benefit programs offered at TTU including eligib-10.11 -2 nn a2 (e)(, s)-11 -1 (c)4 hefe [(m)-2 (us)

- iv. Module IV: Student Disability Services is for faculty and staff members who are interested in a basic overview of how TTU Student Disability Services works with veterans and service members on campus. Learning objectives include understanding Student Disability Services programs and services offered, learning how students can register; gaining a basic understanding about applicable federal/ state laws and guidelines; understanding student responsibilities; and gaining greater familiarity with resources and support available to faculty and staff on campus.
- v. Module V: Advising Veterans is taught by senior MVP staff for faculty and staff advisors of veterans and family members on campus. Learning objectives include a veteran 'snapshot' and their expectations, responsibilities of the advisor in the context of Veterans Educational Benefits, responsibility of the school in reporting to the state/federal government, and best practices in advising veterans.
- vi. Module VI: Hiring Veterans is presented by Human Resources open to faculty and staff members who are interested in hiring veterans at Texas Tech University in their department. Trainees will learn about the soft skills that all veterans bring to the workforce, how to use the "Veterans' Only job posting", and "Veteran Direct Appointment hiring initiative" authorized by state law.
- vii. Module VII: Other veteran, military, or family related topics are explored in this module. Guest speakers from on or off campus may present on topics of interest to the military and veteran community.

- iii. As part of the program, veterans who complete all sessions acquire valuable skills job search skills and a tailored business suit to prepare for the professional world after graduation
- b. Military & Veterans National Alumni Chapter In May 2016, recognizing the value of a broad network of military and veteran alumni across the state and nation, we created a Military & Veterans National Alumni Chapter. One of the primary goals of our chapter is to connect current students and graduating seniors with alumni who are serving in business, corporations, government, and the military. We have begun connecting alumni employers who may provide internship, mentoring, and employment opportunities to our students through the career center and Camo to Corporate program. Additionally, the alumni chapter benefits students by providing education scholarships for veteran students.

We are proud of our Texas Tech veterans and do our best to recognize them at every opportunity. One way we do this is our unique camouflage stole that we award at a special ceremony the day before graduation. The stole is highly visible when veterans walk at graduation and they are singled out for their service by leadership at the graduation ceremony.

This is a brief overview of the Texas Tech programs that support the remarkable men and women veteran students who have served our nation. Central to our success is the strong commitment of campus leadership in providing the resources, facilities, and support that extends across our administration, faculty, staff, and local community. We very much appreciate the support of the House Economic Opportunity Subcommittee in providing your leadership, legislation, and resources for our veterans at Texas Tech across the nation. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I look forward to your questions.