



# The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges

PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
 DATE: January 13-14, 2014

SUBJECT: Update on Veterans Services and the California Community Colleges Veterans Summit III		Item Number: 4.2	
		Attachment: No	
CATEGORY:	Student Services	TYPE OF BOARD CONSIDERATION:	
Recommended By:	 Linda Michalowski, Vice Chancellor	Consent/Routine	
		First Reading	
Approved for Consideration:	 Brice W. Harris, Chancellor	Action	
		Information	X

**ISSUE:** The California Community Colleges are committed to expanding services for returning veterans. Many of our student veterans are going through an adjustment to civilian life and managing a host of social and health issues while they pursue basic skills, career technical education and transfer preparation. It is often a challenge for them to adapt to life on a college campus, work through the maze of requirements to utilize their well-earned GI Bill educational benefits, and find academic success. There are often services available on campus that student veterans don't know about or are reluctant to seek out.

**BACKGROUND:** With an estimated 1.8 million veterans residing in California, our state's population of veterans is the largest in the nation. Many, including those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, look to one of the 112 California community colleges because they are the most easily accessible and affordable educational option available to them. More than 44,000 veterans and active duty service members were enrolled in our colleges in 2011-12.

**RECOMMENDATION** This item is presented for information and discussion.

**ANALYSIS:** Many California community colleges have recognized the special support needs of student veterans and have expanded services to help them successfully integrate into civilian and college life. Examples of such efforts include:

- Veterans Resource Centers, now at nearly half of all of our colleges, provide services, such as counseling, assistance applying for benefits, access to adaptive computer technology to address common learning disabilities, and a place to find refuge with other student veterans and college staff who understand their challenges and needs.
- Boots to Books courses that are essentially tailored student success courses to help student veterans in their transition;
- Veteran-specific resource and job fairs that give student veterans information about services available to them and access to veteran-friendly employers;
- Innovative community college programs, such as specialized “boot camp” like physical education courses or events that provide exercise, stress relief and camaraderie with other student veterans, the use of therapy dogs to assist those who are struggling with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and theater or other arts programs that give veterans a different venue to reflect on and express their experiences.

The Chancellor’s Office, with strong support from the Board of Governors, has utilized several statewide approaches to improve support services for student veterans, including:

- Communication and Technical Assistance –The Chancellor’s Office hired a full-time Veterans Resource Specialist who convenes a Veterans Services Regional Representatives Advisory Committee and maintains a listserv for those in our system who serve veterans to share information.
- Zellerbach Family Foundation Project –The Chancellor’s Office received a \$75,000 grant in March 2010 from the Zellerbach Family Foundation to support the development and implementation of a training program for faculty and staff. The training is designed to increase their awareness of military culture, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury (TBI) and depression, and to help them better understand the challenges faced by many community college student veterans. The *Welcome Home: Creating a Campus Climate of Wellness* training has been provided at numerous colleges and statewide conferences across the state.
- Veterans Summit – To provide a forum for training, sharing of best practices and networking, the Chancellor’s Office, in conjunction with the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges and the Foundation for California Community Colleges, has hosted the California Community Colleges Veterans Summits.

The third California Community Colleges Veterans Summit took place on December 5-6, 2013 in Newport Beach, with approximately 280 attendees, including veterans services coordinators, teaching faculty, counselors, administrators, campus veterans benefits certifying officials, and student veterans. The event continued to receive generous financial support from the J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation and additional support from two new sponsors, the Land of the Free Foundation and Operation Entrepreneurship.

Highlights from the Summit included:

- Opening remarks on the first day by Deputy Chancellor Erik Skinner on behalf of Chancellor Brice W. Harris and on the second day by Board of Governors President Manual Baca;
- Keynote addresses by retired colonel and current Chancellor of the Chabot-Las Positas Community College District, Dr. Jannett Jackson and Assemblymember Rocky Chavez;
- A panel of student veterans who shared their community college transition experiences with summit attendees;
- An increased number of attendees and sessions;
- Inclusion for the first time of veterans services coordinators from California State University and University of California campuses;
- A two-part session focused on academic credit for military training and experience, hosted by the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges and featuring presenters from the American Council on Education.

Feedback on the event has been very positive. This information item will provide an overview and highlights of the 2013 Veterans Summit.