





The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges

PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

DATE: July 18, 2016

SUBJECT: Veterans Services Update		Item Number: 4.3	
		Attachment: Yes	
CATEGORY:	Student Services	TYPE OF BOARD CONSIDERATION:	
Recommended By:	 Pamela D. Walker, Vice Chancellor	Consent/Routine	
		First Reading	
Approved for Consideration:	 Erik Skinner, Interim Chancellor	Action	
		Information	X

ISSUE: This item presents information about activities the Chancellor’s Office has engaged in to support student veterans. It will also include a guest speaker from Saddleback College who will share highlights of their Veterans Education and Transition Services program.

BACKGROUND: With an estimated 1.8 million veterans residing in California, our state’s veteran population is the largest in the nation. Many of the increasing number of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will look to one of the 113 California community colleges as the most easily accessible and affordable educational options available. In fact, approximately 70,000 veterans and active duty service members were enrolled at a California community college in 2014-15. This number is more than six times the combined number of veterans attending the University of California and the California State University systems.

The role of community colleges is not limited to providing academic and career training for returning veterans, but also includes assisting with the often-difficult adjustment many face when transitioning to life after military service, and particularly after combat deployment. Fortunately, leadership at the Chancellor’s Office and our colleges prioritized the need before our servicemen and servicewomen returned from active duty and also expanded support services in order to help veterans successfully integrate into civilian and college life.

RECOMMENDATION: This item is presented for Board information and discussion.

The Chancellor's Office continues to expand system capacity through funding, resources and training to support student veterans:

- The number of Veterans Resource Centers in the system has increased from 24 in 2013 to 77 in the first half of 2016. This growth was achieved with no dedicated funding. In April 2016 college administrators, faculty and staff accompanied nearly 200 student veterans to the Capitol and engaged in a day of advocacy in support of additional funding. As a result, the Assembly's proposed budget included a \$15 million appropriation that would have established a Veterans Resource Center grant program. The grant program would have supported current Veterans Resource Centers and established additional Veterans Resource Centers for the purpose of providing resources to enrolled veterans and active duty members of the Armed Forces of the United States. That appropriation failed to make it into the final budget.
- In May 2016, Chancellor's Office staff partnered with Terence Nelson of Saddleback College to deliver two webinars to Veterans Services practitioners at our colleges on Student Equity Funding for Student Veterans. The goal of the webinars was to provide attendees with an overview of Student Equity funds and best practices in allowable use of the funds for student veterans.
- The 2016 Veterans Summit achieved record attendance with 350 individuals from the California Community Colleges, California State University and University of California attending the Summit in March of this year. To date, participation has reached nearly 1200. Work is underway for the 2017 Veterans Summit, which will be held in northern California in March.
- Thanks to generous support from the Zellerbach Foundation and the California Mental Health Services Authority the Welcome Home: Creating a Campus Climate of Wellness for Returning Veterans training program was developed. This program provides college administrators, faculty and staff with knowledge of military culture and common issues related to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury. In partnership with the California Community Colleges Student Mental Health Program, a joint effort of the Chancellor's Office and the Foundation for California Community Colleges there have been 27 trainings presented with over 1300 participants in attendance. With the initial funding being expended, the Chancellor's Office and the Foundation have committed to finding resources to provide up to 10 more Welcome Home trainings over the next two years.
- The Chancellor's Office, in collaboration with the California State University, sent a joint letter requesting that ongoing training for School Certifying Officials be conducted by the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. Our goal is to begin the training in early 2017.
- The Chancellor's Office, in collaboration with the High Tech Center Training Unit, began implementation of the Sonocent project in April, 2016. This project will provide 100 licenses of Sonocent Audio Notetaker software to 50 colleges. The software allows students to record lectures and then supports them in organizing the information, which is beneficial to those who have suffered head trauma.
- The Veterans Services Regional Representatives Advisory Group recently discussed developing and delivering veteran services best practices webinars to faculty and staff at our colleges each quarter. Our goal is to implement this educational opportunity in Fall 2016.

Our colleges continue to develop innovative programs and services to help student veterans succeed. Some examples are:

- Use therapy dogs to assist student veterans struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Equip Veterans Resource Centers with meditation rooms
- Administer text book loan programs that enable student veterans to check out text books from Veterans Resource Centers
- Take student veterans on field trips to tour four year colleges and universities within the local region
- Host Women Veterans Summit on campus that includes speakers, service providers, etc.
- Host federal Department of Veterans Affairs vocational rehabilitation counselors on a regular basis
- Host attorneys from law firms that provide pro-bono legal services to veteran students
- Provide complimentary massages by students from the college's massage therapy program on campus to student veterans in the Veterans Resource Center to support mind/body wellness

Offer Boots to Books program, which is a college success course designed to help veterans transition from military to college life