

ARNG Education News

Excellence Through Education

A Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Communiqué

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Well-Developed Web Sites Help ESOs Serve Soldiers Before, During, and After Mobilizations

Education Services Officers (ESOs) employ a number of techniques to reach out to Army National Guard (ARNG) Soldiers before, during and after their deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, or simply in day-to-day outreach. Many outreach methods that assist mobilizing and demobilizing Soldiers also apply to helping Soldiers in general as they consider, reconsider, and/or pursue educational options. One standard approach to delivering information or directing students to appropriate resources is via a user-friendly and updated Education Office Web site. Strong examples of highly functional sites exist for new ESOs who are looking for ideas to enhance their office's Web-based capabilities, such as the following:

- **Pennsylvania (PA) ARNG's Education Center Web page** <http://www.dmva.state.pa.us/paarnng/cwp/view.asp?a=1150&q=442179&paarnngNav=1>. At the PA ARNG Web site, Soldiers can link to information on scholarships, GI Bill, distance learning, state education benefits, as well as college, university and trade school home pages, and educational policies related to deployment, such as those pertaining to student loans Chapter 1606 GI Bill benefits.
- **Arkansas (AR) ARNG's Education Office Web site** <http://www.arguard.org/Education/index.asp> also furnishes links to state higher education institutions, counseling via the Education Support Center at Camp Robinson, testing programs, and ARARNG's own newsletter. When Soldiers deploy, CPT James Nolley, AR ARNG's ESO and members of his staff brief Soldiers and provide handy, wallet-sized business cards, with condensed information on education benefits, contacts, and Web sites. CPT Nolley's philosophy is that deploying Soldiers, with so much to deal with besides education issues, can find these cards in their wallets during deployment to be reminded, and guided, to consider resuming their education while deployed and/or soon after they return home.
- **The Mississippi ARNG's Education Services Office Web site** <http://www.ngms.state.ms.us/edu/> contains similar links and documents to those found at the PAARNG and ARARNG Web sites. In addition, on its scrolling format, there is a reminder of timely grade submission, with Education Office contact for grade submission, a "New Soldier" brochure, on-line degree planning instructions, as well as a comprehensive list of

Business Office contacts at Mississippi higher education institutions that work closely with MSARNG.

ESOs who have developed innovative techniques, Web-based or otherwise, for serving Soldiers at Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) exercises or in the regular course of business are encouraged to share these developments with *ARNG Education News* (contact riggled@aascu.org) so that these innovations can reach the broader ESO community.

Initiatives to Assist Combat Veterans Vary in Scope and Approach

Many news stories have emerged lately to document the readjustment issues faced by Army National Guard (ARNG) Soldiers and other military Servicemembers who return from the Iraq and Afghanistan battlefields. It is true that many returning veterans face health and social adjustment challenges. In fact, service providers whose job it is to help veterans reintegrate into family, jobs, or academic life are either straining or just rising to meet those challenges.

However, news at the home front is improving significantly, as initiatives emerge or existing projects gain strength and exposure, and their sponsoring organizations seek to reach out to veterans and their families.

Education Services Officers (ESOs) and their staffs, many of whom are seasoned by service in Iraq and Afghanistan themselves, play a pivotal role in facilitating Soldiers' readjustment to non-combat roles in their states. ESOs' experience, coupled with direct contact with mobilizing and demobilizing Soldiers and higher education institutions, allows them to keep combat veterans and their families apprised of programs and projects to assist them. In addition to college-based initiatives, non-profit and for-profit organizations, and government entities have developed programs for transitioning combat veterans and their families. The following are just a few examples of educational programs emanating from academic, non-profit, and governmental entities, designed to help Servicemembers and their families minimize challenges in their return to academic and other life situations after combat:

Scholarships

- A comprehensive list of higher education scholarships for severely injured Servicemembers or their spouses is available at the DANTES Web site (see <http://www.dantes.doded.mil/sfd/index.asp>). Currently, 15 programs sponsored by various educational institutions are listed at the site, and DANTES welcomes new schools to add their program information to this list.
- **University of Maryland University College's Web**

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site (see http://www.umuc.edu/financialaid/scholarships/02_programs_d.shtml) lists a variety of scholarship opportunities available to returning veterans and their family members. Awards are based on academic performance and/or financial need. Application deadlines are posted on the page.

Academic outreach

- Administrators and faculty at many higher education institutions are stepping forward in areas other than scholarships as well. For example, Supportive Education for Returning Veterans (SERV) is a **Cleveland State University (CSU)** program, which began as an “idea” for John Schupp, SERV’s creator and director. In October of 2006, Dr. Schupp, who is also a CSU Chemistry professor, was approached by student combat veterans who seemed to be struggling academically due to a sense of marginalization within the general student population. After thinking over these students’ dilemma, Dr. Schupp considered a program that would allow student veterans to opt for a sequestered program during a transitional period. He then took his idea and spent a good part of 2007 attaining recognition and support from the university and the state of Ohio.

After receiving CSU- and state-backing (over some administrative hurdles), and gathering a cadre of supportive faculty members from several disciplines to teach, Dr. Schupp started the first classes under SERV with 14 combat veterans. Under the program, student-veterans take basic, general education, courses that are common across degree programs, with fellow-veterans. The philosophy behind this design is simple, according to Dr. Schupp, in that student veterans can concentrate on studies without immediate distractions that might come from fellow-students or faculty members who might politicize student veterans’ experiences or their presence on campus.

According to Dr. Schupp, SERV provides a reasonably secure, and academically-focused, environment for student veterans who are just entering or returning to academic programs after deployment. Participation is voluntary on the part of the veterans. So far, according to Dr. Schupp, this veterans-only environment seems to be working. Chemistry test scores among the 14 student veterans are higher than those among Schupp’s regular chemistry seminar courses. With this initial success for students, Schupp believes that their chances of staying in an academic program will increase, and retaining student veterans by ensuring their academic success is SERV’s ultimate goal. Schupp has already been interviewed on National Public Radio about the program and speaks at

colleges and universities across the country on their prospective adoption of a SERV-like model. See <http://www.csuohio.edu/serv/> for additional information on SERV.

- **Weber State University (WSU)** in Ogden, Utah, is collaborating with the Wasatch Range Writing Project (part of the federally-funded National Writing Project), to advance a program for Utah military veterans of all historical periods. According to WSU English Professor Gary Dohrer, the university offers free writing workshops for veterans, WSU students and non-students. While not directly connected with a for-credit course at present, the workshops encourage veterans to share their military experiences in a safe, communicative environment.

Professor Dohrer indicated his interest in possibly expanding the project into a for-credit writing courses focused on veterans writing about their experiences. At present, however, he views Weber State’s workshops as “community outreach,” a way for him as a non-veteran to say thank you to veterans for their service. So far, WSU’s program has run for four semesters, and there is hope to keep it running for many more semesters. Professor Dohrer’s philosophy complements Dr. Schupp’s in that he believes veterans should be encouraged to communicate their experiences as they see fit, but he also advances the idea of integrating veterans into the general student population as soon as possible. According to Professor Dohrer, while there could be some challenges in interactions between veterans and non-veteran students, he believes that what the student body and university have to gain from integrating veterans into their community is greater than what they lose if veterans are segregated. For more information, go to <http://weber.edu/WSUToday/011608writingworkshops.html>.

Administrative initiatives

- As ARNG Soldiers return to their home states from Iraq and Afghanistan in greater numbers, they might be seeking colleges and universities that make increasing use of Web-based technologies to assist veterans in their return to the campus and classroom. Many institutions are advancing in their use of technology in administration, and they can serve as models among colleges and universities that desire to provide a proactive and wide-ranging orientation toward Servicemembers and veterans. Institutional Web sites worth looking into are those of **Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System** (see <http://www.mnscu.edu/students/veterans/index.html#benefits>), **Illinois State University** (see <http://www.enrollmentmanagement.ilstu.edu/military/>), **North Georgia College and State University**

(see <http://www.ngcsu.edu/enrollment/registrar/deplydadt.shtml>), and **Mississippi State University** (see <http://www.veterans.msstate.edu/>). Each of these institutions is taking a more comprehensive approach to outreach and service to military students and veterans.

Mississippi State University's page includes a separate link to the state ARNG Education Services Office and to VirtualArmory.com, as well as to the state's Veterans Affairs Office; **North Georgia College and State University's** site provides a comprehensive walk-through from pre-mobilization to demobilization; and the **Minnesota State System** site, perhaps the most comprehensive available, offers an array of links to institutions across the state, to on-line courses and programs, to career services and training centers, to tuition and scholarship opportunities and much more. If institutions in your states are adopting similar, user- and military-friendly outreach and service strategies, please contact *ARNG Education News* (riggled@aascu.org). We would like to promote such strategies to other schools that serve military student and veteran populations.

Writing Projects (Academic and Non-academic)

- In addition to Professor Dohrer's writing workshops at **Weber State University** in Utah, projects that encourage combat veterans (and their families) to communicate their experiences are becoming more prevalent and effective in engaging veterans and audiences, and in creating dialogues back home. One of the largest of these communications projects is "Operation Homecoming," which began in 2004 as a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Boeing Company, its primary financial contributor (see <http://www.nea.gov/national/homecoming/index.html> for additional information). Bringing together a group of accomplished writers as facilitators, evaluators, and editors, the project solicited stories from Iraq/Afghanistan war veterans and their family members. Out of over 1,200 submissions, all of which were collected and archived as part of the 12,000-page writing project, the editors selected "100 uncensored and never-before-published eyewitness accounts, private journals, short stories, letters, e-mails, poems, and other personal writings." These writings appeared in a published anthology, called *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families*. In addition to this anthology (published by Random House in 2006), a documentary film version of the project appeared in 2007 and was nominated for an Academy Award last year. NEA is still accepting personal essay submissions

from combat veterans and their families, which will be included in the 12,000+ page archival project. Even though it is uncertain that a future published volume will appear, Sally Gifford, a communications specialist for the project, said that NEA will continue to accept submissions for inclusion in the archival part of the project.

- The Military Salute Project (MSP) of Woodbury, Minnesota, has sponsored a 2008 Minnesota Veterans Literary Initiative, which is designed to encourage Minnesota veterans (and their family members) who have served in the "Global War on Terror to record and preserve their stories" (see <http://home.att.net/~militarysalute2/>). This and other relevant writing opportunities for veterans can be found at the Military Writers Society of America (at <http://www.militarywriters.com/members.htm>). While the 2008 Minnesota Military Salute Project awards competition will have closed by the time *ARNG Education News* goes to print, it is important to note its existence for two reasons. First, according to Jeff Seeber, the program's administrator, MSP will continue to accept literary submissions from combat veterans and their families indefinitely. Those who submit can receive comments, advice, or referrals from MSP. Second, like Operation Homecoming, MSP represents the kind of program that encourages combat veterans and families to communicate their experiences for their own, the community's, and the nation's benefit. This activity is empowering for veterans and can assist their transition back into the classroom.
- Lastly, the Hospitalized Veterans' Writing Project, Inc., sponsors a number of initiatives for wounded warriors, including a newsletter to which inpatient and outpatient veterans can submit writing (see <http://www.veterans-voices.org/>). The project Web site also links to information on dozens of writing awards for veterans in categories spanning fiction, poetry and specialized features. Veterans submit their writings through staff at Veterans Medical Center at which they are receiving treatment.

To learn more about ARNG education
go to:

<http://www.virtualarmy.com/>
and follow the "Education" link.

National Guard Bureau Education and Incentives (NGB E&I) Branch Announces Arriving Staff

NGB E&I welcomes **Mr. Jerome Carter**, who retired in 2004 after 21 years active duty in the Army. Since retiring, Mr. Carter has served for two and one-half years with AT&T Government Solutions in various positions, working on several applications under the Reserve Component Management System (RCMS) umbrella in support of the NGB.

These applications have included the Automated Unit Vacancy System (AUVS), Army Aviation Eagle Eyes (A2E2), and iMARC. Presently, Mr. Carter is assigned as a Business Program Specialist in support of NGB-ARM-EI, while also pursuing his goal to achieve Project Management Professional certification. Mr. Carter attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Also recently arriving at NGB-ARM-EI is **1LT Richard McIlrath**, who comes from the Indiana ARNG (INARNG) Education Services Office, where he served as a Guidance Counselor and Test Control Officer. Serving NGB as the Section Chief for Bonuses and Incentives, 1LT McIlrath received a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Indiana University and is currently pursuing a Master of Science degree in Computer and Electronic Technology from Indiana State University. Prior to joining the IN ARNG, 1LT McIlrath served five years in the Army on active duty, attended Officer Candidate School after joining the Guard, and received his commission as a Signal Officer.

Ms. Melissa Carder, who joined NGB-ARM-EI as an Education Specialist, is a "life-long resident" of the Washington, DC metropolitan area, and is a graduate of the University of Baltimore with a Bachelor's Degree in Marketing. Ms. Carder brings excellent customer service experience to NGB after recent success originating residential and commercial mortgages.

Also joining NGB-ARM-EI in recent weeks is **1LT Mitchell Lango**, who serves as Federal Tuition Assistance Program Manager. 1LT Lango received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Delaware, where he participated in the Army ROTC Program, was commissioned, and later served with the 29th Infantry Division in the Virginia Army National Guard (VAARNG). He also attended the Ordinance Officer Basic Course at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, MD, where he was named Honor Graduate, and deployed for 14 months at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo with the 29th Infantry Division.

Another talented addition to NGB's staff is **1LT Diana Diaz**, who served 15 years on active duty in the Army prior to joining the Guard, deployed with the Texas ARNG

in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in May of 2005, as Assistant Deputy S1, where she was responsible for the management of strength and personnel accountability, to include casualty reports, for 3,400 deployed Soldiers. From October of 2006 - December of 2007, 1LT Diaz was assigned as Officer in Charge and Acting Commander of HHD 49th Finance Battalion, Commander of the 149th Finance Detachment, in Austin, TX, where she was responsible for unit member welfare and Soldier and equipment readiness. As of January of 2008, 1LT Diaz has served as Acting Budget Section Chief for NGB-ARM-EI.

Welcome to all of our new team leaders.