

BEST PRACTICES FROM INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING ACROSS THE U.S.

**Improving the Higher Education Experience
for Undergraduate Veterans**

EMBRACING VETERANS AND MILITARY-AFFILIATED STUDENTS: UNDERSTANDING BEST PRACTICES ADOPTED NATIONWIDE

Many top tier institutions are creating excellent educational experiences for veterans. To better understand current strategies and practices used to improve the student veteran experience at other institutions of higher learning, our team documented best practices from 40+ universities nationwide. In this report, we highlight 7 universities to guide current and future military/veteran service programs in the right direction.

PUSHING PAST BEING "VETERAN FRIENDLY"

Leaders at the nation's top colleges for veterans are now pushing higher education past biases and being more than just "veteran friendly". Institutions are not only creating comfortable campus environments for student veterans, but are going the extra mile to reach veterans where they are and piloting successful new programs and initiatives.

Following reputable peers, university programs and initiatives should be implemented that,

1. Clearly guide students to resources they need at every phase of their journey;
2. Connect student veterans to university officials specializing in veterans issues; and,
3. Promote broader university community engagement and support.

SPOTLIGHTING UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

To better understand how universities leverage resources to welcome and assist the undergraduate veteran population, our team spotlighted several veteran services offices' backgrounds and brands along with the top 2-4 resources offered that are most beneficial to the undergraduate veteran community. This includes everything from webpages, special courses, connections with veteran service organizations such as the Warrior-Scholar Project, and more. Understanding these universities' practices will allow for better experiences for undergraduate veterans.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

PURPOSE

Veterans face obstacles when applying to, enrolling in, and matriculating at institutions of higher learning across the nation. Elite private and public institutions are finding ways to address these challenges and adapt to better serve student veterans. This document will help universities understand the best practices for dealing with these issues.

APPLICATION

Understanding what is successful at other institutions of higher learning (IHLs) will help universities develop their own strategy to improve the veteran educational experience.

NAVIGATE THE CONTENTS

PROFILES	1
COLUMBIA	3
GEORGETOWN	5
STANFORD	7
BROWN	9
RUTGERS	11
UGA	13
PENN STATE	15

BEST PRACTICES FROM INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING ACROSS THE U.S.

**Improving the Higher Education Experience
for Undergraduate Veterans**



PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IVY+ INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

PROFILES

Many Ivy+ institutions are creating excellent educational experiences for veterans. These institutions of higher learning (IHLS) also seek to connect veterans across universities through organizations such as the Warrior-Scholar Project and the Posse Foundation. Our team was able to speak with several universities' veteran/military-affiliated students offices including Columbia, Georgetown, Stanford, UGA, Penn State, and Brown University to better understand what works best for serving undergraduate student veterans. Understanding Ivy+ peers will give insights into where other Ivy+ schools can begin to improve the undergraduate student veteran experience.



IMPROVING THE HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE VETERANS

Best Practices from Higher Educational Institutions Nationwide

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

BACKGROUND

Over the last decade and a half, Columbia University has developed a successful program for service members transitioning from the military to undergraduate and graduate education, the workforce, and civilian life. During this time, Columbia has successfully enrolled more student veterans than all other Ivy League schools combined, while maintaining a graduation rate above 90% and a record of job and graduate school placement that equals Columbia's non-veteran graduates. The School of General Studies (GS), a program for nontraditional students, has been educating military veterans for more than 70 years. Like most of the more than 2,000 students at GS, military service members have, for personal or professional reasons, interrupted their education, never attended college, or are only able to attend part time.

VETERAN SERVICES CENTER

Columbia University launched the Center for Veteran Transition and Integration (CVTI) to have a direct and lasting impact on the issues of veterans transitioning out of the military. CVTI seeks to offer the best-in-class tools and programming veterans need as they transition from active service to college and the workforce.

SPOTLIGHT RESOURCES

UNIVERSITY STUDIES FOR STUDENT VETERANS COURSE

University Studies for Student Veterans is a full-length MOOC (massive open online course). The class has been designed specifically to help veterans transition smoothly from military service to higher education, and bolster their success once they arrive. Led by a team of academic advisors from Columbia University with more than 20 years of experience supporting students—including thousands of student veterans—transitioning to higher education, the course offers strategies for academic success for service members and veterans navigating the transition from military service to the college classroom.

PARTNERSHIP WITH FOURBLOCK FOUNDATION

Columbia's partnership with FourBlock Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization committed to providing career education to transitioning veterans, provides expertise with best-in-class veteran support organizations to impact transitioning veterans on a national scale.

FACTS & FIGURES

Location: New York City, New York

Best Colleges for Veterans Ranking: N/A

GI Bill/Yellow Ribbon Certified?: Yes

CAMPUS WEBSITES

Center for Veteran Transition and Integration

Student Financial Services

CONTACTS

Michael Abrams, Program Director
Phone Number: (212) 853-1586



IMPROVING THE HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE VETERANS

Best Practices from Higher Educational Institutions Nationwide

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

BACKGROUND

Georgetown University is part of the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits, and was founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola after recovering from a battle wound and overcoming the challenges he faced while transitioning from being a warrior to a civilian. Georgetown University is a Catholic and Jesuit institution and prides itself with shaping a campus environment around the Jesuit values to educate the whole person. Due to the deep historical connections to the military and the Jesuit values of care and service, Georgetown identifies the responsibility of serving the military community who are a part of the campus community as students, faculty, staff, alumni, and neighbors.

VETERAN SERVICES CENTER

Georgetown University is proud to serve those who have served. The veterans office supports the opportunities of military members accessing higher education to ensure a campus culture that cares for the entire spectrum of military students. The mission of services is to instill the Jesuit spirit of *cura personalis* into everyday connections among the military-connected community.

SPOTLIGHT RESOURCES

CONNECTION WITH WARRIOR-SCHOLAR PROJECT

The Warrior-Scholar Project is designed to provide mentoring and other forms of guidance for enlisted service members wishing to attend four-year universities.

VET ALLY

Georgetown University's Veterans Office held its first Veteran Education Training (VET) Ally Program in 2013 to start a dialogue among the campus community to identify the strengths and challenges service members, veterans, and military family members face while pursuing their academic and career goals in a civilian environment.

ALUMNI NETWORK

Georgetown has an Alumni Network Database where students and alumni can access all military/veteran alumni information.

WEBPAGE

Georgetown's central webpage for student veterans connects them to all the resources available internally and externally in a digestible online format.

FACTS & FIGURES

Location: Washington, D.C.

Best Colleges for Veterans Ranking: 5th

GI Bill/Yellow Ribbon Certified?: Yes

CAMPUS WEBSITES

Office of Military-Affiliated Communities

CONTACTS

LeNaya Hezel, Veterans Office Director



IMPROVING THE HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE VETERANS

Best Practices from Higher Educational Institutions Nationwide

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

BACKGROUND

Stanford has a long history of serving as the liaison between the university, its students, and the various federal, state and local agencies concerned with veterans' benefits. It is also #1 on US News & World Report's "Best colleges for veterans" list.

VETERAN SERVICES CENTER

The Office for Military-Affiliated Communities (OMAC) focuses on the administration and management of VA financial benefits, coordinates and supports educational opportunities for military-affiliated communities, and conducts outreach to faculty regarding engagement and support for faculty grants or other funding specifically identified for military and veteran communities.

SPOTLIGHT RESOURCES

STUDENT GROUPS

There are a number of student groups on campus that suit the extracurricular needs of military-affiliated students including: Stanford Law Veterans Organization (SLVO), Stanford GSB Veterans club, United Students for Veterans Health, Stanford Undergraduate Veterans Association.

WEBPAGE

Stanford's webpage connects military-affiliated students to all the resources they need. Going beyond links to the VA website or other resources, Stanford offers explanations for each resource, which are supplemented by the ability to speak with someone directly by appointment.

APPOINTMENTS

Students have the ability to schedule a call or in person appointment to talk with someone in the OMAC office at any time.

FACTS & FIGURES

Location: Stanford, California

Best Colleges for Veterans Ranking: 1st

GI Bill/Yellow Ribbon Certified?: Yes

Undergraduate Veterans: 30

CAMPUS WEBSITES

Office of Military-Affiliated Communities

CONTACTS

David Rice, Assistant Director of OMAC



IMPROVING THE HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE VETERANS

Best Practices from Higher Educational Institutions Nationwide

BROWN UNIVERSITY

BACKGROUND

Brown University has supported military veterans and helped students achieve their academic and professional goals, including military service. Though there was a separation from military affiliation during the Vietnam War, Brown has since renewed commitment to the military-affiliated community. Brown has been designated as a Silver Medal Military Friendly School and seeks to facilitate a sense of community with people in the military community, and at Brown at large, to ease the transition to student life.

VETERAN SERVICES CENTER

Brown's Office of Military-Affiliated Students (OMAS) seeks to be a voice on campus for service members and veterans. OMAS also strives to make Brown University the best university for military-affiliated students. OMAS hosts monthly luncheons and operates an exclusive, veteran-only study space. OMAS also helps military-affiliated students navigate all the resources Brown offers including, but not limited to application fee waivers, a guaranteed phone interview, Yellow Ribbon Awards and Financial Aid, and getting involved on campus.

SPOTLIGHT RESOURCES

LEADERSHIP SCHOLAR PROGRAM

The Leadership Scholar Program (LSP) assists honorably discharging, reserve and veteran U.S. Marines with the college application process, and is partnered with leading non-profit organizations such as POSSE, Service to Schools (S2S), and the Warrior Scholar Project.

STUDENT VETERANS SOCIETY

The Brown University Student Veterans Society (BUSVS) was formed in 2009 to help foster a community of support and awareness for student veterans and students interested in military service. Members of BUSVS are involved with raising awareness of veterans' and military issues both on and off campus.

RESUMED UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Brown offers a Resumed Undergraduate Education program that caters to veteran and nontraditional students. Brown makes veteran applicants a priority with application fee waivers, a guaranteed phone interview, generous Yellow Ribbon awards and financial aid, and no SAT/ACT required.

FACTS & FIGURES

Location: Providence, Rhode Island

Military Friendly School (Silver Rank)

GI Bill/Yellow Ribbon Certified?: Yes

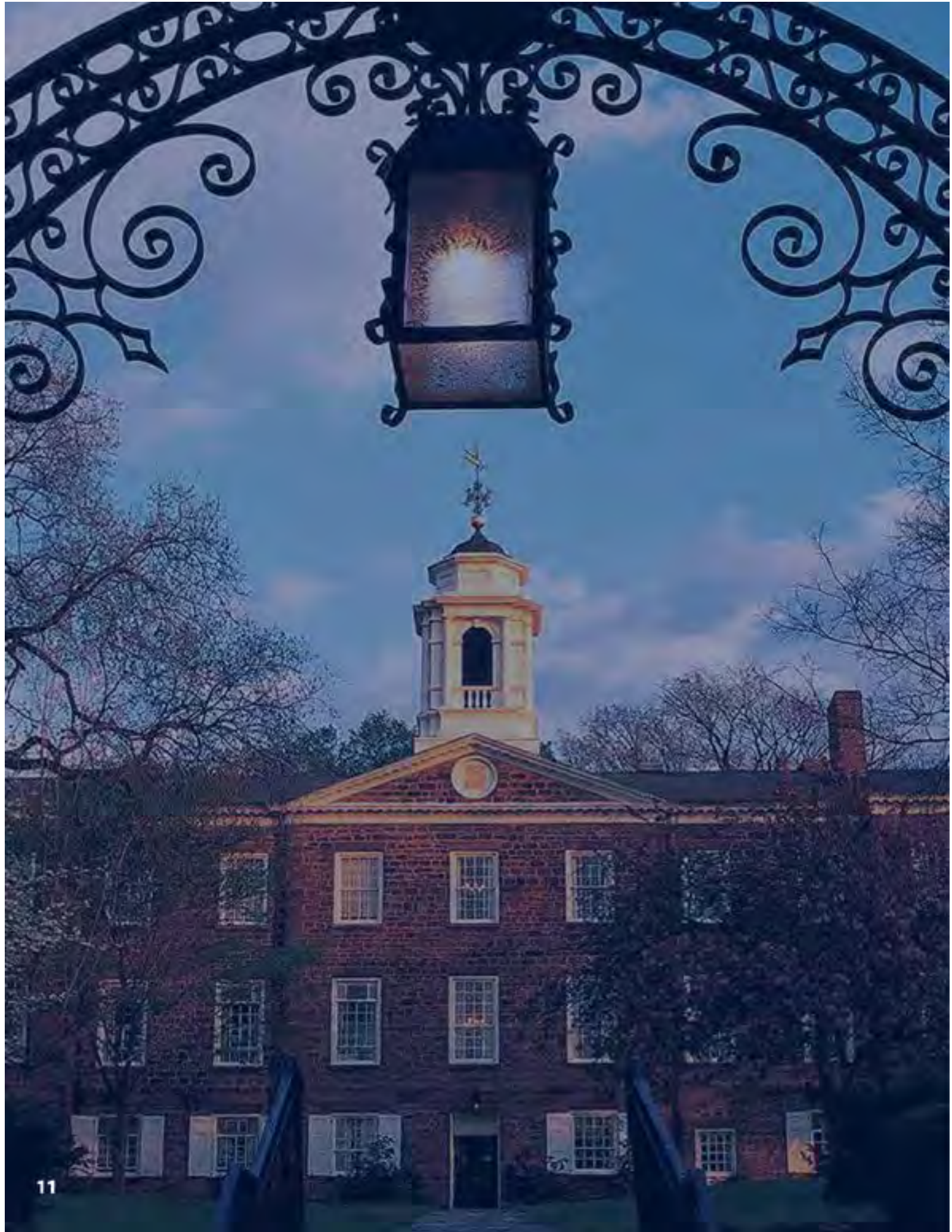
CAMPUS WEBSITES

Office of Military-Affiliated Students

CONTACTS

Kimberly Millette, Program Director

Phone Number: 401-863-7682



IMPROVING THE HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE VETERANS

Best Practices from Higher Educational Institutions Nationwide

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

BACKGROUND

The history of Rutgers students who have served in the military is a long and distinguished one. Since the beginning, students have answered their nations' call. Students of Queens College left their classes to fight for their country's independence as the British landed on New Jersey's shores. Graduates requested their diploma as they fought to keep the nation together during the Civil War. They outnumbered their civilian classmates after World War II utilizing the first GI Bill, and now, after the longest period of sustained warfare in American history, the number of Rutgers students who have served in the United States Armed Forces has more than doubled in the last five years.

VETERAN SERVICES CENTER

The Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services was established in 2010. This office now serves all the needs of student veterans in any capacity students require. Rutgers also has a designated military house for service members and veterans to use for social and academic purposes.

SPOTLIGHT RESOURCES

VET HOUSE

Rutgers has a dedicated building for military veterans to study and socialize in.

WEBPAGE

Rutgers' webpage for veterans offers all resources and information needed for applying and thriving while learning.

PEER ADVISORS FOR VETERAN EDUCATION

PAVE is a peer support program that connects incoming student veterans with student veterans already on campus in order to help them navigate college life, identify challenges they are facing, refer them to the appropriate resource on or off campus, and provide ongoing support to their academic and personal ventures.

FACTS & FIGURES

Location: New Brunswick, New Jersey

Best Colleges for Veterans Ranking: 28th

GI Bill/Yellow Ribbon Certified?: Yes

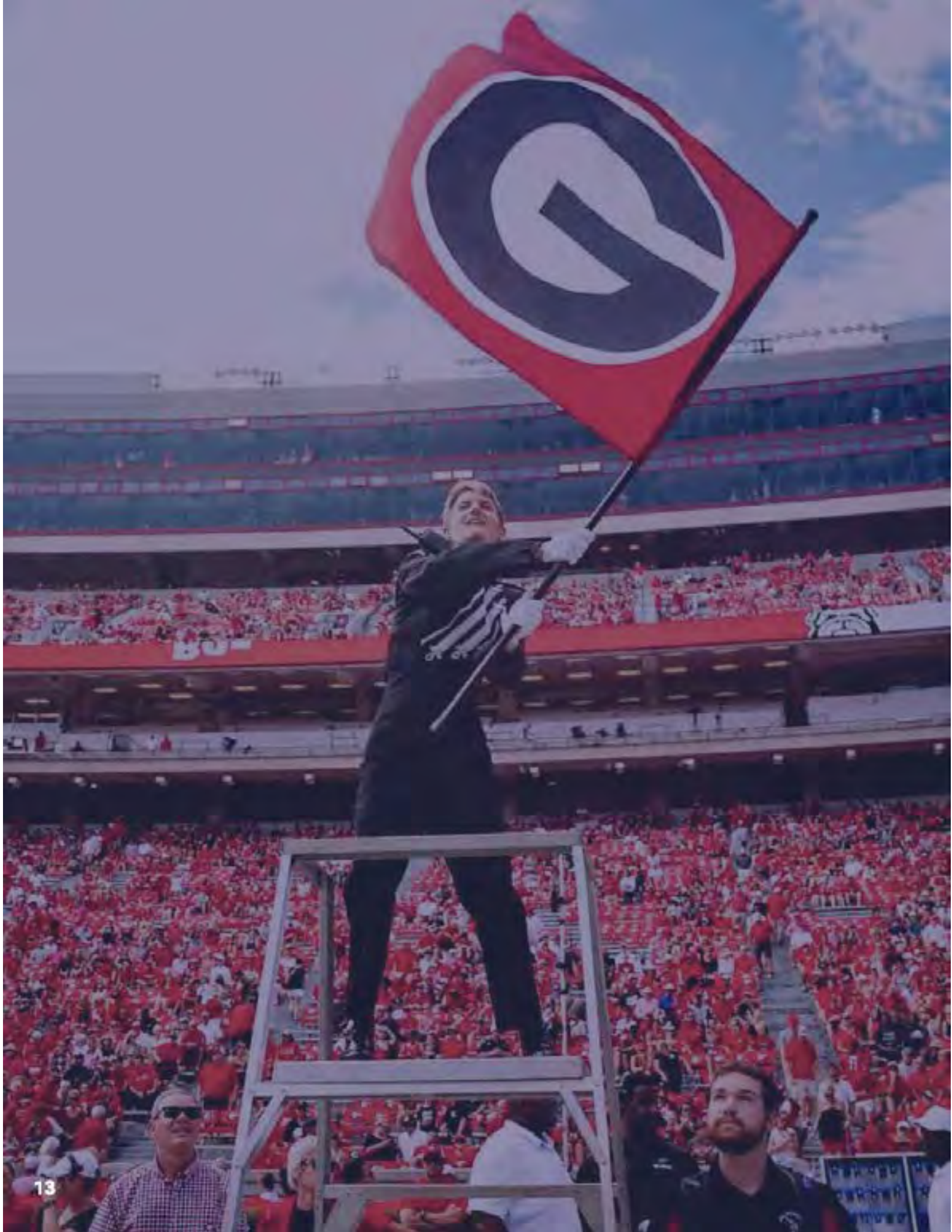
CAMPUS WEBSITES

Office of Veteran & Military Programs and Services

CONTACTS

Ann Treadaway, Director

Phone Number: 848-932-VETS



IMPROVING THE HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE VETERANS

Best Practices from Higher Educational Institutions Nationwide

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

BACKGROUND

Founded in spring 2013, the Student Veterans Resource Center (SVRC) serves as a central location for information about the university's services for student veterans while also offering support, advocacy, and a convenient location for student veterans to gather throughout the day.

The center's strength lies in its established relationships with almost every office at UGA and with many service organizations across the region. The SVRC markets these services while keeping student veterans informed through weekly communications.

VETERAN SERVICES CENTER

The Student Veterans Resource Center (SVRC) provides a convenient point of contact for student veterans, a service desk staffed by veterans, an evolving network of partnerships working to improve services and programs, a comfortable lounge, and a community for student veterans. A range of diverse opportunities enables student veterans to meaningfully engage with the university and the surrounding community.

SPOTLIGHT RESOURCES

WEBPAGE

UGA's webpage offers a plethora of resources to students in a digestible way. While they are still working on branding, UGA's webpage gives students an organized online medium to navigate resources that are useful at every phase of the journey.

SERVICE MODEL

UGA's service model offers a picture of what the expected journey of the veteran is, and how that journey will lead to success in the future.



FACTS & FIGURES

Location: Athens, Georgia

Best Colleges for Veterans Ranking: 20th

GI Bill/Yellow Ribbon Certified?: Yes

CAMPUS WEBSITES

Student Veterans Resource Center

CONTACTS

Ted Barco, Director of SVRC
Phone Number: 706-542-9629



IMPROVING THE HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE VETERANS

Best Practices from Higher Educational Institutions Nationwide

PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

BACKGROUND

Penn State has a long history of making an impact on the lives of veterans and service members. It provides service members, veterans, and military families with the flexibility and convenience needed to achieve their educational goals. Penn State helps students navigate admissions, leverage benefits, manage the impact of deployments, and more.

VETERAN SERVICES CENTER

The Office of Veterans Programs (OVP) at the University Park campus is organized as a comprehensive, direct service unit for veterans and Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) benefits recipients. The office is staffed by six full-time professionals and approximately twenty student veterans who work part-time under the provisions of DVA work-study. The staff and students provide services in the following areas: outreach, certification, mentorship, and general counseling.

SPOTLIGHT RESOURCES

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR

Penn State's College of Education offers a 3-credit First Year Seminar called "Transition is the Mission" (EDUC 100) at University Park during the Fall 2019 semester. The course is currently open to student veterans in any year of study. The course aims to help student veterans maximize their VA benefits, get the most out of their college experience, prepare for post-college employment, and adjust to life outside of the military.

PENN STATE WORLD CAMPUS

Many veterans choose to utilize Penn State's online classes and degree programs as a means to pursue higher education.

FACTS & FIGURES

Location: University Park, Pennsylvania

Best Colleges for Veterans Ranking: N/A

GI Bill/Yellow Ribbon Certified?: Yes

CAMPUS WEBSITES

Office of Veterans Programs

CONTACTS

Mary Fisk, Coordinator Veterans Outreach

DISCLAIMER

All terms, HCD descriptions, and methodologies were quoted or paraphrased from what we learned in the *Using Human-Centered Design To Improve The Citizen Experience* course at Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy as taught by Professors Tom Allin and Blythe Meyer. All University Profiles are adapted from information available on university websites.

This student document was prepared in 2019 in partial completion of a summer internship. The research, analysis, and policy alternatives contained in this storybook are the work of the student team that authored the document. They do not represent the official or unofficial views of the Sanford School of Public Policy or of Duke University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Louis and Matthew would like to express gratitude to Professor Tom Allin for introducing us to this project, coaching us, and empowering us to make an impact in the military community at Duke and among the Ivy+ community. We are also thankful to Zach Osborne for guiding us throughout the project and helping us understand the veteran experience.

Thank you to the Office of Student Veterans and Clay Adams for spearheading this important initiative and connecting us to the Duke and Ivy+ community at large, helping us better understand the issues veterans face in undergraduate programs.

Finally, thank you to the many Duke, Ivy League, and Ivy+ institutional leaders, student veteran office directors, students, and alumni that took the time to speak with us. Without your insights and stories, it would not be possible to map the journey and pinpoint the opportunities to help student veterans thrive.

Copyright © 2019 by Louis Scola and Matthew Lanza. Without the specific permission of its authors, this document may not be shared, used, or cited for any purpose other than to inform universities' student veterans offices (or equivalent) about the issues presented.