Troops to College

Summary Reports of Task Forces

June 1, 2006 – December 31, 2007

[This report provides the results of the Troops to College Working Group effort for the period of June 1, 2006 through December 31, 2007.]
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Executive Summary

California is home to an extraordinary number of veterans and servicemembers. For example, the state leads the nation in the number of veterans: approximately 9.2% (2.2 million) of the nation’s 24 million veterans reside in California. Of active duty men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces, 11.7% (170,000 of 1.45 million) are from California. Over 12% of all active duty personnel are stationed in California (175,000 of 1.45 million). In addition, more than 20,000 active Air Force and Army National Guard are stationed in California, over 3,000 of whom are currently deployed worldwide. In addition to military personnel in the National Guard, many Californians who serve in the Reserves have been deployed as well.

The Montgomery GI Bill education benefit is a principal reason American men and women enter the U.S. military. Each member of the military who either serves in California or is a California resident is a potential candidate for admission to one of California’s 109 California Community Colleges, 23 California State University campuses, and 10 University of California campuses.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) estimates that 27,000 veterans migrate to California annually. According to USDVA, the average age of these exiting veterans is 27.3. Eighty-four percent are male, and sixteen percent are female. Ninety-six percent of exiting veterans are enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill. According to the USDVA, approximately 70% utilize some portion of their benefits, but sources at military.com have estimated that fewer than 50% actually use their education benefits toward the completion of a degree. According to USDVA, just 14,500 veterans are currently using such benefits in California at public universities; another 5,000 veterans are using their benefits in California private universities (to include private profits).

While current usage of benefits is difficult to pin down precisely, it is clear that veterans (and active duty servicemembers) are underutilizing the outstanding and affordable public educational options available to them in California. The California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California represent tremendous untapped opportunities for exiting veterans, both for California residents and for servicemembers stationed in California.

California’s Troops to College Initiative

Because of California’s role in leading the nation in the number of veterans and active duty personnel and the availability of California public higher education, in March 2006 Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger charged the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California, working in collaboration with all military branches, and the California Departments of Veterans Affairs, Education, and Labor and Workforce Development to expand education opportunities for active duty servicemembers and veterans to achieve the vision that California will become the nation’s leader and model in providing them with educational opportunities and assistance. To achieve this outcome, the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California have agreed to expand their respective outreach programs,
academic and financial aid advising, and admission opportunities for active duty servicemembers and eligible veterans, in addition to providing on-base classes and distance education.

To oversee the development, implementation, and evaluation of effective programs, the Governor appointed an ad hoc committee to review the status and achievements, and to establish the future goals of Troops to College. The oversight committee provides policy direction and guidance to both state and military organizations on key active duty and eligible veteran’s issues. The Oversight Committee includes the California Secretaries of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, and Veterans Affairs, the chancellor of the California State University, the chancellor of the California Community Colleges, the president of the University of California, and the following military commanders: Commander Marine Corps Installations West; Commander Navy Region Southwest; Commander Space and Missile Systems Center (Los Angeles Air Force Base); Commander National Training Center (U.S. Army, Fort Irwin); Commander U.S. Coast Guard, Pacific Area (Alameda); and the Adjutant General, California National Guard.

The day-to-day implementation of the Troops to College is overseen by the Veterans’ Workgroup chaired by Colonel Bucky Peterson, USMC (Ret.), the former Vice President for Development at Sonoma State University, who is now the Liaison to California’s Secretary of Education and Special Assistant to the Chancellor of the California State University on matters pertaining to active duty and veterans post secondary education. Colonel “Paddy” Gough, an active duty Marine Colonel, is the Co Chair. Assistant Secretary of Education, Vincent Stewart; Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, John King; and Assistant Secretary of Labor, Jeff Wyly provide the link to the Governor’s office. Jeff Spano, Community Colleges and Todd Greenspan, UC provide advising and coordination from their respective Chancellor’s and President’s Offices. Allison G. Jones, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs, Office of the Chancellor, the California State University, provides a unique role to the working group based on the broad support from the CSU Chancellor’s Office. Additionally he has a depth of expertise in all facets of student academic support and he lends his offices subject matter experts to fully support Troops to College.

State Benefits for Veterans and Servicemembers

California law waives the state’s non-resident tuition for active duty men and women and their dependents who are not California residents and who enroll in college while stationed in California. Non-resident tuition is also waived for veterans who were on active duty for more than one year immediately prior to discharge. Non-resident tuition is waived for their dependents as well. Thereafter, it is expected that veterans and their dependents who enroll in California public universities will become California residents (a relatively simple process); thus, effective with their second year of enrollment they would continue to be entitled to pay only the in-state fees.

This is an important benefit. For example, at the California State University all students, both California residents and non-residents, are required to pay the undergraduate
California State University State University Fee of $2,772. California State University non-resident tuition (an additional $10,170) is waived for qualified non-California residents.

Additionally, the CSU Board of Trustees sponsored AB 950 (Salas) Public Postsecondary Education; Student Residency Requirements: Active Duty Military. The Governor signed AB 950 in October that establishes a consistent policy regarding non-resident fee waivers for members of our armed forces, stationed in California, who are not residents of California and are graduate students at CSU by increasing the waiver of non-resident tuition from one to two years.

California provides high academic quality, low cost public colleges and universities, which represent tremendous untapped opportunities for exiting Veterans as well as men and women on active duty, both for California residents and for servicemembers stationed in California. Yet, with 42 two- and four-year public colleges and universities with a combined enrollment over 3.1 million students, only 14,500 veterans are enrolled on these campuses using their education benefits.

Implementation

A number of challenges arose in implementing Troops to College. These included improving communications among all the stakeholders, and especially increasing understanding in the higher education community about relevant military and veteran matters, and conversely, improving understanding in the military community about California’s public institutions of higher education.

Under the aegis of the Troops to College Veterans’ Workgroup, California higher education began to implement programs to support the Troops to College initiative in May 2006. Five issue and program areas were identified that needed special attention, and a task force was assigned to each area to develop and implement programs that would support this initiative. These five task forces and the achievements to date are outlined below.

Communications, Marketing, and Website Task Force

This task force developed and implemented a veteran website template for use by colleges, universities, and the military, including links between the military and colleges and universities, military.com, and the Office for Veteran’s Affairs. All institutions established a “Vets Corner” on their respective websites in support of providing timely information to active-duty servicemembers and veterans interested in earning a baccalaureate or graduate degree. Information about college admission requirements, costs, transfer of military credit, and other campus veteran support programs is included on these websites, and this information was also distributed to all Education Service Officers (ESO).

Veteran’s Outreach Task Force

The Veteran’s Outreach Task Force developed and implemented information outreach programs targeted to those on active duty and to veterans about educational opportunities at California public colleges and universities. Community events, organizations, and agencies
that work directly with veterans, in addition to county veterans services and veterans hospitals, were identified and provided with information about the Troops to College initiative.

This task force has provided information to active-duty servicemembers and veterans about education requirements for careers related to military experience, implemented the Hire a Hero, Hire a Vet Initiative, incorporated Troops to College into the California Department of Veterans Affairs training program, and provided outreach briefings to Veterans Service Organizations and County Veterans Services Offices. Participation in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was identified as an effective means to introduce information about California public colleges and universities in a more focused way.

While outreach to veterans was initially addressed, it became clear early in the implementation phase that California needed to reach active-duty personnel well before they began to transition out of the military. As a result, the task force turned its attention to identifying and implementing programs to reach men and women on active duty. To achieve this outcome, all colleges and universities were asked to join the Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC) and to become active in GoArmy and in the Education Support Center (National Guard). Colleges and universities were encouraged to invite all Education Service Officers to their campuses and to conduct Montgomery GI Bill education benefit workshops.

**Admission and Financial Aid Task Force**

Conversations between military and university representatives quickly highlighted the areas of confusion about university admission policies, including the transferability of military credit. As a result, the task force is reviewing The American Council on Education (ACE) Guide on acceptance and transferability of credit and service experience, with the goal of providing a seamless transition between the military and higher education and shortening the veteran’s time to earn a baccalaureate degree.

The Admission and Financial Aid Task Force is also engaged in reviewing the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Test (ASVAB) in order to develop an SAT equivalency. The ASVAB was originally designed to predict future academic and occupational success in military occupations. Validation studies indicate that ASVAB assesses academic ability and predicts success in a wide variety of occupations, and there is interest from some colleges and universities in using the ASVAB for admission purposes.

Residency provisions in the California Education Code for members of the armed forces need to be reviewed and modified as necessary to provide greater access and waiver of non-resident tuition for all members in the Armed Forces, including the National Guard. On July 5, 2007, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Governor Schwarzenegger will continue to seek ways to include support in the state’s budget to provide assistance with college tuition to “the 27,000 active duty and National Guard members returning from overseas.”

Finally, the task force is identifying policies and/or waivers currently available to help increase admission to and better transition of active duty personnel and veterans to public
colleges and universities in California in addition to identifying financial assistance packages available to increase their access to higher education campuses.

**Partnership Task Force**

The Partnership Matrix Task Force has identified contacts at each California military base and college campus, implemented active on-base university outreach programs, developed regional service centers consisting of military bases and campuses to provide services, increased communication between military bases and campuses, developed policies and protocols for university access to military bases and military access to university campuses, and developed a college counseling corps consisting of veteran college alumni to work with active duty servicemen and women.

**Best Practices Task Force**

This task force has identified best practices among campuses and military services that support education for veterans in California public universities, and is encouraging all universities and colleges to implement these practices in order to reach out more effectively to active duty and veterans. As examples, this task force has developed guidelines for conducting successful education fairs on military installations, veterans support teams to assist “soldiers” to transition to becoming students, and effective outreach programs that include participation in job and education fairs, campus veterans support teams, and websites.

Significantly, the task force has identified a new program, "Boots to Books" that was developed at Citrus College, a community college located about 30 miles east of Los Angeles. This innovative program is designed to help veterans transition to civilian life and the college environment. It is the first of its kind in the nation to provide a positive transition step for combat veterans. Taught by a VA counselor who is a combat veteran, this course focuses on combat stress, post traumatic stress disorders, and other issues affecting veterans returning to civilian life. The curriculum is specifically designed to increase the veteran’s academic, work, and social success. The class teaches participants interpersonal skills, methods of adapting to civilian life and work careers, and techniques for managing military operational stress. In fall 2007, this course was a hybrid with an existing counseling course on a trial basis, but it is hoped that the course will become a stand-alone course in the near future. The *Troops to College* workgroup is exploring ways to expand the availability of courses like this one elsewhere in the state.

**Outcomes to Date**

The list below provides a comprehensive summary of the outcomes as a result of the *Troops to College* initiative:

- Implemented veterans’ web sites, including system and a statewide website,
- Identified a campus contact person and office that active duty personnel and veterans can contact for individual advising,
- Established a severely injured education advising program at Balboa Naval Hospital,
- Implemented regional partnerships with military bases,
- Instituted “Veterans Orientation and/or Veterans Welcome Reception” programs to ease the transition from active duty to college attendance,
- Begun work with veterans on campus to establish student veteran associations,
- Met regularly with military education service officers,
- Regularly visited military bases to provide on-site counseling and information in addition to analyzing military personnel transcripts,
- CCC and CSU instituted monthly conference calls to discuss implementation issues related to this initiative, and
- Concept development of a distance learning component for active duty and veterans.

*Troops to College* through the California State University recently met with the American Council on Education’s (ACE) Director of Program Evaluations, Center for Lifelong Learning, to discuss ways that the California State University as well as the Community Colleges can partner with ACE to provide advice to campuses on how to use more effectively the ACE *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services* to assess military courses and experience. With ACE’s assistance and guidance, *Troops to College* will be reviewing military courses and experience to determine if work that has been historically been acceptable as elective credit might satisfy campus general education and lower division major prerequisite courses. This would shorten the time to the degree. Because the acceptance of academic credit involves extensive faculty support and approval, ACE has offered to meet with campus officials and to send faculty from other universities who more routinely use the ACE guide to explain the content and rigor of the courses.

As a result of the *Troops to College* initiative and discussions between the California State University chancellor and presidents with military leaders, CSU has confirmed ACE’s findings that the men and women who serve in today’s military frequently recognize that they are capable of handling college-level work after their training, regardless of their high school academic record. Moreover, much of the training received in the military is heavily grounded in science, mathematics, and technology. Therefore, *Troops to College* is exploring with all three systems (administrative and faculty leadership) the possibility of identifying alternative paths to admission for active duty personnel and veterans that recognize recent training and coursework received in the military, rather than basing admission solely on a high school academic record. Additionally this effort will support several educational initiatives from the Governor’s office that support critical shortages of engineers and math and science teachers in our State.

*Troops to College* also working with ACE and military personnel in California to provide academic advising and education opportunities to severely wounded military members recovering at Balboa Naval Hospital and Camp Pendleton Naval Hospital. ACE has indicated that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs data suggests that 82% of those with a 20% disability rating enroll in postsecondary education. ACE is planning a series of web-based seminars for military vocational rehabilitation counselors who provide information
about academic planning and advising. *Troops to College* will participate in these seminars.

**Proposed Legislation Regarding Education Benefits for Veterans**

Several bills have been introduced in Congress to expand benefits to active duty servicemembers and veterans of the armed forces. *Troops to College* is committed to ensuring access to our nation’s active duty personnel and veterans. As a group, al-be-it representing different offices and constituencies, *Troops to College* strongly supports legislation aimed at increasing and improving benefits for veterans, and believes that efforts to enhance educational benefits for the Reserve and National Guard in particular would help broaden the scope and success of initiatives like *Troops to College*.

**Leading the Nation**

Col. Peterson and Allison Jones have discussed California’s *Troops to College* Initiative with members of Congress, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, and other Washington D.C. agencies. At a July 2007 senate hearing, Sen. Daniel H. Akaka (Hawaii) asked Allison Jones to ensure that California continued to share its *Troops to College* initiatives with other states and higher education so that the nation could learn how to overcome the obstacles that California has overcome to ensure that its active duty personnel and veterans are aware of the education opportunities available to them and enroll in college in larger numbers.

**Next Steps**

To build upon the achievements to date, the *Troops to College* initiative will continue to implement the following programs:

- Continue to plan to implement a statewide roll out of *Troops to College* with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger as the keynote speaker;
- Expand advertising and promotion, including a bus tour to each military base in California with representatives from admission, advising, financial aid, and faculty;
- Expand regional institution/military base partnerships;
- Expand consistent use of the ACE Guide in the evaluation of military training for academic credit;
- Continue discussions with military leaders to open “one stop” locations on military bases where active duty and veterans can find information about education, careers, benefits, other support services;
- Review and recommend additional academic programs for inclusion in the military’s Transition Assistance Program (TAP);
- Expand alumni outreach to connect veterans with alumni organizations who will assist with employment and other services to veterans;
- Develop statewide veterans’ website;
- Expand student veterans clubs;
• Explore university services to wounded veterans;
• Explore deferred payment plans on university campuses for veterans who have filed for Montgomery GI Bill education benefits but who typically do not receive their first check until well in the initial term;
• Work with Congressional members who are seeking advice from the Troops to College participants about changes needed to support veterans, e.g., eliminate the ten-year limitation on use of education benefits, merge various education programs, expand eligibility for campus-based Title IV federal financial aid;
• Pilot distance learning programs that are attractive to military personnel;
• Support national legislation to provide enhanced educational benefits to National Guard; and
• Review best practices of other states that could be imported into California to improve services to veterans.

Summary

Active and constructive collaboration between the State of California, the U.S. Armed Forces and veterans’ entities is already yielding results. More active duty personnel and veterans are exploring high quality, affordable public educational opportunities in California as a result of the increased partnerships between all stakeholders in California. More classes are being offered on base to active duty personnel. State institutions are offering improved advice and services to veterans and military personnel. The California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California are becoming the schools of choice for active duty servicemembers and eligible veterans.

Of important mention is the fact that led by Chancellor Charles B. Reed, the CSU has taken a leadership role in this initiative, whose mission is to make California the nation’s leader and model in providing educational opportunities and assistance to active duty servicemembers and veterans. As part of this effort, the CSU has been working with stakeholders throughout the state to expand its outreach programs, academic advising, and financial aid advising in addition to providing on-base classes and distance education opportunities.
Report of Admission and Financial Aid Task Force to California

Troops to College

Chair — James Blackburn, Director of Enrollment Management Services, Office of the Chancellor, The California State University

Charge:

- Ensure SAT/ACT tests are available in a timely manner at military bases;
- Review Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Test (ASVAB) to develop an SAT equivalency (the ASVAB was originally designed to predict future academic and occupational success in military occupations. Numerous validation studies indicate the ASVAB assesses academic ability and predicts success in a wide variety of occupations);
- Review procedures and American Council on Education (ACE) guide on acceptance and transferability of service experience;
- Develop and implement a dual admission and transfer guarantee programs;
- Review residency provisions for members of the armed forces and recommend as necessary revisions to California Education Code to provide greater access and waiver of non-resident tuition;
- Identify policies and/or waivers available to help increase admission to and better transition of active duty and veterans to public colleges and universities in California; and
- Identify financial assistance packages available to increase admission for active duty and veterans on higher education campuses.

Outcomes:

- No evidence has yet surfaced re the lack of SAT/ACT testing opportunities for active duty personnel. Moreover, it seems unlikely that very many of these men and women would be seeking to enter the universities as first time freshmen
- A concordance for ASVAB results as they relate to SAT is available, were such to be needed.
- CCC and CSU campuses are fully authorized to use the ACE Guide in the evaluation of military training for academic credit. Such is not the case with the UC.
- A variety of colleges and universities via SOC and otherwise have transfer and dual admissions assurances for servicemembers, and more are joining. As of February 2007, 50 CCC campuses were members of SOC, and several more applications are being prepared. As of May 31, 2007, all 23 CSU campuses were members of SOC.
- Two bills were introduced in the CA legislature (SB 2472) and (SB 272) which were signed by the Governor in September 2007 to expand access of servicemembers and/or their dependents to public colleges and universities,
  o SB 2472 provides expanded access by servicemembers and dependents to waivers of non-resident fees from one to two years of graduate study.
- SB 272 provides enrollment priority for servicemembers during their first term within one year of their return from deployment.
- Representatives of the USCG have raised concern that the billing procedures and fee nomenclatures of some colleges and universities may obviate the acquisition of full “tuition assistance” by active duty servicemembers. This matter needs further attention.

Other related initiatives:

- Efforts are underway to fully inventory the on-line (and other distance learning options) offering of all CA public institutions of higher education. This has proven to be more difficult than expected. Such offerings are often scattered about several divisions of individual institutions and systems, and not all of them have been approved for payment from the VA or the individual armed services.
Best Practices Task Force

Chair — Jeff Spano, Student Services and Special Programs, Office of the Chancellor, The California Community Colleges

Charge:
- To identify best practices among campuses and military services that support education for veterans in California public universities;
- To develop and implement outreach plans based on best practices identified; and
- To develop and implement effective outreach programs that include participation in job and education fairs, campus veterans support teams, websites and partnerships.

Participants: Jeff Spano, Carolina Cardenas, Joan Putnam Jeff Weston, Todd Greenspan, Jenna Fahrner, Sam Bagwell, Pat Jeffress, Michael Franceschina, Stephen Howard

Composition: The Best Practices Subcommittee includes representatives of California public colleges and universities and representatives of branches of the military with a presence in California.

Outcomes:

The following is a report on the accomplishments of this subcommittee, which met in October of 2006 and March of 2007 and which has sustained on-going communication through telephonic and electronic conferencing. This committee has decided to focus its efforts on development of three Best Practices Guides to help those interested in putting on Job and Education Fairs, establishing Veterans Support Teams on campuses, and establishing and maintaining effective partnerships. To date, two of the “Guides” have been completed and the third is underway.

Education Fairs Guideline: Using “The Ultimate College Web Page for Veterans” and the “Transfer Days Planning Guidelines” as models, the committee has developed “The California Military Installations Education Fair Planning Guidelines” to provide information necessary to conduct a successful and worthwhile education fair at a military installation. The Guidelines are intended to help individuals design an education fair that meets the informational needs of military and civilian personnel and family members at one convenient location; prepares personnel with information necessary for academic planning; provides on-site advisement and guidance, and promotes self and career development of military and civilian personnel.

The California Military Installations Education Fair Planning Guidelines includes a detailed guide for planning an education fair from pre-event organization to post-event evaluation. The guidelines also include an Education Fair Checklist, a sample Education Fair School Contact List, a sample Education Fair advertising poster, and examples of a Sponsor Poster and a Schedule Poster.
**Veterans Support Teams:** The goal of Veteran Support Teams (VST’s) is to remove unnecessary roadblocks and aid veterans in their transition from “soldier to student.” The team recognized that veterans who have served in the military may have a hard time transitioning from the military lifestyle to that of higher education and the academic culture; that the age and experience disparity between veterans and students coming to college right out of high school may also act as a roadblock; and that veterans entering the college/university setting are often older and have external demands such as spouses, children, jobs, etc. in addition to college or university expectations.

To assist in this effort, the committee developed a best practices guide for setting up a Veteran Support Team (VST) on college campuses. The guide envisions a Veteran Support team composed of dedicated, energetic, and knowledgeable professionals who will meet the unique needs of the veteran student population at each campus and provide the tools so that each individual veteran can meet his/her educational goals.

The VST guide makes recommendations as to who should be included both on and off campus as Veterans Support Team members, how the VST should be organized and operated, and what services the VST should provide. Finally, guide suggests outreach activities for the VST to more fully meet its mission.

**Partnerships that Work/Partnership Development:** Team membership for this effort has been established and a conference call is scheduled for Wednesday, May 2nd from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. to review military/university partnership models and best practices; identify elements of a good partnership; and describe the steps to implement and sustain partnerships that help active duty military and veterans gain access to and succeed in California public colleges and universities.

Participants in this effort include:

- Cathy Creeggan, CCCCO
- Carolina Cardenas – CSU
- Michael Franceschina – U.S. Coast Guard
- Steve Howard - U.S. Air Force
- Pat Jeffress – U.S. Marine Corps
- Janet Hoffman - Palomar College
- Joan Putnam – CSU
- Amy Utt – Solano Community College
- Jeff Weston – CSU
Active Duty and Veterans Outreach Task Force

Charge:

- Develop and implement information outreach program targeted to veterans about the California Veterans Education Opportunities Partnership;
- Identify community events, organizations, and agencies to help provide information about the California Veterans Education Opportunities Partnership;
- Engage county veterans services and veterans hospitals to support the California Veterans Education Opportunities Partnership; and
- Provide information to active duty and veterans about education requirements for careers related to military experience.

Outcomes:

The Outreach Committee worked closely with the Marketing Committee in its various projects due to the natural overlap between the committee’s objectives. Projects were focused on making information on education benefits easily accessible to newly released veterans. The majority of these projects were undertaken under the auspices of the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA).

- **Established an “Education Portal”.** Veteran educational benefits are controlled by a variety of agencies, both federal and state, and across agencies within each level of government. This often makes it difficult and frustrating for veterans to find detailed information on a specific program. Veterans will often contact CDVA for information on various veteran programs without realizing that the Department may not have responsibility for a specific program.

  In order to reduce that frustration the CDVA established a Veterans Education portal on its home page. Upon selecting the portal link they are directed to a web page that has brief descriptions and links directly to the wide variety of sites with veteran educational benefits. These links are designed to take the veteran directly to the most pertinent site for the program. By bypassing agency homepages the portal tries to put the veteran within “three clicks” of the desired information.

- **Hire A Hero, Hire A Vet.** The CDVA and the California Labor & Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) are partnering to implement a statewide initiative to transition recently separated veterans into careers. This initiative is designed to provide veterans with education, employment, training, and benefit resources that will assist them with finding employment in high-wage, high-skill occupations, and providing access to the veteran benefits they have earned. Resources will be offered
via a series of job and resource fairs designed for recently separated veterans and their unique needs.

Regional program partnerships can apply for grant funding support from the state if they adopt the state-developed job and resource fair model. The regional job and resource fair must be an expansion of an existing job fair that targets recently returning veterans to help transition these individuals into careers and/or education/training opportunities. The fair will offer a broad spectrum of veteran benefit information and resources specifically for veterans in one location. Emphasis will be placed on “outcomes” during the fair (jobs offered, claims filed, loan applications completed, benefit enrollment, etc).

Required Partnerships at the Regional Level will include:
- EDD local program offices – lead partner
- Local Veterans Affairs offices – CDVA and USDVA district and local offices
- Department of Industrial Relations – Division of Apprenticeship Standards local offices
- County Veteran Services Offices
- Higher Education Institutions (examples listed below)
  - California Community Colleges
  - California State Universities
  - University of California
  - Private higher education institutions

There are ten regional resource fairs planned for this fiscal year.

- **Incorporated Troops to College into CDVA training program on California benefits.** The CDVA routinely conducts training on the veteran benefits provided by the State of California that are in addition to federal benefits. The Troops to College initiative and specific benefits such as waiver of nonresident fees for active duty members stationed in California, and priority placement for veterans seeking admission to impacted programs have been highlighted in the lesson plan and accompanying benefits brochures.

- **California Veteran's Education Opportunities Partnership Seminar, Coast Guard Island, Alameda, California. June 28-29, 2006.** The purpose was to inform enrollment management teams, admissions and outreach personnel, and veteran support teams from the Northern California State Institutions about the Coast Guard mission objective and Voluntary Education program. The target outcome was for the institutions to take steps to implement successful regional partnerships in order to better serve the more than 7,000 Coast Guard members in the MLPAC Region. Participants were informed about the California Veterans Education Opportunity Project [VEOP], Coast Guard 101 and given a tour of WHEC 718 Boutwell to understand shipboard environment. Information was provided by the American Council on Education (ACE), military credit
evaluation, military transcript evaluations, tuition assistance process and GI Bill procedures, Veteran education compliance and inspection procedures and Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) in an effort that the institutions might adapt more military friendly education policies.

- **Outreach briefings to Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) and County Veterans Services Offices (CVSO).** The CDVA provides periodic briefings to CVSO staff on the Troops to College initiative as a means to facilitate developing local contacts with campuses. These updates are provided three times per year. The CVSO’s have received copies of the campus contacts list. Additionally the working group chairman has made presentations to forums such as at the semi-annual Commanders Conference convened by the Secretary of CDVA.

- **Outreach Report to the Legislature.** As part of a separate effort the CDVA was required to report on “Strategies to Improve California’s Utilization of Veteran Benefits.” This report included information on the Troops to College initiative as a means to educate the Legislature on the effort.

- **Product – “Ultimate College Website for Veterans”**. Every college and university should have a web page dedicated to veterans and their dependants – a “Veterans Corner”. This page should be accessible from the homepage via a quick link or an A-Z index. The more information that is given on this “Veterans Corner” the easier it will be for students to receive their benefits. To assist campuses in the development of websites with appropriate content, the CDVA had veterans (recently released from active duty and who are currently taking advantage of their education benefits) developed a document showing best practices they observed as they surveyed campus websites. These veterans attend campuses in the Sacramento area using Montgomery GI Bill benefits. The problems and hurdles they have faced in the process to enter college as a veteran are fresh in their minds. This document was distributed to the Troops to College working group members for distribution to campuses.

- **Product – CVSO contact list.** An integral partner in the “enduring relations” that campuses are establishing should be the County Veterans Services Offices (CVSO). The CVSO provide information, guidance and assistance on obtaining federal, state and local veteran benefits. They can be an extremely valuable resource to campus veteran liaisons for veteran issues outside of the education arena. A document has been produced and distributed that cross references the local CVSO contacts for each CCC, CSU and UC campus.

- **Survey of campus websites.** Today’s recently released veterans rely heavily on the internet to research topics. To that end easy access to campus information, specifically for veterans, is an important marketing tool. In conjunction with the “Ultimate College Campus Website for Veterans” document discussed above, the CDVA had MGIB users survey all the campus websites for veteran information. They were graded on availability of information on veteran and active duty
specific topics, ease of finding veteran/active duty specific information, and general “veteran friendliness.” The three educational systems were provided the results of this survey. The CDVA will undertake periodic reviews of changes to update the survey results.
Partnership Task Force

Chair — Colonel Ken Gardiner, USMC Director of Policy and Operations, Marine Corps
Installations West

Charge:

- Identify contacts at each military base and colleges campus;
- Develop matrix of military bases and campuses within those regions to provide services;
- Foster communication between military base and campuses identified in the matrix;
- Develop policies and protocols for access to military bases and access to university campuses; and
- Develop a college counseling corps consisting of veteran college alumni to work with active duty men and women.

Outcomes:

- Identify contacts at each military base and colleges campus

Local contacts, both Civilian and Military have been established at all regional levels. Going forward the Base Educational Officers should be used as the first Point of Contact (POC) when requesting information regarding on-base educational opportunities. The local Veteran Administrations (State/Federal) need to be leveraged/marketed as additional informational sources.

The published POCs have been updated and validated. These need to be kept current and changes should be sent to a centralized collection location (Bucky?). A survey of the CSU schools websites highlighted an inconsistency in the ability to access military/veteran benefits information. A number of the sites are linked to outside websites that have nothing to do with the university and in some cases were inappropriate. CSULB has a very complete website which includes a comprehensive “veteran’s handbook” that serves a one stop shop for information, forms and links.

- Develop matrix of military bases and campuses within those regions to provide services (Regional Service Centers)

California was broken up into regions where the predominate Service would take the lead. The Regions are broken down as follows: San Diego – Navy, Orange County/Camp Pen – USMC, LA – Army, Northern Calf – Air Force and Humboldt – Coast Guard. The military/university location map is being updated and will be distributed once all changes have been incorporated. It was decided that community colleges would not be included due to their numbers.
• **Foster communication between military base and campuses identified in the matrix.**

Currently, strong relationships have been formed with the CSU and some community colleges. A mechanism needs to be identified in order to build relationships with the remainder of the community colleges and the UC schools. CG MCI West hosted the Chancellor and (15) Presidents of CSU schools for a two day tour aboard Camp Pendleton. Interactive sessions were held with both senior leadership and individual Marines. The active duty Marines who were currently enrolled in college level programs discussed the drivers behind choosing a particular program. The inherent flexibility of a web based/distance learning scenario was the number one decision making criteria. Another obstacle/barrier Marines encountered with the CSU and UC schools was the limited number of credits that were transferable and the lack of credits given for military experience.

• **Develop policies and protocols for access to military bases and access to university campuses**

Access to military bases can be easily arranged through individual installation operations departments. Schools need to be MARSOC/NAVSOC certified before they can conduct on-base courses.

• **Develop a college counseling corps consisting of veteran college alumni to work with active duty men and women**

At this point there is no central source of information concerning which campuses have veteran counseling corps, their structure and a standard training criteria required in order to become a counselor. A number of schools do have active “veteran student groups” which are home grown efforts by the students themselves. These veteran run organizations are designed to provide guidance on Veteran’s benefits and admission process and provide a social network of fellow veterans and give visibility on issues back through military/VA.
Communications, Marketing, and Website Task Force

Chair — Karen Heinrich, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary of Education

Charge:

- Develop and implement a veteran website template for use by colleges, universities, and the military;
- Establish reciprocal digital communication links between the military and colleges and universities, military.com, and the Office for Veteran’s Affairs;
- Ensure campuses establish a “Vets Corner” on campus websites; and
- Develop and distribute to Education Service Officers (ESO) information about college admission requirements, costs, and transfer of military courses.

Outcomes:

Governor Schwarzenegger created Troops to College California Veterans Education Opportunities Partnership in March 2006 with the goal of encouraging veterans to attend California’s public colleges. The vision of the Governor and the working group was that California would become the nation’s model and leader in providing education opportunity and assistance to active duty military and veterans.

In addition, the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California were tasked with expanding their respective outreach programs, academic and financial aid advising, and admission opportunities for active duty and eligible veterans. This was achieved through collaborative partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of the Secretary of Education, Labor and Workforce Development Agency, and military forces in California by actively marketing California’s education opportunities.

The Communications, Marketing, and Website Task Force provided direction on the following items:

- Develop and implement a veteran website template for use by colleges, universities, and the military;
- Establish reciprocal digital communication links between the military and colleges and universities, military.com, and the Office for Veteran’s Affairs;
- Ensure campuses establish a “Vets Corner” on campus websites; and
- Develop and distribute to Education Service Officers (ESO) information about college admission requirements, costs, and transfer of military courses.

Below is a report on the accomplishments of the Communications, Marketing, and Website Task Force since March of last year. There are three main areas that will be discussed:

- Website Development;
- Media Outreach; and
- Public Service Announcement
**Website Development**

Today’s active military and veterans live in a digital world. Because of that reality, the task force decided that there needed to be information available about how to enroll in school and the *Troops to College* partnership online. A list of suggested content for a “Veterans Corner” was developed and distributed to the California State University, University of California and California Community College system. This also included a list of suggested links that could be included so that all the information a veteran could need would be available in one location.

**Media Outreach**

The committee conducted extensive media relations outreach beginning with the Veteran’s Day observance in November 2006. The Office of the Secretary of Education sent out a press release highlighting the initiative around the Veterans Day observance.

In addition, specific veteran profiles were pitched to publications around the state as a way to highlight the work that was being done by the *Troops to College* working group.

The following articles ran about the *Troops to College* initiative:

- November 10, 2006: Bakersfield Californian  
  Veterans embracing education opportunities

- November 10, 2006: The Gridley Herald  
  *Troops to College* – California Veterans Education Opportunity Partnership

- November 11, 2006: The Vacaville Reporter  
  Military duty provided educational experience

- December 9, 2006: North County Times  
  Wanted: More veterans in college

- January 1, 2007: North County Times  
  Governor’s initiative encourages troops to pursue higher education

- January 14, 2007: North County Times  
  Colleges need more veterans

- February 9, 2007: Camp Pendleton  
  Initiative streamlines process

- February 22, 2007: The Land Park News  
  From the battlefield to a Sac State classroom
Public Service Announcement

A public service announcement was also developed with the intention of distributing it to television stations and military bases statewide. The script is provided below and an electronic copy will be provided upon completion.

Troops to College

Public Service Announcement

Governor Schwarzenegger, sitting at his desk:
“Hello everybody, I want to encourage all of our military men and women to take advantage of the Montgomery GI Bill and get your college degree for free at any California college or university.”

Governor Schwarzenegger continues (voiceover played over two video clips of students walking across a UC and a CSU campus with identifying signage in the background):
“We are home to the best higher education system in the world and I want all active duty military personnel and veterans to know that we want you on our campuses.

Student Veteran, standing in front of the veteran support office on campus:
“The support I’ve received on campus from both the veteran support office and student groups has been awesome.”

Senator Denham, standing in front of a community college marquis or sign:
“It’s hard for veterans to beat the variety of degree programs and flexibility available at California’s public colleges and universities.”

Governor Schwarzenegger, sitting at his desk (Troops to College name, contact information at bottom of screen):
“You are the future CEOs, the future teachers, doctors, lawyers and builders of our state and our country. With your military experience and a college degree your opportunities are boundless.”

Plan and Agenda for the next six months

Goals

Communications, Marketing and Website Task Force – Chris Bertelli, JP Tremblay, Paul Browning and Regina Brown-Wilson co leads (Secretary Of Education office responsible)
- Complete Troops to College Website
- Audit the three systems departments and military installations
- Develop plan to develop promotional materials
- Continue to promote local and state wide campus stories
- Participate in planning or Road Show

Active Duty and Veterans Outreach Task Force – John King lead, supported by Col Gough and staff and Bucky Peterson
- “One stop” – Concept and feasibility (possible use of County Veterans Services Officers)
- Transition Assistance Program review and recommendations
- Severely Injured program
- Alumni outreach – what and how
- Road Show Co lead (with partnership task force committee)
- Draft and propose a California GI Bill

Admission and areas of academic interest and priorities (policy and legislation) – Vince Stewart, lead supported by Jeff Spano (CCC), Allison Jones (CSU), and Todd Greenspan (UC)
- Articulation of credits for military schools and experience – full acceptance of ACE guidelines
- Engineers and potential for veterans
- Support the efforts of the Veteran Program Administrators, the Educational Specialist Officers and the Student Veteran Organizations

Partnership Task Force – Colonel Gough lead and Bucky Peterson (ESO to support)
- Service Base and Station Commanders outreach
- Road Show concept and schedule

Best Practices Task Force
- Continue to document
- Audit best practices of other states that could be applicable to California (Minnesota and Texas for example); collect and review; propose possible adoption

Other areas of interest
- Assessment Process and April 1 2008 enrollment numbers
- Possible National and State legislation and policy considerations
- Examples:
  - Eliminate “penalty” on GI bill for other grants and scholarships
  - Delete 10 year window for use of GI Bill
- Synchronization of Jobs and Education – possible partnership with County Veterans Services Offices

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