

November 8, 2013

To: President Schulz and Provost Mason

From: Linda Thurston, Associate Dean, College of Education

RE: Academic Excellence Funded Military and Veterans Educational Initiative

The College of Education is making a significant contribution to the work at K-State with military families and veterans and is impacting the education of our undergraduate and graduate students in their knowledge of and appropriate pedagogy and practice for veterans, members of the military and their families. Thanks to a **\$6,000 Academic Excellence Fund Award**, the College of Education developed a college-wide **Military and Veterans Educational Initiative** to organize the various military-related activities across the college and to plan for a holistic and sustainable approach to working with our students.

The Military Initiative (MI) started after the award was made, with Associate Dean Linda Thurston and Associate Professor Judy Hughey as co-chairs of a steering committee that included faculty, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students. Department chairs recommended or asked for volunteers to be on the committee, assuring representation across all academic programs. In addition, staff and other faculty were invited to participate, as were graduate and undergraduate students. A core group of 14 individuals, including active duty military and military spouses, met monthly for six months. The group developed this goal for the initiative:

*To Build Capacity in the K-State College of Education to*

- a. Prepare pre-service and in-service school personnel to serve military-connected students and families;*
- b. Meet the needs of our military-connected COE undergraduate and graduate students;*
- c. Contribute to the knowledge base about education and military-connected students and families; and*
- d. Collaborate with other military/veteran initiatives across campus.*

The group began work immediately, with interest and commitment from all committee members. These are a few of the no-cost accomplishments of the group:

- The Center for Student Services modified its student intake form to include military and military-connected checkboxes for students.
- A special section of the COE website was designed for military-related activities (<http://coe.ksu.edu/about/military/index.html>).

- The past five years of COE dissertations were examined and a list of those related to military/veteran topics was made and put on the website, as was a list of the related publications by faculty and graduate students.
- Dr. Hughey submitted and received an engagement proposal “Engage, Collaborate and Counsel to Enhance Educational Capacity” for serving military/veterans and their families. As part of this project, she will develop a Certificate of Competence for counseling military-connected students in K-12 educational settings.
- Faculty and graduate students who are part of the MI committee have conducted research about faculty needs, community resources, and informational needs of pre-service and in-service teachers (listed on the website).
- A resource guide for faculty on the three K-State campuses is being developed.
- Faculty and students have presented at several state and national conferences (listed on the website).
- An electronic repository of curriculum materials for faculty and teachers was developed and is accessible from the college website.
- The committee has met with other groups on campus who have similar interests, such as the Veterans’ Center and the Institute for Health and Security of Military Families.

In addition to this work by the committee, college-level activities were planned for a fall kick-off to focus on military, veteran, and military-connected issues in education. The first event, in September was the premier of the COE-developed documentary, *A Walk in My Shoes: Military Life* (<http://coe.ksu.edu/about/military/militarylife.html>), at Forum Hall. The committee arranged a resource fair in the lobby of Forum Hall for this event. In addition, the Midwest Equity Assistance Center (MEAC) sponsored a military-connected film festival in Bluemont Hall and purchased and displayed books and curriculum materials related to the topic. Topical bulletin boards were designed on all floors of Bluemont Hall (G-4).

The committee has been very active in laying a foundation for building capacity within the college to serve our military-connected students, as well as our undergraduate and graduate students who will work with military-connected children, adults and families. To promote sustainable efforts beyond awareness activities, the committee decided to provide the majority of the funding from the Excellence award to departments to develop their own initiatives for professional development and research efforts that relate to the MI goals. Therefore, departments were invited to consider how MI funding could be used within their departments and programs for research-based endeavors that have long-term impacts. Each department was allocated \$1,650 for this endeavor. The funds were used in these ways:

- The Department of Special Education, Counseling and Student Affairs is funding a research and professional development project proposed by a new faculty member, Mickey Losinski. He will work with pre-service and in-service special education teachers at Ft Riley to provide ongoing emotional and behavioral supports for military-connected students using a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).
- The Department of Educational Leadership is funding four adult education faculty to survey online and evening college instructors teaching for DCE to determine their understanding and perceptions of military-connected adult learners. The findings

from their survey will be used to develop a technology-based faculty tutorial for online instructors. The Department is augmenting the MI Excellence funds with an additional \$3,350.

- The Department of Curriculum and Instruction purchased and developed literacy kits for elementary, middle and high school students that can be checked out by pre-service, in-service teachers and our partner schools. These kits included “The Little CHAMPS”, for elementary students, and novels with military children and resilience materials for middle and high school students.

The committee used the remainder of the funds to develop and print a brochure about the military-connected work of the college, which we call “ED-OPS”, a somewhat military term referring to “educational operations”. The brochure has been printed and a bookmark was developed to distribute at state and national conferences and meetings. Both are on our website (<http://coe.ksu.edu/about/military/index.html>). Funds were also used to purchase journals and books for departments and for the MEAC library in Bluemont Hall.

The committee continues to meet and to expand, as more faculty, staff and students become engaged in military-connected issues in education. Associate Professor Jane Fishback (adult education) and Instructor Sandy Risberg (Curriculum and Instruction) now chair the committee. They are planning several future activities such as a panel of graduate students who have done research on military-connected issues and sponsoring a local conference for students and education professionals in the area. We have just received notice that our proposed panel, *KSU military ED-OPS: Initiatives at K-State University's College of Education for military and veteran students, teachers, and families*, has been accepted for national professional development conference of the Council of College and Military Educators in Savannah this April. The panel is made up of Dean Mercer and these MI committee members: Risberg, Fishback, J. Hughey, Hewett (student) and Thurston.

**In addition to developing a foundation for building capacity of our faculty and students to meet the educational needs of military-connected students, this initiative has moved the College forward in its 2025 goals related to collaboration, engagement, research and external funding.**