

COLUMBIA STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Veteran Reconnect Grant Program

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Funding requested:

\$97,797.35

*Janet F. Smith by
Ch. D. Smith, Sec. VP*
President/Director of Higher Education Institution

Christa S. Martin
Project Director

Abstract

Columbia State Community College, located in southern Middle Tennessee, seeks to enhance the lives of citizens and communities in its nine-county service area through teaching, learning, and student success. Success rates for student veterans at Columbia State are a significant area of concern, with Fall-to-Spring progression rate, Fall-to-Fall retention rate, and three-year graduation rate all significantly lower than the rates for the student body as a whole. Improving outcomes for our student veterans is critical to increasing educational attainment rates and contributing to the success of the 'Drive to 55' initiative. To achieve these improved outcomes, Columbia State proposes to: 1) hire a full-time Veterans' Success Coach to provide transition supports and serve as an advocate to student veterans at the college; 2) provide a 'train-the-trainer' workshop for faculty and staff to better understand the strengths and needs of student veterans; and 3) develop a resource package to assist student veterans in identifying and taking advantage of student services available on campus and in the community. These components will combine with existing efforts at the institution to provide a comprehensive support system for student veterans and dramatically improve their chances for successful transitions into college, into the academic setting, into new social settings, and eventually into successful careers.

Optional Priority Area:

To meet the optional priority area, Columbia State will partner with General Motors Spring Hill Manufacturing to institute an internship program and/or a hiring agreement for student veterans. Additionally, a Veterans' Employment Representative with the Maury County Career Center has pledged his full support of the project and will work with the college to leverage his relationships with area employers to find job placement for our student veterans.

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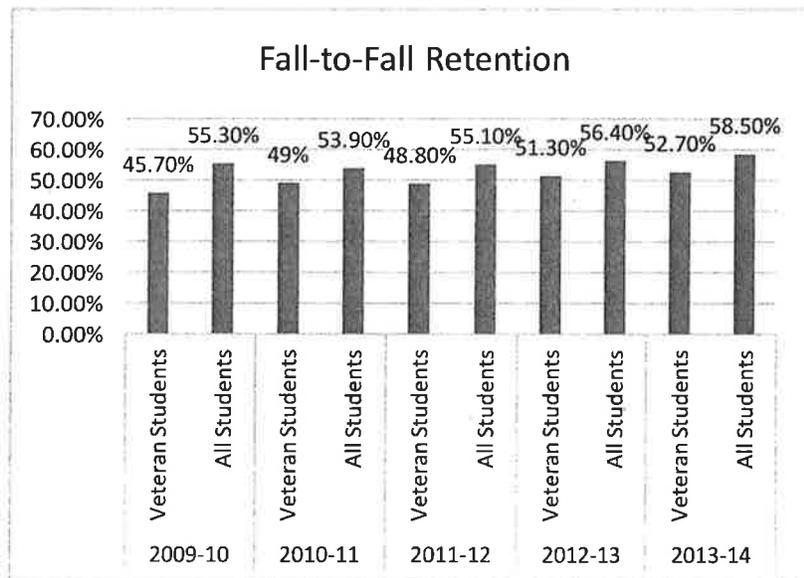
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1. Program Need

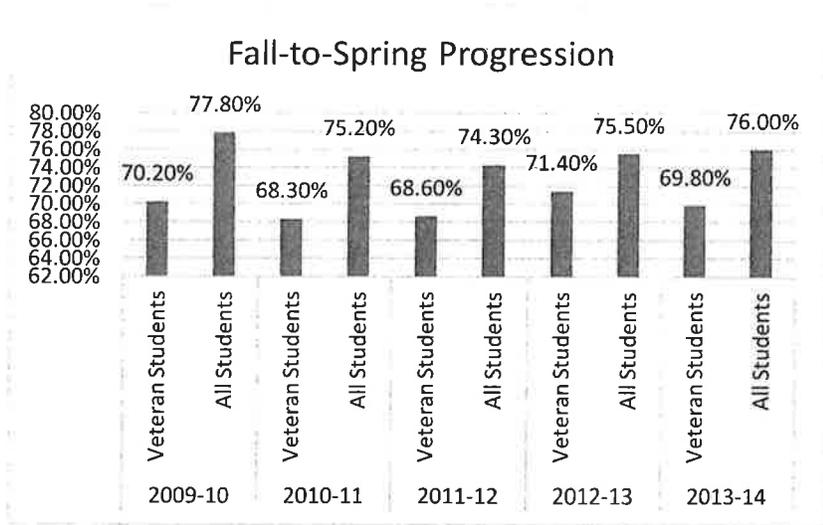
Columbia State Community College, located in southern Middle Tennessee, seeks to enhance the lives of the citizens and communities in its nine-county—Giles, Hickman, Lawrence, Lewis, Marshall, Maury, Perry, Wayne, and Williamson—service area through teaching, learning, and student success. Currently, the State of Tennessee has over 10,000 citizens serving in the Tennessee National Guard and is home to over 500,000 veterans per the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The educational attainment rate of Bachelor's degrees or higher is significantly lower in southern Middle Tennessee (13.1%) than the rates for the State of Tennessee (19.6%) and the United States (24.4%). Veterans are an essential component of this overall demographic. Of the 3,195 veterans living in Columbia State's nine-county service area in 2010, only 5.6% were enrolled at the college.

Veteran enrollment at Columbia State has been fairly consistent in recent years with 137 veterans enrolled in Fall 2009, 131 in Fall 2010, 112 in Fall 2011, 110 in Fall 2012, 125 in Fall 2013, and 84



veterans and 18 dependents in Fall of 2014. Success rates for student veterans once enrolled are also extremely low—the graduation rate for student veterans at Columbia State was just 13.8%



in 2010 and 15.8% in 2011 for Fall first-time freshmen.

Likewise, retention and progression rates for student veterans are significantly lower than the rates for the overall student population. Increasing enrollment and improving

outcomes for Tennessee’s returning veterans is critical to the success of the Drive to 55 initiative.

Columbia State has recently begun targeted efforts to increase both enrollment and success among student veterans. In April 2015, the college was selected as a recipient of \$20,000 through a Tennessee Board of Regents Student Engagement, Retention, and Success grant to implement a project titled “Veterans Engagement Team for Success (VETS),” which is set to begin in Summer 2015. Existing strategies and those to be implemented as part of the VETS project are an excellent start toward what will be, with the addition of activities outlined herein, a comprehensive, college-wide intervention to provide student veterans with the level of support necessary to ensure their successful overall transition into college and career. This overall transition includes four facets—1) the transition into college via the application and enrollment process; 2) the transition into the academic setting; 3) the transition into a new social setting; and 4) the transition into a successful career.

Activities included in this proposal are intended to aid in the overall transition of student veterans and follow the guidance of Griffin and Gilbert (2015), who identified three overarching themes of student veteran needs in their analysis of student veterans at seven representative

institutions of higher education (IHEs). These three overarching needs are: 1) Personnel and Services; 2) Institutional Structures; and 3) Social and Cultural Support (Griffin and Gilbert 2015).

The components of this proposal will coordinate with existing institutional supports and the VETS grant to create a comprehensive institutional structure that will increase veteran enrollment and provide student veterans with a greater opportunity to succeed once enrolled. A list of all the services and supports provided along with its source of funding, the targeted stage of transition, and the targeted program need is listed below.

Columbia State's comprehensive student veteran success plan

Service/Support	Source	Phase of Transition Addressed	Student Veteran Need Addressed
Veterans' Success Coach to provide an identifiable point of contact/resource to all veteran students	Veteran Reconnect	Application & Enrollment; Academic Setting; Social Setting; Career	Personnel & Services; Institutional Structure; Social & Cultural Support
Veterans Day celebration at each campus	Veteran Reconnect	Social Setting	Social & Cultural Support
Monthly social activities at each campus	Veteran Reconnect	Social Setting	Social & Cultural Support
'Train-the-Trainer' training for Success Coach and other important points of contact	Veteran Reconnect	Application & Enrollment; Academic Setting; Social Setting; Career	Institutional Structure
Resource Packet for all enrolled student veterans	Veteran Reconnect	Application & Enrollment; Academic Setting; Social Setting; Career	Personnel & Services; Institutional Structure; Social & Cultural Support
Career Services	Existing institutional supports; Veteran Reconnect	Career	Personnel & Services; Institutional Structure
Counseling Services	Existing institutional support; Veteran Reconnect	Social Setting	Personnel & Services; Social & Cultural Support
Disability Services	Existing institutional support; Veteran Reconnect	Academic Setting	Personnel & Services; Institutional Structure
Intrusive Academic Advisement	Existing institutional support; Veteran Reconnect	Academic Setting	Personnel & Services
Tutoring Services	Existing institutional support; Veteran Reconnect	Academic Setting	Personnel & Services

Dedicated Veterans Financial Aid Coordinator	Existing institutional support	Application & Enrollment	Personnel & Services; Institutional Structure
Military to Civilian Life Transition webpage	Existing institutional support	Application & Enrollment; Academic Setting; Social Setting	Personnel & Services; Social & Cultural Support
Dedicated Veteran Admissions webpage	Existing institutional support	Application & Enrollment	Personnel & Services
Identify and track enrolled student veterans	Existing institutional support; Veteran Reconnect; VETS	Application & Enrollment; Academic Setting; Social Setting	Personnel & Services; Institutional Structure; Social & Cultural Support
Volunteer Mentors	VETS	Social Setting; Career	Social & Cultural Support
Training for Disability Services, Academic Advising, Financial Aid, etc.	VETS	Application & Enrollment; Academic Setting	Personnel & Services; Institutional Structure
Establish a Student Organization for Student Veterans	VETS	Social Setting	Social & Cultural Support
Recruiting Partnerships with National Guard Armories, Armed Forces Recruiting Officers, Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development	VETS	Application & Enrollment; Career	Institutional Structure
Establish Veterans Support Team	VETS	Social Setting; Career	Institutional Structure
Group Counseling Sessions	VETS	Social Setting	Personnel & Services; Social & Cultural Support

2. Program Plan

Columbia State already has a standardized system for tracking veterans and student veteran success data. Veterans who receive veteran-specific benefits are entered into the database upon entering the college. A specialized Financial Aid Coordinator of Veterans and Scholarships handles this process. Additionally, student veterans who do not receive veteran-specific benefits are asked to self-identify on the FAFSA. Student Success is tracked via the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness and by the C-STAR student success software which can be accessed by students as well as faculty and staff who interact with enrolled students.

Funds from the Veteran Reconnect program will be used to hire a full-time Veterans' Success Coach to work exclusively with student veterans. This will be a new position, and grant

funds will not be co-mingled with any other staff member duties. Hiring preference will be given to applicants who are veterans.

Veterans' Success Coach job description
<p>This position will be directly responsible for providing transition supports to the student veterans enrolled at Columbia State. The Veterans' Success Coach will be a recognizable advocate for student veterans and serve as a liaison between the students and the other student support offices and services. This position will work primarily out of the Columbia campus, but will travel to each of the five campuses and cover the entirety of the nine-county service area.</p>
<p>Potential duties include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan and deliver a Veterans' Celebration at each campus to honor student and employee veterans for Veterans' Day• Regularly communicate with each enrolled veteran to determine potential issues and work toward resolution• Coordinate monthly social activities at each of the five campuses to engage and support student veterans• Send reminders at key dates and deadlines to student veterans• Work with Career Services to provide information on internships and job opportunities, and potentially arrange field trips for student veterans• Coordinate with Disability Services and Counseling Services to provide support and referrals for student veterans who need or may need these services• Regularly follow up with all enrolled veterans who receive academic alerts relative to academic performance or financial aid issues• Coordinate with Tutoring Services and Academic Advisors on behalf of student veterans who need academic support for their classes• Explore with student veterans their interests in joining the student club for veterans and/or establishing clubs at each campus• Work with Financial Aid and advocate for student veterans and assist student veterans in all administrative processes from application to enrollment to graduation to employment• Coordinate a study hall time and place as requested by student veterans• Sponsor student veterans in their engagement activities and projects and provide supports as necessary• Partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans Benefits Administration where possible• Attend all VA/VBA training (online and on-ground) to stay abreast of current issues/funding resources, etc.• Plan and deliver veterans recruiting events throughout the nine-county service area• Encourage student veterans to self-identify as such with advisors and FAFSA

This position will report directly to the Coordinator of Counseling Services, Connie M. Gallon who herself is a veteran of the U.S. Army and has more than nine years of previous experience working for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Two student workers will be hired to assist the position in grant-related duties.

Additionally, funds from this program will be used to provide a ‘train-the-trainer’ workshop for select campus personnel to better understand the strengths and needs of student veterans. Information from these training sessions will be brought back and shared with the college at-large via convocation or other college-wide information and training sessions. To conduct the initial ‘train-the-trainer’ session, Columbia State will partner with the Council for Adult & Experiential Learning (CAEL) through its “Basic Training: Student Veterans in the Classroom” program.

Finally, funds from this program will be used to develop a resource package that will assist student veterans to identify and take advantage of student services available on campus and in the community. These components will combine with the VETS project and existing services on Columbia State’s campus to comprehensively and cohesively respond to the needs of student veterans.

Optional Priority Area:

To meet the optional priority area, Columbia State will partner with General Motors Spring Hill Manufacturing to institute an internship program and/or a hiring agreement for student veterans. At the time of writing, GM is in its annual two-week summer break. Melissa J. Garland, HR Manager, has agreed to work with the college throughout this project and will be forwarding a letter of support upon the re-opening of the facility in mid-July. John Allen, a Veterans’ Representative with the Maury County Career Center, has pledged his full support of the project and will work with the college to leverage his relationships with area employers to find job placement for our student veterans. Please see his letter of support attached.

Project timeline

Month	Activities
Jul-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Director will attend mandatory project director meeting
Aug-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Director will work with President, Human Resources, other pertinent parties to finalize job description and create job listing for full-time transition coach to specifically serve student veterans. First meeting of Veterans Success Committee – begin plans to develop veterans resource packet; approve of job description via email review as prepared
Sep-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans Success Committee meets – continue working on resource packet Begin reviewing candidates for Veterans’ Success Coach, schedule interviews
Oct-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview and select candidate; make offer, etc. Veterans’ Success Committee approves resource packet
Nov-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veterans’ Success Coach reviews committee-approved resource packet; makes suggestions for improvement; contact printing agency; begins meeting with currently enrolled veterans and potential new student veterans Hold on-campus CAEL-led ‘train-the-trainer’ workshop for Success Coach and other faculty/staff identified as important to project success (to include at least two faculty members)
Dec-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee meets to review semester success data Committee makes suggestions for spring semester based on data Success Coach continues meeting with enrolled and potential student veterans Receive final printed resource packet; arrange with IT to include information from packet on website Success Coach and others who attended CAEL workshop will hold information and training sessions to spread information and effective strategies across college
Jan-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin offering specialized transition services to all enrolled student veterans, either through direct meetings with Veteran Success Coach or by assigning them to advisors who have had specialized training; distribute resource packet to all new and continuing student veterans Committee meets to review enrollment and progression numbers Begin identifying grants/donors/etc. to continue funding for Veterans’ Success Coach position
Feb-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success Coach and advisors will check-in with student veterans periodically to monitor progress and identify needs Committee meets to review identified needs and make suggestions for improvement Continue seeking grants/funds/etc. to continue funding
Mar-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to check-in with student veterans, identify needs Committee meets to identify trends through first half of semester Begin process of acquiring funds for continuation
Apr-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduation/placement and summer enrollment prep Committee meets to review funding opportunities and discuss continuation plans
May-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semester ends; collect and analyze data Committee meets to finalize plan for continuation and review progress toward funding Success Coach conducts exit interviews with graduating/transferring student veterans
Jun-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee analyzes first semester successes and shortcomings of Success Coach and comprehensive transition plan Success Coach continues to meet with enrolled students, prepares for summer courses Continue veteran recruiting efforts including events held in coordination with local partners
Jul-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee, project director and Success Coach develop project evaluation Project director, others work to fulfill all remaining grant requirements

Measurable Objectives

The project components listed above will work together in an effort to achieve the following measurable objectives: provide transition services to 100% of all veterans currently enrolled and to new veteran student enrollees; increase Fall-to-Spring Progression rate among student veterans by 3%; increase Fall-to-Fall Retention rate among student veterans by 5%; increase number of student veterans enrolled to 150 by Fall 2016; and provide at least 50 faculty/staff with veteran-specific retention and success training.

Project Governance and Accountability

Dr. Christa S. Martin, Assistant to the President for Access and Diversity, will serve as project director. Her experience in education is ideal for this role, as her academic credentials include a doctoral degree in higher education leadership and 35 years of employment at Columbia State Community College. Additionally, she has extensive grants management experience, having served as director for numerous externally-funded projects.

The Veteran Success Committee, previously established by the VETS grant, will consist of the following personnel: 1) Denise Halman, Financial Aid Coordinator of Veterans & Scholarships; 2) Freda Pillow, Career Counselor; 3) Connie M. Gallon, Coordinator of Counseling Services; 4) Wynn Gooch, Disability Services Counselor; 5) Dr. Christa S. Martin, Assistant to the President for Access and Diversity and Project Director; 6) an Enrollment Management representative; 6) an Academic Advising representative; 7) the Veterans' Success Coach; and 8) student veterans who wish to participate. Each member of the Veterans Success Committee (with the exception of the student veterans) is a full-time regular employee of the college. This committee will meet monthly to maintain oversight throughout the grant period. The Veteran Success Coach will meet monthly with the Veteran Success Committee, sharing

successes and identifying challenges. The project director reports directly to the President, will chair the Veterans Success Committee, and will monitor the services and activities provided by the Veterans' Success Coach, providing progress updates and reports as necessary to fulfill the terms of the grant.

3. Budget Plan

Each component of the grant budget supports the goals and stated outcomes of the program. The table below provides justification and explanation for each line item on the attached budget.

Budget Narrative		
Line-item category	Amount Requested	Justification
Salaries, Benefits & Taxes	\$67,384.00	Hire 1 full-time Veteran Success Coach to work exclusively on project tasks (\$40,160); Fringe benefits calculated at 40% (\$16,064); hire two student workers to assist Veterans' Success Coach (\$7.75 / hour, 20 hours / week, 14 weeks for Spring, 14 weeks for Fall, 8 weeks for Summer = \$5,580 x 2 = \$11,160)
Professional Fee, Grant & Award	\$9,900.00	Contract CAEL to conduct on-site 'train-the-trainer' workshop on challenges, strengths of assisting student veterans
Supplies, Printing & Publications, etc.	\$4,720.00	Contract with local printing agency to deliver a student resource packet to give to enrolled student veterans and arrange with campus IT to prominently place on college website (300 copies x \$2.40 / booklet – perfect-bound, 20-pages, full color, 5.25" x 8.25" = \$720); recruiting budget for Veterans' Success Coach (\$2,000); supply budget for Veterans' Success Coach (\$2,000)
Travel, Conferences & Meetings	\$8,549.10	Travel and lodging for CAEL workshop leaders; travel for Veterans' Success Coach to visit each campus 2x per month during Spring 2016 semester (\$0.47 / mile); budget to travel to VA/VBA conferences, recruiting events, and other professional development opportunities as necessary; budget for monthly social activities and Veterans' Day celebration across all campuses
Indirect Cost	\$7,244.25	To cover costs associated with administrative functions including providing the required project reports, financial information, and information to support project evaluation, calculated at 8%.
		Total: \$97,797.35

4. Sustainability

The continuation of services instituted or supported by this project will be accomplished in a number of ways. The professional development, Veteran Success Committee, and academic advising will continue with existing college funding. The one-time workshop provided by CAEL will train individuals already employed by the college with existing funds on how to train their peers on techniques which specifically provide assistance to student veterans. Those initially trained by this workshop will continue to hold training and information on campus and become campus veteran ambassadors and advocates on campus. The Veteran Success Committee will also continue to function as normal and is not dependent upon grant funds. Academic advisors are typically full-time faculty who have received three levels of training to help students navigate their course schedule and academic program. These advisors do not receive additional compensation above and beyond their salary. Likewise, the resource packets developed and purchased through grant funds will remain in circulation as long as possible, and the information therein will be made freely available on the college website.

To continue the Veteran Success Coach position beyond the first year provided by this grant, the college will seek the necessary funding from a variety of sources, including external grants and partnerships. Additionally, the college hopes that the reputation earned as a result of this project, the concentrated efforts which are currently ongoing apart from this project, and the increased veteran enrollment will generate an increase in annual revenue which could justify the position for a longer term. The Supportive Education for the Returning Veteran (SERV) model developed by Dr. John Schupp of Cleveland State University indicates that such an expectation is not unrealistic.

References

- DiRamio, D., Ackerman, R., & Mitchell, R.L. (2008). From combat to campus: Voices of student-veterans. *NASPA Journal*, 45(1), 73-102.
- Griffin, K.A., & Gilbert, C.K. (2015). Better Transitions for Troops: An Application of Schlossberg's Transition Framework to Analyses of barriers and Institutional Support Structures for Student Veterans. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 86(1), 71-97.
- Rumann, C.B., & Hamrick, F.A. (2010). Student Veterans in Transition: Re-enrolling after War Zone Deployments. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 81(4), 431-458.
- Schupp, J. (2008). What is SERV and Why it is Needed. *The SERV Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.servprogram.com/Pages/default.aspx>

TO: Dr. Christa S. Martin
DATE: 1 JUL 2015
SUBJECT: Potential employer support for Columbia State's upcoming "Veteran Reconnect" project

I am the "Local Veteran Employment Representative" for the Department of Labor in this area. My job is to connect with employers in this area and solicit their support in hiring veterans. I applaud your efforts in setting up the program you described in your email, *Veterans Reconnect*. When your program becomes a reality I will, in my visits to employers, promote this concept to them in order to bring on board an expanding list of employers to support the program. Thank you for including me in this effort.



John M. Allen
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APPENDIX B - BUDGET

GRANT BUDGET LINE-ITEM DETAIL:

PROFESSIONAL FEE, GRANT & AWARD	AMOUNT
Contract CAEL to conduct on-site 'train-the-trainer' workshop on strengths and challenges of providing specific supports to student veterans	8,000.00
Travel and lodging for CAEL workshop leaders	1,900.00
TOTAL	9,900.00

INTEREST	AMOUNT
TOTAL	

DEPRECIATION	AMOUNT
TOTAL	

OTHER NON-PERSONNEL	AMOUNT
TOTAL	

CAPITAL PURCHASE	AMOUNT
TOTAL	