



411 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40466
Olympia, WA 98504-0466
(360) 786-7432

Washington State Legislature

Meeting Minutes

October 17, 2013,
Pierce College Fort
Steilacoom, WA

267A John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0466
(360) 786-7258

Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs

Members present: Bailey, Braun, Conway, Green, Hayes, Klippert, MacEwan, Muri, Morrell, Orwall, Roach, Rolfes

Members absent: Becker, Hobbs, McCoy, Shin

Meeting was called to order at 1:41 p.m. by co-chair Senator Bailey.

Denise Yochum, President, Pierce College Fort Steilacoom, welcomed the committee to the college. Members introduced themselves.

Senator Bailey announced that the committee would delay voting on the new executive committee and approval of the minutes until a quorum was present.

Veteran Support in Higher Education

The committee heard presentations from four stakeholder panels:

1. Pierce College Fort Steilacoom
 - Denise Yochum, President
 - Vicki Bell, Veteran Advisor/Resource Center Manager
 - Tyrone Green, student
 - Rorey McFarland, student

Ms. Yochum briefed the committee on veteran students and veteran benefits for education. Pierce College serves 1,700 veteran students who use over \$2.4 million in federal veteran educational benefits. Students do not receive veteran benefits for living expenses through winter, spring and summer breaks and many students rely on emergency assistance through these periods.

The college offers a full range of courses at Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM), including business, criminal justice and college transfer programs. About 30 percent of all district enrollments are through the JBLM program, which is non-state funded. The JBLM program has 2,440 FTEs, which is larger than some of the smaller colleges in the state. About 64 percent of enrollments are taught on-line, and 36 percent take graduate courses. The college provides special contracting for military service, including emergency preparedness for military units deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. About 40 percent of the

students could not enroll because of the government shutdown. The shutdown cost the college about \$50,000 a week and has cancelled financial assistance.

Representative Klippert asked whether if there are dormitories for students. Ms. Yochum said no.

Ms. Bell briefed the committee on the Veteran Resource Center at the college. The college received a Department of Education three year grant, for \$360,000. The center provides resources for veterans and offers peer support as veterans transition out of the military. The Center creates partnerships with on campus services and interaction with non-military students and provides volunteer opportunities. The Center will continue to operate with community partnership funding after the grant expires.

Representative Orwall asked about counseling services at the Center. The Center has staff counselors and connects with the Vets Center that as a certified counselor on staff.

Senator Conway asked whether student performance is tied to PTSD. Ms. Yochum said the college has disability services on campus for PTSD and brain trauma injuries.

Mr. Green spoke about his experience as a veteran student, student government member and a member of the National Guard. The transition out of active duty military to school and civilian life was difficult. More help is needed to help with transition services. The Center is a good resource for veterans.

Mr. McFarland spoke about transitioning to college and civilian life. The Center helps with PTSD treatment. It is difficult to translate military skills when looking for jobs.

Senator Conway asked whether there are any federal support services for veteran resource centers, apart from grant funding. Ms. Yochum said that the colleges communicate with one another about setting up such centers.

Representative Klippert asked what kinds of transition services were available from the military. Mr. Green said that there were optional transition support services provided within 30 days of leaving active duty. There should be a better way to communicate between active duty units and the National Guard.

2. Bellingham Technical College

- Laura Nelson, Veterans Academic Advisor
- April Hinckle-Johnson, Veteran Support navigator, Americorps VISTA

Ms. Nelson briefed the committee on veteran assistance with the admission and enrollment of veteran students. Staff helps coordinate enrollment, registration and financial aid with students using veterans benefits. The college provided job seeking services, including resume building and interviews.

Ms. Johnson briefed the committee on providing on-campus services to enrolled students, coordinating events with the general student body and the community. The college runs a Vet Club on campus for enrolled veterans.

Senator Bailey asked what would make things better for veterans services. Ms. Nelson said that the college needs dedicated space on-campus for veterans.

Representative Morrell asked how much of veterans benefits are used increasing math skills. It is something that is common for students but there is no data.

Senator Bailey asked if the college is associated with a military base. Ms. Nelson said no, but they are working to partner with bases.

3. The Evergreen State College

- L. Cdr. Thomas R. Kelley, USN, Ret. Director of Veteran Services
- Professor Daryl Morgan, Faculty, Visual and Environmental Arts
- Leslie Johnson, MSW, TESC Counseling Center
- Bradley Switzer, Alumnus and Veteran

Crd. Kelly briefed the committee on the college task force, convened in 2007, to evaluate and recommend what programs were needed on campus for veteran students. The task force's 14 recommendations to the college were implemented, including the establishment of the Military and Veteran Center. The college performs ceremonies for veterans, including a "coining ceremony" for each veteran entering the college, as well as holding services on Veterans Day and Memorial Day. The Center offers resources for veteran students, including support with veteran benefits, admission and financial aid. Statistics show that seventy percent of veterans leaving the service will use their benefits almost immediately. About 40,000 troops will be returning to JBLM within the next year or two, with about 32,900 new veteran students entering Washington colleges, so there will be an increasing need to provide services to veterans on campuses.

Prof. Morgan briefed the committee on the academic program that is offered exclusively to veterans. The courses focus on orienting students to on-campus resources, skill development and over the years has added business-related and liberal arts courses. The curriculum is specifically developed to the veterans' experiences. The college seeks to engage veteran students with a broad range of academic subjects, not simply job-training.

Mr. Switzer briefed the committee about the student experience at the college. The college work-study program, evening/weekend classes and on-campus mentors were helpful to succeed in college.

Ms. Johnson briefed the committee on mental health services on-campus. Mental health services are part of the campus veterans team. The campus is very supportive of veterans. The college hosted the "War in the Soul" conference in 2010 on veteran mental health services. Participants came from other states, including Hawaii and Alaska. The campus counseling center is trained on veteran issues, cultural competence, PTSD and sexual assault for female veterans. The Veterans Center became fully operational two weeks ago, which will provide a venue to provide more counseling services to veteran students.

Senator Conway asked whether the college has worked with other colleges on sharing its task force's 14 recommendations. Ms. Johnson said the mental health conference was the first of its kind and there are on-line resources available.

Senators Conway and Bailey said that colleges should be sharing information and successful programs to be implemented at other locations.

Representative Morrell asked what the college was doing to help veterans sign up for the expansion of health care coverage. Ms. Johnson said that the campus services help direct veterans to the available services.

4. University of Washington - Tacoma
 - Professor Lisa Hoffman, Association Professor and Special Assistant for Community Engagement
 - Mike Wark, Director of External Relations

Mr. Wark used a PowerPoint presentation and briefed the committee on student enrollment. The post 9/11 GI Bill helped increase veteran enrollment by 76 percent since 2009. In 2012-13, 1212 students were receiving veterans benefits. About 80 percent of veteran students are male, and 40 percent are between 26-30 years old. Sixty percent of students are undergraduates and 92 percent are Washington residents. Veteran students have an average 3.54 GPA. The University offers support services, including on campus centers, financial aid officials, counselors and academic advisors.

Professor Hoffman briefed the committee on the University's programs for veterans, including: -

A partnership with JBLM provides a transition program for military members, including a set of course and career assessments.

- The Veterans Incubator for Better Entrepreneurship (VIBE) program identifies talent and offers early-stage support for business development as part of an academic degree.
- The Master's program in cybersecurity and leadership was developed at the request of a unit at Camp Murray.
- The Physician Assistant Program expands access to veterans interested in becoming physician assistance, with an emphasis on serving rural areas.
- The University is piloting a campus tour program, a three-day curriculum for military members to explore education options
- There are also programs for military spouses and the "Red Badge" creative writing workshop for veterans in transition.

Senator Bailey asked if there is any data on veteran student graduation rates and where people are going after graduation, and the need to direct resources where they are needed. Professor Hoffman said the Washington State Transition Council has been working on this information. Tracking veterans is used through data collected under the 9/11 GI bill. There are three main data systems in the state, including the University of Washington.

A general discussion followed on sharing resources among higher education services for veterans and more directly making resources available for veterans.

Washington Youth Academy

The committee heard presentations from:

- Larry Pierce, Director
- Mike Mittleider, Deputy Director
- Robert Whitney, Parent of past cadet and mentor
- Current and former cadets: Jonathan Strickland, Luke Portillo, Erica Fabela, Drew Watts & Deva Ward
- Jocelyn Youngren, Counseling Administrator

- Sue Kitchell, Youth Academy Team Member
- Carry Pierce

Mr. Pierce briefed the committee with a PowerPoint handout on the Youth Academy. The Academy is a transition school that does not offer a degree. The Academy is a division of the Washington State National Guard. Washington's dropout rate ranges from 14,000-22,000 students a year. The Academy enrolls 160 students twice a year. The Academy is looking to expand its program.

The Academy has averaged a 2.4 grade level increase for students in a 22 week course. In its last session, students have averaged a 3.0 grade level increase in math. Girls perform equally to boys. Eighty-four percent of students earn all eight credits possible in the program.

Each cadet and former cadet spoke about their personal experiences with the Academy.

Mr. Whitney spoke about being a parent and mentor for cadets.

Ms. Youngren and Ms. Kitchell spoke about working at the Academy.

Mr. Mittleider spoke about teaching at the Academy.

Mr. Pierce said that the Rand Foundation conducted a study on the National Guard Youth Challenge Program and recommended that the program should continue and calculated there is a 166 percent return investment in the program. The Academy is 75 percent federally funded and 25 percent state (OSPI) funded. The Academy was designate as a state innovative school in 2011. It is one of the top rated programs in the county. It was the only program rated nationally at 98 percent for resource management. The Academy graduated its 1,000th student in June.

Senator Rolfes asked what is the biggest barrier to expansion for the Academy. Mr. Pierce said that fiscal resources are limited and they are looking for capital facilities where to expand. The Academy competes with other priorities of the Military Department.

Senator Conway asked if the Academy was in line to move into school surplus properties. Mr. Pierce said the Academy has discussed with officials about an opportunity with a program being developed with the departments of labor, defense and education regarding the allocation of surplus properties, which may include and RFP process.

General discussion followed about alternative learning programs.

Mr. Mittleider told the committee that the Academy would like a way to access more information on students who are dropping out of school in time to enroll them in the Academy. He also said that lifetime military service should count towards experience in teaching.

A general discussion followed about student success after graduation.

Senator Roach said that there should be more flexibility in evaluating teacher credentials and that the Academy's model should be looked at as model for social services like foster care.

The Department of Defense is looking to partner with the Academy to pilot a program for extending the services of the Academy for students who graduate and need social services.

Homeless Veteran Housing and Services

The committee heard presentations from:

- Mary Forbes, Assistant Director, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs
- Janet Massella, Managing Director, Housing Trust Fund, Washington Department of Commerce

Ms. Fobes used a PowerPoint presentation to brief the committee on DVA's homeless veterans programs. DVA held a summit in 2010 to engage community partners, promote best practices and coordinate local funding. Programs were highlighted in Whatcom, Snohomish and Okanogan counties. Local housing authorities manage 1,865 HUD vouchers for veterans. The state was awarded \$3.2 million in support services for veterans' families in 2012 and an additional \$6.1 million in 2013. DVA also has 60 -bed transitional housing facility, Building 9. DVA has partners, such as the WestCare Foundation, which provides resources and assistance in growing veteran programs. DVA is working on grants with WestCare for rural outreach and rapid re-housing funding.

Ms. Massella used a PowerPoint presentation and briefed the committee on the Housing Trust Fund and projects for veterans. Veterans are a special needs category identified in the Trust Fund and the number of veterans served has increased and is anticipated to continue to rise. A specific set-aside was designated for homeless veterans starting in 2011. The specific budget proviso of \$3 million was expressly intended to leverage federal funds. There are challenges with serving this population because providers did not have much experience working with this population. There are about 8 projects, with \$10-11 million, that serve the veteran population, though not exclusively.

In 2013-15, the legislature provided a list of projects for specific allocation for four target populations, farmworkers, chronic mental illness, developmental disabilities and homeless veterans. The four projects for veterans are still under development.

Senator Bailey asked how many beds were allocated for homeless veterans. Ms. Massella did not know, but would follow up with more information.

Senator Conway asked if there was a facility dedicated for low-income veterans. Ms. Massella said that some projects include a percentage of beds for veterans.

Approval of Minutes and Election of the Executive Committee

The committee voted to approve minutes and elect the new executive committee:

Representative Klippert moved (Conway second) to approve the committee minutes from the October 2012, November 2012 and September 2013 committee meetings. Approved.

The committee broke for caucus.

The committee re-convened, Senator Conway presiding:

Representative Muri moved (Conway second) to elect Representative Klippert to serve as the House Republican member of the executive committee. Representative Klippert was elected.

Representative Green moved (Klippert second) to elect Representative Orwall to serve as the House Democrat member of the executive committee. Representative Orwall was elected.

Senator Rolfes moved (Conway second) to elect Senator Conway to serve as the Senate Democrat member on the executive committee. Senator Conway was elected.

Senator Roach moved to elect Senator Roach to serve on the executive committee as the Senate Republican member of the executive committee. Senator Roach was elected.

Senator Conway announced that Senator Roach and Representative Orwall will serve as co-chairs of the executive committee.

Meeting adjourned at 4:49 p.m.