



Orange County Community Colleges Legislative Task Force

Advocates for Orange County's Community College Students

Contact: Judy Iannaccone
Director, Communications - RSCCD
Phone: (714) 480-7503
e-mail: iannaccone_judy@rsccd.edu

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Orange County Community Colleges Help Veterans Transition to Civilian and Student Life

(Orange County, CA)—As President Obama promises to bring home the remaining 40,000 U.S. troops in Iraq by year's end, many ponder what's in store for them upon their return. With unemployment in California currently at 11.9 percent, many veterans will look to community colleges to arm them for civilian life and work.

One group that is focused on serving the complex educational, psychological and physical needs of a rapidly increasing veteran student population is the Orange County Legislative Task Force. The Task Force is a coalition representing four districts and 10 community colleges in Orange County. The Task Force collectively advocates for students through monitoring and supporting legislation, garnering community support and identifying barriers to student success. This year the Task Force will focus on the needs of veteran students as one of their primary missions.

“It took me two years, applying to four colleges to get over the anxiety of transitioning into college life when I enrolled in the Fire Technology program at Santa Ana College,” said 31-year-old Silverado resident and Army veteran Wylie McGraw. “The military doesn't really teach you how to be a civilian again. When you are used to living a disciplined, planned out life, it's a little scarier than what they mentioned. I suffered from anxiety issues; I didn't eat; I didn't sleep; I didn't want to fail. I worried about balancing taking five classes, working, and taking care of my personal life.”

McGraw and thousands of other veteran students like him are grateful for the services that Orange County community colleges offer through their Veterans Resources Centers to help them transition from military to civilian life. On campus services range from dedicated counseling services to priority registration and community partnerships with organizations such as the Orange County One Stop Center to augment college efforts.

“We are proud of the services that we provide to our veterans and we stand ready to serve them as they return from active duty,” said Dr. Raúl Rodríguez, Chair of the Task Force and Chancellor of the Rancho Santiago Community College District.

Services for Veterans at the county’s community colleges include:

- Dedicated academic counselors
- Access to Certifying Officials to assist with obtaining Veteran’s Administration Benefits
- Priority registration for recently discharged Veterans
- Customized orientation presentations and materials
- Access to counselors, programs and services with expertise in acquired brain injury, physical disabilities, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and learning disabilities
- Job placement assistance and services via partnerships with the Veterans Administration, OC Vets, and Orange County One Stop Centers

For more information about Orange County community colleges’ services to veterans, contact the following offices:

- Coastline Community College—(714) 546-7600
- Golden West College—(714) 892-7711, ext. 55142
- Orange Coast College—(714) 432-5275
- Santa Ana College’s Veterans Resource Center—(714) 564-6050
- Santiago Canyon College Financial Aid Services—(714) 628- 4876
- Cypress College’s Veterans Affairs Office – (714) 484-7150
- Fullerton College’s Veterans Resource Center—(714) 992-7102
- Saddleback College VETS—(949) 582-4252
- Irvine Valley VETS—(949) 451-5296

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