



## STATE OF MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



20 West 12th Street, 2nd Floor • St. Paul, MN 55155 • Phone: 651-296-2562 • Fax: 651-296-3954  
www.mdva.state.mn.us • 1-888-LinkVet

August 14, 2013

Speaker of the House Paul Thissen  
House State Government Finance Committee  
463 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Speaker Thissen,

In response to your inquiry dated August 2, 2013 about the Legislative Commission on Planning and Fiscal Policy (LCPFP), MDVA can provide the following information relative to the two committees you have addressed:

Higher Education Veterans Assistance Steering Committee:

As this committee developed, there were two advisory groups created during that time. One was the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Steering Committee created by MS§197.585 and another created by the Governor, which was called the "Governor's Yellow Ribbon Task Force Higher Education Action Group, Group 6". At some point it was decided that those two groups had the same mission, so they were combined into one meeting which had the same members. That said, on the documents provided you will see both group names. Most of the members of the advisory group are no longer in their previous positions, however, after contacting a few remaining members, it was discovered that there is not any further documents to provide.

In specific response to the questions:

1. The mission of the group was to facilitate admissions and registration for returning service members, to accelerate federal VA benefits, to expand veteran transition assistance on all of Minnesota's public and private campuses and to develop a call/contact center for veteran admissions issues.
2. The membership list is attached to the attached report.
3. No budget.
4. The group met several times in 2007, but there is no record of any meetings after December 19, 2007. At the last meeting, the group adjourned as the goals of the group had been met. Future meetings would only be scheduled if some situation arose to warrant it.
5. The only report from the committee is attached, dated January 15, 2007. It was decided that the annual MDVA HEVP report to the legislature would serve the same purpose as it contains the same information. The latest HEVP report is attached.

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6. There is not a group website.

Veterans Health Care Advisory Council: this council sunset June 30, 2013.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike McElhiney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike McElhiney, Legislative Director  
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

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STATE OF MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER, LARRY SHELLITO



20 West 12th Street, 2nd Floor • St. Paul, MN 55155 • Phone: 651-296-2562 • Fax: 651-296-3954  
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April 3, 2013

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA), Veterans Health Care Advisory Council is scheduled to expire in accordance with 2012 Minnesota Statute, Chapter 196, Section 30, 196.30 Veterans Health Care Advisory Council, on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

It is our belief that the mission, goal, and objectives of this council have been attained as prescribed in statute. The quality of care delivered by the Health Care Division of MDVA has, and continues to; excel within the Federal and State Veterans Homes communities, providing some of the best care to our Veterans.

As the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and as the Chairperson of the Veterans Health Care Advisory Council, it is our recommendation that the current council be retired and that a Commissioner's Health Care Task Force be established. The goal of this change is to provide a greater focus on direct clinical care to meet the needs of the increasingly diversified population of Veterans. The Minnesota Veterans Homes need to be current and flexible when responding to the broad continuum of care facing multiple generations of Veterans. The creation of this Task Force is not intended to replace or diminish communications with and input from residents, family members, staff and others who are concerned about the quality of care and the services provided to the Veterans in our homes. We recognize that input from a variety of sources, including veteran organizations, the VAMC, the Long Term Ombudsman, other consumer advocates and long term care administrators and professionals is critical. As appropriate, the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs will convene ad hoc advisory panels to assist the Task Force in specific topic areas. The mission of the Commissioner's Health Care Task Force will be to focus on Veterans Health Care that meets or exceeds industry standards.

The Commissioner's Health Care Task Force will be responsible to assist in providing the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs with information and professional expertise on the trends and delivery of quality care for Minnesota's Veterans. Please see suggested areas of interest that may include but not exclusive to:

1. The development of programs that will continue quality Long Term Care to our Veterans
2. Trends and services needed to provide in a wide range of health issues such as:
  - a. Mental Illness
  - b. Type Two Diabetes (early detection and long-term treatment)
  - c. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
  - d. Women's Programs
  - e. Sexual Assault Trauma

Larry Shellito, Commissioner  
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Ronald Sanford, Chair  
Veterans Health Care Advisory Council

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# **2013 LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

## **MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT VETERANS AFFAIRS HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS PROGRAM DIVISION**

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### Legislative Charge

Minnesota Statute 197.585, Subd. 4

*Beginning January 15, 2007, and each year thereafter, the steering committee established in subdivision 2 shall report to the chairs of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over Veterans affairs policy and finance and higher education policy and finance regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the program established in this section.*

### Estimated Cost of Preparing this Report (as required by Minn. Stat. 3.197)

Staff time:	\$291.00
Copies:	\$9.00
TOTAL:	\$300.00

## **SUMMARY**

The following progress report, submitted to the Minnesota Legislature and prepared by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, provides a status update on the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program for the period of January 1 to December 31, 2012. The report reflects the program's continued success due largely to increasing complexity and expansion of federal benefits, returning Minnesota based military units, and the need for a highly trained workforce.

While education benefits are available to most Veterans, military members, and some dependents, assistance is needed to untangle the various eligibility requirements. Enrollment processes are unique to each benefits package available. Coordinators with the Higher Education Veterans Program (The Program) provide much-needed assistance as well as serve as an initial point of contact for Veterans interested in higher education. The Program is therefore in a unique position to encourage and facilitate the use of benefits and assist institutions with retention initiatives.

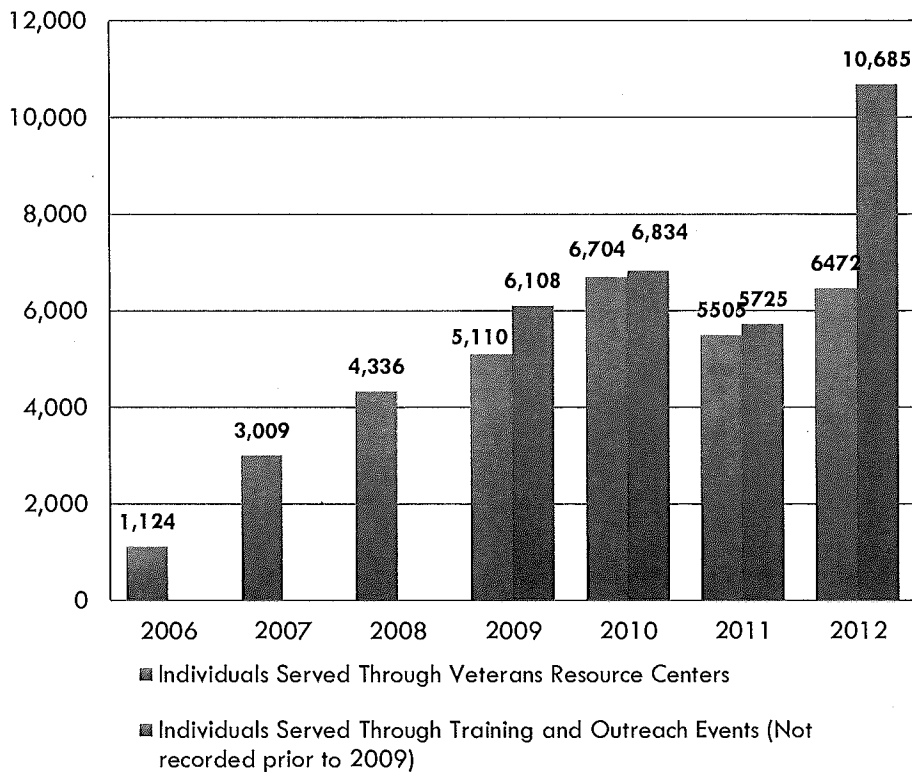
## **PROGRAM BACKGROUND**

The 2006 Minnesota Legislature allocated funding to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs for the creation of the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program (commonly referred to as the Higher Education Veterans Program). The Program is uniquely designed to serve the needs of Minnesota's students and prospective students who are impacted by military service, including Veterans, military members, and their dependents.

One statewide supervisor, an assistant, and twelve regional coordinators serve universities, colleges, and students throughout Minnesota. Based out of a host campus, coordinators support colleges and universities within their defined region to provide one-on-one, comprehensive education assistance to Veterans, military members, and their dependents. Coordinators collaborate with campus administration officials to create and manage Veterans Resource Centers as well as addressing campus-level needs of student Veterans.

A novel concept when launched in July 2006, the Higher Education Veterans Program remains the only program of its kind in the country and has helped thousands of returning Minnesota Veterans transition to college. The complex nature of Veteran and military education benefits demand the services of subject matter experts who can assist Minnesota's Veteran community. The Higher Education Veterans Program has proven to be effective, flexible, and efficient. Coordinators empower countless Veterans, military members, and their dependents the access to federal and state benefits as well as other local resources available.

## HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS PROGRAM DATA



The Program saw a 17% increase over 2011 in individuals served and a significant increase (89%) in outreach and training events. Many federal, state, county and local officials are relying on the State Military Education Professionals to provide expertise and training to their staff. The continued strong partnership between the Program, MnSCU and the Minnesota National Guard has produced professional presentations geared toward the specific event. Continued increased numbers are a connection between new students and student retention.

### 2012 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

In 2012, the impact and importance of the Higher Education Veterans Program was especially evident as the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) legislation was signed and became law. VOW provides seamless higher education to employment transition for Service-members, expands education and training opportunities for Veterans, and provides tax credits for employers who hire Veterans with service-connected disabilities. The expansion of education benefits included the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), opening higher education to unemployed veterans age 35-60. Campus Coordinators quickly became the champion for this program on their campuses and throughout the State.

Governor Dayton's initiative on veteran employment created the Inter-agency Employment Working Group (IEWG) sponsored by the Minnesota National Guard. The Higher Education Veterans Program is a strong voice on the committee providing creative and innovative solutions to veteran employment and retraining. A Higher Education Program Coordinator was part of an employment team tasked to meet soldiers face-to-face in Kuwait prior to their return to Minnesota after a year-long deployment.

Continued confusion and difficulty accessing federal benefits led thousands of Minnesotans to seek assistance through the Program. As rules change and budgets decrease for some benefits,

the rules became increasingly interconnected requiring Veterans to make choices between complex sets of benefit packages. At times, these decisions are irrevocable and mistakes could cost Veterans tens of thousands of dollars. As such, students who are entitled to the benefits and higher education institutions rely heavily upon Program Coordinators.

The following information highlights the demand as well as some of the most notable achievements in 2012.

1. **330** unemployed Veterans turned to Coordinators to assist them with the new Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP). Coordinators provided staff and faculty training on their campuses, assisted Veterans with the application process, and created a seamless transition to higher education for these non-traditional students.
2. Coordinators supported cities and counties with the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Community initiative. Serving on campus planning committees, Coordinators assisted seven campuses with Beyond The Yellow Ribbon Company (campus) status.
3. Over **3,200** returning Minnesota National Guardsman completed demobilization training at Camp Shelby, Fort Dix, Camp Atterbury, Fort Polk, and Fort Hood. Coordinators conducted large group presentations and one-on-one sessions at each of these locations. Coordinators are a strong part of the Minnesota National Guard 30, 60, and 90 day reintegration events held throughout the State.
4. Coordinators served **6,472 new** individuals in 2012, and thousands of other individuals who returned for continued assistance. Overall, the program had a total of **62,303** contacts in 2012, a 2.5% increase over 2011.
5. Coordinators conducted **61** training events with **10,685** individuals attending the events. This number represents an 89% increase over 2011. Coordinators provided **74** large group training sessions with **2,206** individuals in attendance.

Breakdown of events:

- a. 30/60/90 day/MIRT events: **20**
- b. Family Readiness/Family Preparedness Academy: **8**
- c. Out-of-state demobilization events: **9**
- d. Kuwait employment team: **1**
- e. Pre-deployment event: **1**
- f. Beyond the Yellow Ribbon events: **3**
- g. Other Veteran Events: **19** (CVSO training, stand-down, career fair, Military on Display, State Fair, and college fairs)



## **2012 VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER USAGE**

### **VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER GUIDELINES**

#### **Mission:**

Veterans Resource Centers provide students with an on-campus point of contact for comprehensive information about benefits and resources available to current and past military members and their families, as well as opportunities for peer support.

#### **Types of Veterans Resource Centers:**

Since the resources available and needs of each campus differ vastly, there is not a single standard for a Veterans Resource Center. However, two key goals should always be attempted: centralized information and opportunities for veterans to connect with their peers.

The following are *minimal* guidelines based on the number of VA certified students present on campus. Actual efforts are at the discretion of the individual campuses:

**Tier 1** – Minimal number (1-15) certified VA students. The following services should be developed:

- Maintain a bulletin board that the Regional Coordinator and campus staff can frequently update with timely and relevant information.
- Maintain regular contact between Certifying Official and Regional Coordinator.
- Notify veterans of coordinator's role and availability for assistance.
- Assure the Regional Coordinator has met with key campus staff (admissions, financial aid, counselors, and certifying official)
- Provide meeting space for one-on-one meetings and group events as needed.

**Tier 2** – Intermediate number (15-100) certified VA students. In addition to Tier 1 services, the following should be developed:

- Develop a Veterans Resource Center or office with consistent hours and staffed by all or some of the following: Regional Coordinator, student workers, campus staff, or other service providers (CVSOs, DEED Veteran Employment Reps, VA Outreach Services/Centers, Family Assistance Coordinators, etc.).
- The Veterans Resource Center should be a dedicated space, but if necessary it can be a shared space.
- If the space is shared, campuses should provide adequate room for peer networking and support. Campuses should develop additional meeting space options for veteran peer support, veteran's club meetings and other informal veteran meetings, in a consistent location and meeting time designated.
- Provide support for a Veterans Club.

**Tier 3** – Significant number (100+) certified VA students. In addition to Tier 1 & 2 services, the following should be developed:

- The Veterans Resource center should be a dedicated space, not shared. In addition to a gathering space, the campus should also provide office space for Regional Coordinator.
- Provide support for a Veterans Club.

### Higher Education Veterans Program - Veterans Resource Centers

6	Tier 1: Previously established space (as of December 31, 2011)
24	Tier 2: Previously established shared resource centers/office (as of December 31, 2011)
25	Tier 3: Previously established Resource Centers (as of December 31, 2011)
3	Tier 1: Newly established space (January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012)
0	Tier 2: Newly established space (January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012)
0	Tier 3: Newly established space (January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012)
2	Existing Resource Centers increasing space or programming

### Utilization of Veterans Resource Centers/Offices

6,472	Total first time visitors
63,879	Total annual contacts
2.5%	Increase over 2011

### Military Status of Visitors

65%	Veteran (180 or more days of active duty)
18%	Current Military Member
7%	Family/Dependent of Military Member/Veteran
1%	Former Military Member (less than 180 days of active duty)
9%	Did not declare or no military status

### Top Purposes for Visits

Veterans education funding/assistance from coordinator
Peer support/connecting with other Veterans

### Referrals to Other Service Providers

Serving as a comprehensive information hub for Veterans, military members, and their dependents on campus, coordinators have developed well-defined referral networks to link Veterans on campus with the appropriate campus staff or service providers in the community. The numbers below reflect these referrals to other service providers.

3,487	Internal campus resource
792	External community resource (CVSO, DEED, and other state agencies)

## **2012 PRESENTATION AND OUTREACH DATA**

Throughout the year Coordinators are profoundly trusted to provide training on their area of expertise: Veteran/military education benefits and creating Veterans-friendly campuses. Training is conducted in a variety of formats and locations. Coordinators presented on numerous armory drill floors throughout the state and post-deployment education briefings at Minnesota National Guard reintegration events. Higher education institutions have confidence in the Coordinators to provide faculty and staff in-service days and webex/webinar sessions on a national scale. The figures below highlight the variety and scale of the program's outreach and training efforts.

<b>Number of Events</b>	<b>Number of Individuals Trained</b>	<b>Type of Training</b>
39	6,149	Reintegration activities
7	1,131	College and university
6	926	Service providers and Veterans service organizations
9	2,479	Community events
<b>61</b>	<b>10,685</b>	<b>Total</b>

## **2012 MyMILITARYEDUCATION ONLINE SUPPORT CENTER USAGE DATA**

The website MyMilitaryEducation ([www.mymilitaryeducation.org](http://www.mymilitaryeducation.org)), an online support center based in Perham continues to be an important part of the Higher Education Veterans Program. Highlighting the program's efforts to collaborate with other agencies and service providers, the website and call center is a collaborative effort by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and Minnesota Online. Veterans, military members, and dependents stationed around the world count on the support team to provide an added dimension to the Program's services. An important outreach component, the online support center is a gateway to the services of the Higher Education Veterans Program. Specific details are provided in attachment #1.

### **Types of Online Support Center Contacts**

77,761	Self service
473	Advisor/counselor help
<b>78,234</b>	<b>Total contacts in 2011</b>

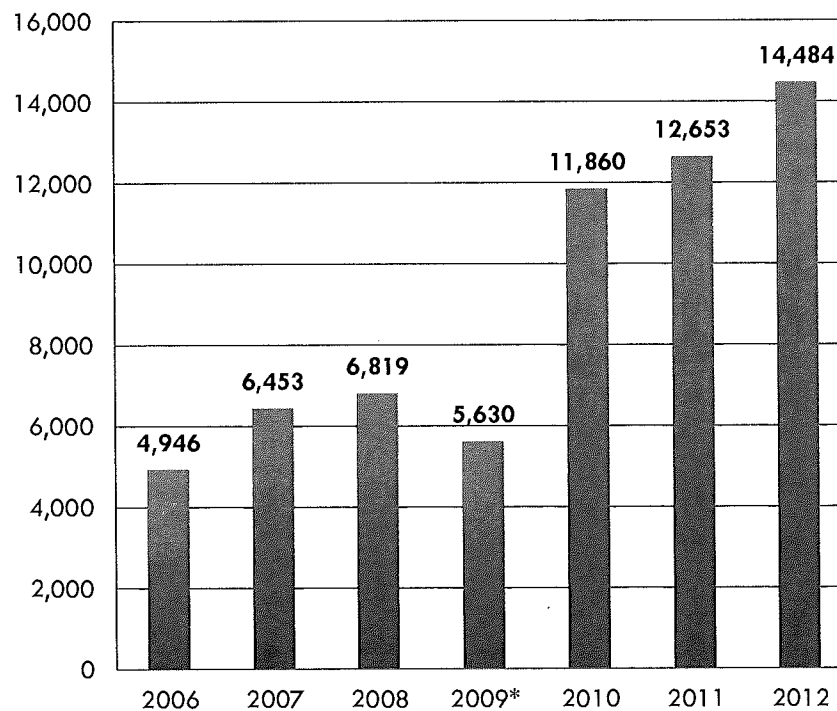
### **Top Purposes for Online Support Center Contacts**

Comprehensive list of Veteran/Military Scholarships for Service Members
Obtaining military transcripts and transfer credits
Post 9-1 (Chapter 33 Application and information
Veterans Online Applications (VONAPP)

## **STUDENT VETERANS IN MINNESOTA**

Recent legislation and Veteran unemployment initiatives, the importance of higher education, and retention of students have dramatically increased the number of Veterans and military members attending higher education. In addition, expanded benefit eligibility has increased the number of dependents eligible for aid. The following graph shows the number of students using USVA educational benefits in Minnesota. A portion of the dramatic increase (nearly 300%) since the inception of the Program in 2006 can be attributed to Coordinators assisting with student retention. Many of the benefits are complex and confusing. Program Coordinators ease the transition to higher education while providing long-lasting service from admission through student graduation. Numerous students continue to seek Coordinator assistance in graduate programs or second undergraduate programs.

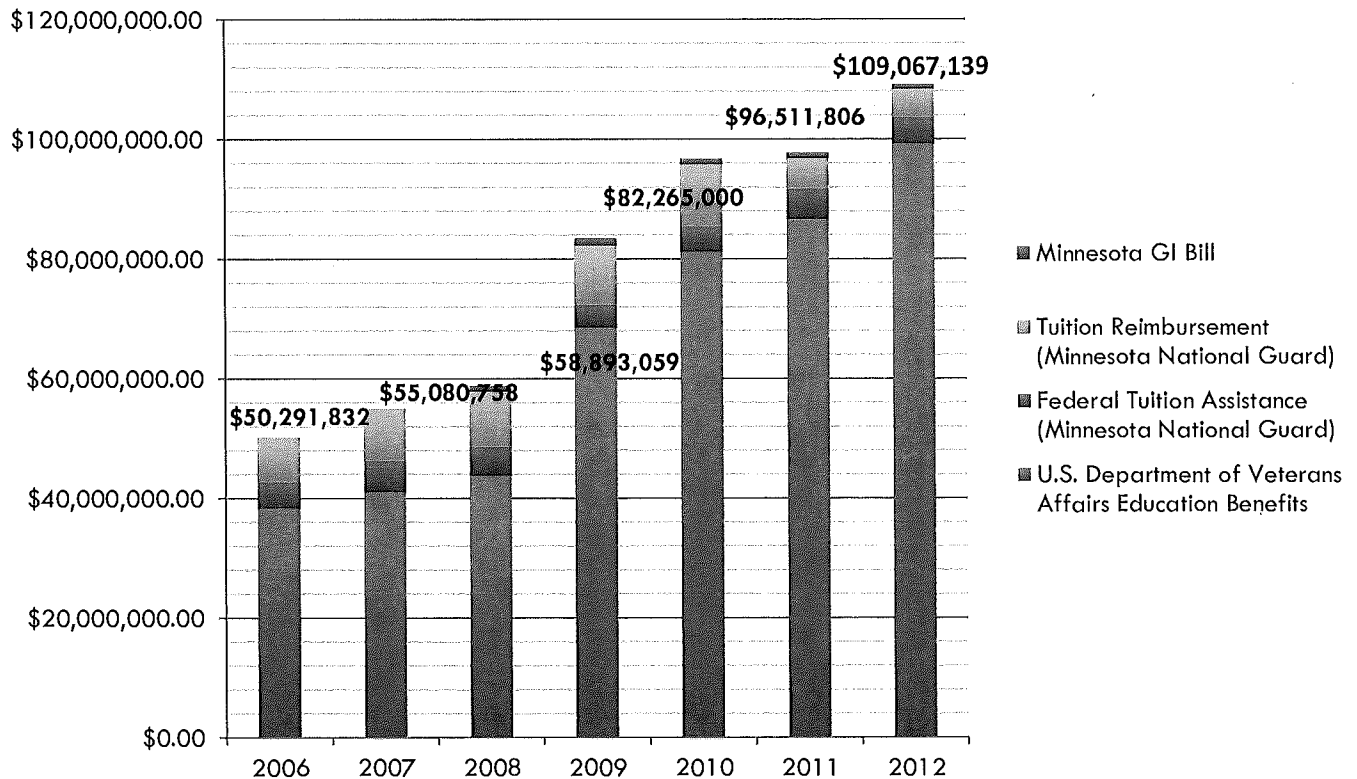
**MINNESOTA STUDENTS USING VA EDUCATION BENEFITS**



\*The 2009 data from the USVA does not include individuals using Chapter 33 (also known as the Post 9/11 GI Bill), which began in August 2009. The actual number of Veterans attending college in 2009 is therefore much larger than reported.

Increasing numbers of Veterans attending college in Minnesota has led to an equally dramatic increase in federal education benefit dollars spent in Minnesota. A combination of state and federal funds make higher education possible for thousands of Minnesota Veterans, military members, and dependents each year. These benefits also make an important contribution to Minnesota's economy. The amount of federal education benefits spent in Minnesota has more than doubled during the existence of the Higher Education Veterans Program. This trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. The following graph illustrates the federal and state expenditures of Veterans' education benefits in Minnesota.

## COMBINED EXPENDITURES FROM STATE AND FEDERAL VETERANS EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT PROGRAMS IN MINNESOTA<sup>1</sup>



### **2012 Federal and State Benefit Highlights:**

**14,484 VA certified students in 2012 received over \$99 million in education claims.**

**Federal Tuition Assistance Program assisted 1,122 Soldiers enrolled in 10,713 courses and paid out over \$4.4 million.**

**State Tuition Reimbursement Program assisted 2,074 soldiers and paid over \$4.6 million.**

**Minnesota GI Bill received 1,265 applications and paid out 564 claims totaling \$813,105.**

<sup>1</sup> The Minnesota GI Bill began in the 2007-2008 academic year. Data reported is from Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

Federal Tuition Assistance is a program available to most reserve components in addition to the Army National Guard. The numbers reported are for the Minnesota Army National Guard, the only data available. Both Federal Tuition Assistance and State Tuition Reimbursement data reported from Minnesota National Guard J-1 Education Office.

USVA education data is not available for 2012. The amount listed is an estimate based on the number of individuals using VA education Benefits in 2011 at an average rate of \$6,853/student (the average rate per person for 2007 to 2011). U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits data accessed from [http://www1.va.gov/VETDATA/GDX/Geographical\\_data.asp](http://www1.va.gov/VETDATA/GDX/Geographical_data.asp).

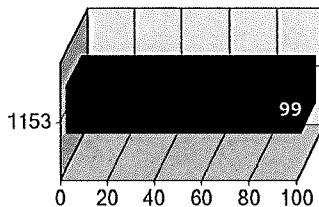
## ATTACHMENT 1: ONLINE SUPPORT



### Higher Education Veterans Programs MyMilitaryEducation.org

#### Summary of Service: January 1, 2012 - December 14, 2012

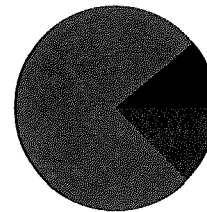
##### Solve Rate resolved within 24 hours



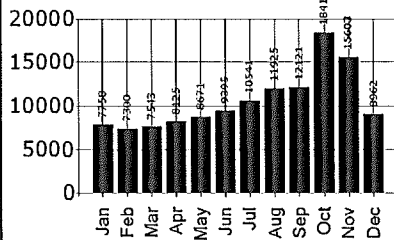
##### Most Personal Assistance

- 52% Military Education Benefits/Finances
- 29% Career & Life Planning
- 11% Getting Ready for College
- 3% MDVA Higher Education Veterans Prog
- 2% Military Family Resources

**78,234 people**



##### Self-Service Usage



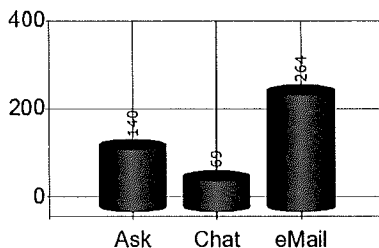
##### Most Viewed Answers

1. Comprehensive List of Veteran/Military Scholarships for Service Members
2. Obtaining Military Transcripts and Transfer Credits
3. Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) Application and Information
4. VONAPP - Veterans On Line Applications
5. Veterans Re-Entry Education Program

##### Top Inbound Links

	2012-12	2010-11
linkvet.custhelp.com	1,425	1,544
mnsu.edu	687	258
gpslifeplan.org	625	481
getreadyforcollege.org	490	505
mnveteranservice.org	250	60
Total	3,477	2,848

##### Personal Assists

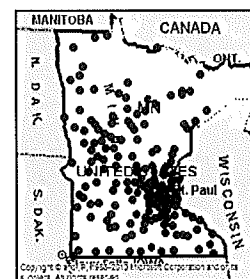


##### Top Website Pages

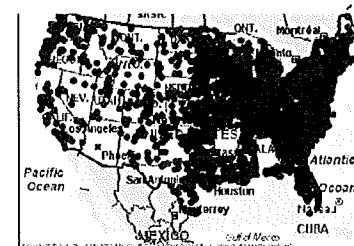
	2012	2011
Comprehensive List of Military Scholarships...	22,003	6,690
MN LinkVet Online Support	11,607	5,933
Find Answers	6,933	5,145
Obtaining Military Transcripts...	7,442	3,475
Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) Application...	5,160	2,475
Total	109,091	74,990

##### Visits/Contacts

	2012-12	2010-11
mymilitaryeducation.org	67,638	39,540



Minnesota sent 4,957 visits from 187 cities.



Additional 65,827 visits from 5,000 cities outside of Minnesota. Totaling 70,784 visits from 5,187 cities in the USA

## **ATTACHMENT 2: REGIONAL OFFICES AND VETERANS RESOURCE CENTERS**

### **State Higher Education Veterans Program Office:**

Host Campus: Minnesota State University Moorhead  
1104 7<sup>th</sup> Ave S  
Moorhead, MN 56560

### **Dave Bellefeuille, State Supervisor**

[belldave@mnstate.edu](mailto:belldave@mnstate.edu)  
218-477-2080 Office

### **Jennifer Huntman, Administrative Assistant**

Minnesota State University Moorhead  
[jenn.huntman@mnstate.edu](mailto:jenn.huntman@mnstate.edu)  
218-477-2080 Office

### **Northwest Region:**

### **Anthony Schnellbach, Regional Coordinator**

[tony.schnellbach@northlandcollege.edu](mailto:tony.schnellbach@northlandcollege.edu)  
218-683-8550  
Host Campus: Northland Community and Technical College  
1101 Hwy One East  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701

### **Eric Abell, Regional Coordinator**

[Eric.abell@minnesota.edu](mailto:Eric.abell@minnesota.edu)  
218-683-8550  
Host Campus: Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Detroit Lakes  
900 Hwy 34 E  
Detroit Lakes, MN 56501

### **Northwest Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota - Crookston
- Bemidji State University, Bemidji
- Minnesota State University, Moorhead
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Moorhead
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Detroit Lakes
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Fergus Falls
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Wadena
- Northland Community and Technical College, Thief River Falls
- Northland Community and Technical College, East Grand Forks
- Northwest Technical College, Bemidji

**Northeast Region:**

**Jodi Kiminski, Regional Coordinator**

[j.kiminski@lsc.edu](mailto:j.kiminski@lsc.edu)

218-733-7604 Office

Host Campus: Lake Superior College

2101 Trinity Road

Duluth, MN 55811

**Aaron Jensen**

[Aaron.jensen@hibbing.edu](mailto:Aaron.jensen@hibbing.edu)

218-262-6739

Host Campus: Hibbing Community College

1515 E. 25<sup>th</sup> Street

Hibbing, MN 55746

**Northeast Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota, Duluth
- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Cloquet
- Hibbing Community College, Hibbing
- Itasca Community College, Grand Rapids
- Lake Superior College, Duluth
- Mesabi Range Community and Technical College, Eveleth
- Rainy River Community College, International Falls
- Vermillion Community College, Ely
- College of St. Scholastica, Duluth and other locations

**Central Region:**

**Laura Boden, Regional Coordinator**

[mnva@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:mnva@stcloudstate.edu)

320-308-2185 Office

Host Campus: St. Cloud State University

720 4<sup>th</sup> Ave South

St. Cloud, MN 56301

**Josh Brummond, Regional Coordinator**

[mnva@alextech.edu](mailto:mnva@alextech.edu)

320-762-4467 Office

Host Campus: Alexandria Technical and Community College

1601 Jefferson St

Alexandria, MN 56308

**Central Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota – Morris
- St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud
- Alexandria Technical and Community College, Alexandria
- Central Lakes College, Brainerd



- Central Lakes College, Staples
- Ridgewater College, Willmar
- Ridgewater College, Hutchinson
- St. Cloud Technical and Community College, St. Cloud

### **Metro Region:**

#### **Katherine Bachman, Regional Coordinator**

[Katherine.Bachman@dctc.edu](mailto:Katherine.Bachman@dctc.edu)

651-423-8274 Office

Host Campus: Dakota County Technical College

1300 145<sup>th</sup> Street East

Rosemount, MN 55068

#### **Duane Bauer II, Regional Coordinator**

[bauer333@umn.edu](mailto:bauer333@umn.edu)

612-238-4568 Office

St Mary's University, LaSalle Hall

2500 Park Ave So

Minneapolis, MN 55404-4403

#### **Charles Egerstrom, Regional Coordinator**

[charles.egerstrom@anokaramsey.edu](mailto:charles.egerstrom@anokaramsey.edu)

763-433-1415 Office

Host Campus: Anoka Ramsey Community College

11200 Mississippi Blvd NW

Coon Rapids, MN 55433

### **Metro Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota, Veterans Transition Center, Minneapolis
- University of Minnesota, One Stop Service Center, Minneapolis
- St Paul College, St Paul
- Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis
- Dunwoody College of Technology, Minneapolis
- Anoka Technical College, Anoka
- Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Cambridge
- Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Coon Rapids
- Century Community College, White Bear Lake
- Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount
- Inver Hills Community College, Inver Hills
- Hennepin Technical College, Brooklyn Park
- Hennepin Technical College, Eden Prairie
- Minneapolis Community and Technical College
- Normandale Community College, Bloomington
- North Hennepin Community College, Brooklyn Park
- Pine Technical College, Pine City

- University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis
- University of St. Thomas, St. Paul
- Concordia University, St Paul

### **Southwest Region:**

#### **Justin Guggisberg, Regional Coordinator**

[justin.guggisberg@smsu.edu](mailto:justin.guggisberg@smsu.edu)

507-537-7213 Office

Host Campus: SW Minnesota State University, Marshall

1501 State Street-Room SS132

Marshall, MN 56258

#### **Southwest Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- Southwest Minnesota State University, Marshall
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Canby
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Granite Falls
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Jackson
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Pipestone
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Worthington

### **Southeast Region:**

#### **David Schrader, Regional Coordinator**

[david.schrader@mnsu.edu](mailto:david.schrader@mnsu.edu)

507-389-5726 Office

Host Campus: Minnesota State University, Mankato

168 Centennial Student Union

Mankato, MN 56001

#### **Tony Tengwall, Regional Coordinator**

[tony.tengwall@roch.edu](mailto:tony.tengwall@roch.edu)

507-529-6142 Office

Host Campus: Rochester Community and Technical College

851 30<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE - Box 47

Rochester, MN 55904

#### **Southeast Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Winona State University, Winona
- South Central College, North Mankato
- South Central College, Faribault
- Southeast Technical College, Red Wing
- Southeast Technical College, Winona
- Rochester Community and Technical College, Rochester
- Riverland Community College, Austin

**REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE**

**HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS  
ASSISTANCE OFFICES ON CAMPUS**

**by**

**HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
STEERING COMMITTEE**

**January 15, 2007**

## 197.585, Minnesota Statutes 2006

### 197.585 HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Subdivision 1. **Assistance provided.** The commissioner of veterans affairs shall provide central liaison staff and campus veterans assistance officers to serve the needs of students who are veterans at higher education institutions in Minnesota. Methods of assistance may include, but are not limited to, work-study positions for veterans, and providing information and assistance regarding the availability of state, federal, local, and private resources.

Subd. 2. **Steering committee.** The commissioner of veterans affairs shall chair a higher education veterans assistance program steering committee composed of:

- (1) the adjutant general or the adjutant general's designee;
- (2) a representative of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, designated by the chancellor;
- (3) a representative of the University of Minnesota, appointed by the president of the university;
- (4) a representative of private colleges and universities in Minnesota, appointed by the governor;
- (5) a representative of the Office of Higher Education, appointed by the executive director;
- (6) a representative of county veterans service offices, appointed by the commissioner of veterans affairs; and
- (7) a representative of the Department of Employment and Economic Development, appointed by the commissioner of that department.

The steering committee shall advise the commissioner of veterans affairs regarding the allocation of appropriations for the purposes of this section and shall develop a long-range plan to serve the needs of students at higher education institutions in Minnesota who are veterans.

Subd. 3. **Office space provided.** Each campus of the University of Minnesota and each institution within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system shall provide adequate space for a veterans assistance office to be administered by the commissioner of veterans affairs, and each private college and university in Minnesota is encouraged to provide adequate space for a veterans assistance office to be administered by the commissioner of veterans affairs. The veterans assistance office must provide information and assistance to veterans who are students or family members of students at the school regarding the availability of state, federal, local, and private resources.

Subd. 4. **Report.** Beginning January 15, 2007, and each year thereafter, the steering committee established in subdivision 2 shall report to the chairs of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over veterans affairs policy and finance and higher education policy and finance regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the program established in this section.

Subd. 5. **Expiration.** This section expires at the end of the first fiscal year in which the number of veterans enrolled in Minnesota public institutions of higher education is fewer than 4,000, but no later than June 30, 2011. *reported*

**History:** 2006 c 282 art 15 s 3

**Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program  
Steering Committee Report  
January 15, 2007**

The 2006 Legislature allocated \$600,000 in Fiscal Year 2007 to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs for the creation of the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program to serve the needs of students who are veterans at Minnesota's higher education institutions.

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) in consultation with the Adjutant General, and representatives from: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), University of Minnesota, Private Colleges and Universities, Office of Higher Education, Department of Employee and Economic Development, and the County Veterans Service Officers Association, implemented the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program.

The MDVA contracted with Central Lakes College, Brainerd for the services of Donald Pfeffer, M.A. to serve as Director of the Higher Education Veterans Program. Mr. Pfeffer is a military veteran (active duty Air Force 1971-1975 and retired in 2002 from the MN Air National Guard). He has been a college counselor for approximately twenty years and he established the Central Lakes College Veterans Resource Center in February 2006. In addition, Mr. Pfeffer has served as part of a Reintegration Training Team for Higher Education Institutions.

The legislation specified that the following activities be carried out:

**I. Program.** *"The commissioner of veterans affairs shall provide central liaison staff and campus veterans assistance officers to serve the needs of students who are veterans at higher education institutions in Minnesota. Methods of assistance may include, but are not limited to, work-study positions for veterans, and providing information and assistance regarding the availability of state, federal, local, and private resources".*

**Program Outcomes (July 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006):**

- A. To carry out the intent of the legislature the Steering Committee (see attachment #3) developed the following objectives:
  - 1. To have college and university campuses assume "ownership" of activities necessary to serve veterans and family members. Specifically, this included, but was not limited to, the following:
    - a. Identifying someone on campus to provide leadership and organization;
    - b. Create a "Veterans and Family Friendly Environment" on campus;
    - c. Provide space, equipment, and supplies and seek out funding for staffing (campus and federal work-study funds, volunteers and donations);
    - d. Review their policies and procedures (particularly in the areas of credit transfer, tuition and fee payment and admissions);

- e. Provide training for employees regarding the issues of reintegration for military members and their families;
- f. Create a veterans resource center; and
- g. Provide information about the availability of federal, state, local and private resources to military members and their families.

2. In order to maximize service to all college and university campuses in Minnesota, the Steering Committee sectioned the state into six geographically balanced regions and placed a campus representative at those campuses with a high rate of attendance by veterans, veterans' families and military enrollees. It is the intent of the steering committee that from the six designed office locations the coordinators would be able to assist other higher education campuses within the region. The following activities occurred to meet this objective:

- a. All regional coordinators were recruited, interviewed, hired, trained and in place ready to begin developing services in their respective regions by August 28, 2006 (see attachment # 2).
- b. The coordinators immediately developed their regional offices and began assisting campuses within their regions to meet the objectives stated above.
- c. Each of the six campuses hosting the regional offices provided office space, office equipment, telephone, computer/internet and basic office supplies as an in-kind contribution. The Department of Veterans Affairs provides the coordinators' salary, fringe benefits and travel expenses.
- d. The coordinators did extensive networking with County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs), local Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) personnel and other local resources (see attachment # 1).
- e. The Director's office provided leadership, training, support and developed the reporting processes for the regional offices. The Director also provided coordination among MDVA, MnSCU, and University of Minnesota staff for the placement of Regional Coordinators on "host" campuses.

**II. Campus Office Space.** *"Each campus of the University of Minnesota and each institution within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system shall provide adequate space for a veterans assistance office to be administered by the commissioner of veterans affairs, and each private college and university in Minnesota is encouraged to provide adequate space".*

**Campus Office Space Outcomes (July 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006):**

- A. Prior to the start of the Higher Education Veterans Program, five colleges or universities already had resource centers in place to assist veterans (see attachment # 2).
- B. The Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program placed twenty-three additional resource centers on MnSCU, University of Minnesota and Private College campuses by December 31, 2006. Other campuses are currently in the process of identifying space for the location of a veterans assistance office/center on their campus (see attachment 2). For each new center the campus will provide the necessary office equipment, supplies and electronic communication.
- C. The coordinators assisted campuses with the planning and establishing of the veterans resource centers. Due to the travel time involved for each coordinator, the campuses have assumed responsibility for the development and operation of the center since the office exists to serve the students of that campus.
- D. The coordinators provide staff training, information about services for veterans and they assist the campuses with developing the application for federal work-study funding. They also helped campuses identify other sources of staffing. In addition, they were available to assist individual students with information and services via electronic communication whenever needed.
- E. From the start of the program to December 31, 2006, one thousand six hundred seventy-nine individuals (unduplicated count) have been served by the six regional areas.

The following is a breakdown of these individuals by "Status" category (see attachment 1 for additional information):

**1. Veterans Status**

46% Veterans (at least 180 days Title 10 Active Duty)  
16% Current Military (Non-veteran)  
8% Former Military (Non-veteran)  
8% Family of Military  
22% Other, or did not declare status

**2. Student Status**

62% Current student  
32% Non-student  
5% Prospective student  
1% Former student

## Summary

The Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program has been extremely successful during the first six months of operation based on the number of campus veterans centers established and the number of military members and their families receiving services. This has occurred due to the strong leadership demonstrated by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and outstanding assistance from Minnesota State Colleges and University system and the University of Minnesota.

The early success of the program is a result of the dedicated work of the regional coordinators. The current coordinators work hard to ensure they serve the campuses that request their help. Often times, the distance between campuses requires long traveling distances, in spite of that, they carry out their duties and have successfully met the intent of the legislation.

The campuses where offices are currently located are increasingly asked for more "on campus" time from the coordinators. With the return of almost 3,000 combat veterans over the next several months, the demand for time will increase. It is the goal of the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program Steering Committee that by the end of the third year of operation, all Minnesota College and University campuses will be serving military members and their families as the result of the planning and development provided by campus representatives.

The current generation of veterans and their families will continue to need services long after the initial thirty, sixty, and ninety day interval reintegration programs. This program will serve as a continuous, stable point of referral and assistance for those veterans and their families. Experience demonstrates it may take months before an individual who experienced life altering events, like combat, begins talking about those encounters.

Campus Veterans Center Coordinators are learning that one reason a veteran will stop in is for "conversation". It is imperative that a non-threatening location for veterans and their families exist in our communities. College and university campuses are ideal locations for this to occur.

The Higher Education Veterans Program looks forward to continuing to serve our veterans and their families. An excellent partnership among higher education campuses, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and community service agencies has developed a united plan for the young men and women returning to school. It is an exciting opportunity for all involved to pool their resources and talents to serve those who "served their country".



Attachment #1  
Statewide Report  
Veterans Resource Centers  
Development, Utilization, Visit "Purpose", Referral and Staffing  
August 14 to December 31, 2006

Establishment of Veterans Resource Centers

5     *Number of previously established veterans resource centers (prior to July 1, 06)*

23     *Number of veterans resource centers newly established (after July 1, 06)*

*Locations: See attachment #2 for a listing of locations by region*

Utilization of Veterans Resource Center

361     *Average # first time visitors each month (unduplicated)*

531     *Average # monthly visitors (unduplicated)*

1679     *Total visitors to date (unduplicated)*

Veteran Status

46%     *Veteran (180+ days active duty)*

16%     *Current military (non-veteran)*

8%     *Former military (non-veteran)*

8%     *Family of military*

22%     *Other or did not declare status*

Student Status

62%     *Current student*

32%     *Non-student*

5%     *Prospective student*

1%     *Former student*

Purpose of visit

Total 5866 Service Contacts (Duplicated Count)

32%     *Conversation*

26%     *Food/Beverage (as part of "open house" or planning or discussion activities)*

17%     *Veterans funding (GI Bill, 1606/1607, federal tuition assistance, state reimbursement)*

6%     *Other funding (higher education financial aid, scholarships, emergency funds, etc)*

6%     *Medical/health/personal*

5%     *College/University and instructional issues*

3%     *Tuition and fees*

1%     *Books and supplies*

1%     *Community issues*

3%     *Other (or not specified)*

## Attachment #1 (continued)

### Referral

#### Number of Persons (Unduplicated) Referred To:

<u>320</u>	<i>Internal campus resource</i>
<u>251</u>	<i>External community resource</i>
<u>210</u>	<i>County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO)</i>
<u>183</u>	<i>Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED Vet Reps)</i>
<u>50</u>	<i>Other</i>

### Staffing

<u>5</u>	<i>Federal work- study students</i>
<u>4</u>	<i>Campus work- study students</i>
<u>7-9</u>	<i>Campus volunteers</i>
<u>4</u>	<i>Community volunteer</i>
<u>7</u>	<i>Regional coordinators</i>
<u>1</u>	<i>Service Agency (MN Family Assistance Center)</i>
<u>1-2</u>	<i>Other</i>

## Attachment # 2

### Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Higher Education Veterans Program Director's Office and Regional Coordinators

**Director's Office:**     **Donald Pfeffer, Director**  
Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program  
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs  
Central Lakes College  
501 West College Drive  
Brainerd, MN 56401  
218-855-8148 Office  
218-330-5970 Cell  
[dpfeffer@clcmn.edu](mailto:dpfeffer@clcmn.edu)

**Northwest Region:**     **Dave Bellefeuille, Regional Coordinator**  
Host Campus: Minnesota State University, Moorhead  
1104 7<sup>th</sup> Ave South  
Moorhead, MN 56563  
218-477-2080 Office  
218-329-6040 Cell  
[belldave@mnstate.edu](mailto:belldave@mnstate.edu)

#### **Northwest Region Campus Veterans Centers**

##### **Previously Established:**

None

##### **Newly Established:**

Minnesota State University, Moorhead with common location with  
Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Moorhead  
Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Detroit Lakes  
Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Wadena  
Bemidji State University, Bemidji with common location with  
Northwestern Technical College, Bemidji  
Northland Community and Technical College, East Grand Forks  
Concordia College, Moorhead

## Attachment # 2 (continued)

**Northeast Region:**     **Jodi Kiminski, Regional Coordinator**  
Host Campus: Lake Superior College  
2101 Trinity Road  
Duluth, MN 55811  
218-279-2660 Office  
218-260-6558 Cell  
[j.kiminski@lsc.edu](mailto:j.kiminski@lsc.edu)

### **Northeast Region Campus Veterans Centers**

Previously Established:

University of Minnesota, Duluth

Newly Established:

Lake Superior College, Duluth

Pending Completion:

Hibbing Community College, Hibbing

College of St. Scholastica, Duluth

**Central Region:**     **James McAuley, Regional Coordinator**  
Host Campus: St. Cloud State University  
720 4<sup>th</sup> Ave South  
St. Cloud, MN 56301  
320-308-2185 Office  
320-493-8153 Cell  
[mnva@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:mnva@stcloudstate.edu)

### **Central Region Campus Veterans Centers**

Previously Established:

Central Lakes College, Brainerd

Newly Established:

St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud

Alexandria Technical College, Alexandria

Pine Technical College, Pine City

St. Cloud Technical College, St. Cloud

## Attachment # 2 (continued)

### Metro Region:

**David Schrader, Regional Coordinator**

Host Campus: University Of Minnesota

One Stop Student Services Center

200 Fraser Hall

106 Pleasant Street SE

Minneapolis, MN 55455-0422

612-625-7620 Office

612-625-3002 Fax

651-285-8555 Cell

[schr0381@umn.edu](mailto:schr0381@umn.edu)

### Metro Region Campus Veterans Centers

Previously Established:

Minneapolis Community and Technical College

Comfort for Courage, University of Minnesota

Newly Established:

One-Stop Service Center, University of Minnesota

Inver Hills Community College, Inver Hills

Pending Completion:

Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Coon Rapids and Cambridge

Century Community College, White Bear Lake

Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis

Normandale Community College, Bloomington

North Hennepin Community College

### Southwest Region:

**Patricia Arnold, Regional Coordinator**

Host Campus: Southwest Minnesota State University, Marshall

1501 State Street

Marshall, MN 56258

507-537-7213 Office

507-537-7145 Fax

507-401-0104 Cell

[arnoldpa@southwestmsu.edu](mailto:arnoldpa@southwestmsu.edu)

### Southwest Region Campus Veterans Centers

Previously Established:

None

Newly Established:

Southwest Minnesota State University, Marshall

Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Worthington

Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Jackson

Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Pipestone

Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Granite Falls

Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Canby

Martin Luther College, New Ulm

Pending Completion:

University of Minnesota, Morris

## Attachment # 2 (continued)

**Southeast Region:**    **Regional Coordinators: Eric Christensen and Angelina Wiger**

Host Campus: Minnesota State University, Mankato  
242 Centennial Student Union  
Mankato, MN 56001

Eric Christensen (PT)

507-389-5726

507-779-9446

[Eric.d.christensen@us.army.mil](mailto:Eric.d.christensen@us.army.mil)

Angelina Wiger (PT)

651-335-6776

507-779-9375

[angelina55109@yahoo.com](mailto:angelina55109@yahoo.com)

**Southeast Region Campus Veterans Centers**

Previously Established:

Winona State University, Winona

Newly Established:

Minnesota State University, Mankato

South Central College, North Mankato

South Central College, Faribault

### Attachment #3

#### Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Higher Education Veterans Program Steering Committee Members

- **Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs**
  - Commissioner Clark Dyrud, Chair  
20 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Veterans Service Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155-2079  
651-296-2345  
[Clark.Dyrud@state.mn.us](mailto:Clark.Dyrud@state.mn.us)
- **Department of Military Affairs**
  - Capt. Jess Ulrick  
20 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Veterans Service Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155-2079  
651-282-4590  
[jess.ulrick@mn.ngb.army.mil](mailto:jess.ulrick@mn.ngb.army.mil)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Christopher Kline (alternate)  
651-268-8189  
[Christopher.p.kline@mn.ngb.army.mil](mailto:Christopher.p.kline@mn.ngb.army.mil)
- **Minnesota State Colleges and Universities**
  - Steve Frantz, System Director for Student Life  
500 World Trade Center  
30 East 7th St  
St Paul, MN 55101  
651-296-0672  
[steve.frantz@so.mnscu.edu](mailto:steve.frantz@so.mnscu.edu)
- **University of Minnesota**
  - Mary Koskan, Departmental Director  
One Stop Student Services Center  
259 FraserH  
106 Pleasant St SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
612-625-0160  
[m-kosk@umn.edu](mailto:m-kosk@umn.edu)

### Attachment # 3 (continued)

- **Private Colleges and Universities**
  - To be determined
- **Office of Higher Education**
  - Tim Medd,  
1450 Energy Park Dr, Suite 350  
St Paul, MN 55108-5227  
651-642-0527  
[timothy.m.medd@state.mn.us](mailto:timothy.m.medd@state.mn.us)
- **County Veteran Service Officer**
  - Brad Lindsay, Olmsted County  
Government Center  
151 4th St SE  
Rochester, MN 55904-3711  
507-285-8205  
[lindsay.brad@co.olmsted.mn.us](mailto:lindsay.brad@co.olmsted.mn.us)
- **Department of Employment and Economic Development**
  - Jim Warnest,  
1st National Bank Bldg  
332 Minnesota Street, #E200  
St Paul, MN 55101  
651-296-1194  
[jim.warnest@state.mn.us](mailto:jim.warnest@state.mn.us)