February 17, 2021 at 1:15 p.m.
Via Videoconference and PBS NC Live Stream
University of North Carolina System Office
Center for School Leadership Development, Board Room
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

AGENDA

A-1. Approval of the Minutes of October 21, 2020................................................................. N. Leo Daughtry

A-2. Isakson and Roe Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 ........ Lauren Augustine
     Vice President of Government Affairs, Student Veterans of America

A-3. Military Affairs Update ......................................................................................... Siobhan Norris and Kathie Sidner

A-4. Adjourn
DRAFT MINUTES

October 21, 2020
University of North Carolina System Office
Center for School Leadership Development, Room 128
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

This meeting of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs was presided over by Chair Leo Daughtry. The following committee members, constituting a quorum, were also present in person or by video conference: Thomas C. Goolsby, Jimmy D. Clark, Mark Holton, and Isaiah Green.

Chancellors participating were Ron Mitchelson from East Carolina University and Peggy Valentine from Fayetteville State University.

Staff members present included Siobhan Norris, Kathie Sidner, and others from the UNC System Office.

1. Call to Order and Approval of OPEN Session Minutes (Item A-1)

The chair called the meeting to order at 1:45 p.m. on Wednesday, October 21, 2020, and called for a motion to approve the open session minutes of July 22, 2020.

**MOTION:** Resolved, that the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs approve the open session minutes of July 22, 2020, as distributed.

**Motion:** Mark Holton
**Motion carried**

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<th>Roll Call Vote</th>
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<td>Daughtry</td>
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2. UNC Military Affairs Update (Item A-2)

The committee heard from Siobhan Norris, Program Manager for Military and Veteran Education, and Elizabeth Chung, UNC System Presidential Scholar, on research conducted to improve military friendliness and to help remove barriers for military students. Currently, North Carolina complies with the minimum requirements of the Veterans Choice Act. Section 702 of the Veterans Choice Act mandates that any
institution of higher learning provides in-state tuition to veterans, spouses, and dependents who use educational benefits and are living in the state regardless of residency within three years of the date that the veteran left active duty service. This policy is important, because the Veterans Administration (VA) only covers the cost of in-state tuition. The committee was then shown a United States map that highlighted states that did the bare minimum, those that went above and beyond the requirements, and those states that fell in-between. Data shows that 46 percent of GI Bill users go to states that provide them in-state tuition, past the three-year minimum. Ms. Chung provided the committee with data obtained from UNC Greensboro and Winston-Salem State that showed an increase in students using VA educational benefits after the Veterans Choice Act was enacted. The committee agreed that further research would be beneficial.

Next, Kathie Sidner, Director of Defense and Military Partnerships, provided an update of improvements the System has implemented since receiving feedback from an internal survey and outside feedback. One area of recommended focus was improving outreach to the military community, specifically, having a stronger digital footprint. The Military Affairs team has developed a centralized military website. The website is in its beginning stages, and there is still work to be done to improve the site. The site is live and has several useful resources for prospective students. Another area of improvement is base engagement. The System will work to have more of its institutions participate in education fairs at the military bases in North Carolina.

Finally, Ms. Sidner discussed that the VA reported that for every 250 students using VA education benefits that there should be one full-time employee to serve those students. This recommendation is because the educational benefits system is a complex process that is labor and time intensive. The institution’s certifying officials have to manually enter course grades for every student being certified at the end of the semester along with their other job requirements. The committee was shown a graph illustrating the number of students using VA educational benefits and the number of full-time certifying officials at each institution. The graph showed that there were far more students per certifying official than the 250 recommended. The military affairs team is trying to explore options to help these employees. One recommendation is the possibility of having certifying officials support several institutions in the region, sharing services to relieve the burden.

3. Presentation on the Governor’s Challenge for Veteran Suicide Prevention (Item A-3)

The committee heard from Dr. Patricia Oliver from Winston-Salem State University on the Governor’s Challenge for Veteran Suicide Prevention. Dr. Oliver is the sole representative from the UNC System on this initiative. The Governor’s Challenge for Veteran Suicide Prevention is a call to action, asking state, military, and civilian inter-agency teams to collaborate, plan, and implement suicide prevention best practices and policies for service members, veterans and their families. The inter-agency military and civilian team will consist of state leaders, policy makers, and healthcare providers. They will define and measure success, including defining assignments, deadlines, and measurable outcomes. Dr. Oliver took part in a meeting in January where the group conducted a SWAT analysis. They determined that there was a lack of competent clinical care for the military members and their families as clinical/healthcare providers are unable to identify individuals at risk. The resulting priority is to identify and assess the military members and their families in North Carolina in non-VA care systems for suicide risk. This priority will be met by reaching out and engaging community members in the healthcare sector.
4. **Adjourn (Item A-4)**

There being no further business, and without objection, the meeting adjourned at 2:34 p.m.

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Mark Holton, Secretary
AGENDA ITEM

A-2. Isakson and Roe Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020................. Lauren Augustine
    Vice President of Government Affairs, Student Veterans of America

Situation: The committee will receive an update on the Isakson and Roe Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 from Lauren Augustine, vice president of Government Affairs, Student Veterans of America (SVA).

Background: On January 5, 2021, the President of the United States signed the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-315) into law. This new law brings significant changes to veterans’ education benefits, many of which directly impact the UNC System. Ms. Augustine will summarize the most relevant changes affecting the UNC System and the University’s current and future military-affiliated students.

Assessment: This briefing will summarize the most significant elements of new federal legislation regarding military student education.

Action: This item is for information only.
Lauren Augustine

As the vice president of Government Affairs, Lauren advocates on behalf of student veterans, their families, and military-connected students to empower them to, through, and beyond higher education. Since joining the team in 2018, she has helped champion several legislative and regulatory changes in support of SVA’s mission.

She previously worked as a senior legislative associate for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, a legislative representative for the American Federation of Government Employees, and the director of government relations for Got Your 6. In these positions she advocated on behalf of veterans, their families, and the services and benefits provided by the VA and Department of Defense. A veteran of the U.S. Army, she served as an unmanned aircraft systems operator with the First Infantry Division.

In recognition of her advocacy work, Lauren was named a Top Lobbyist by The Hill in 2018 and 2019, a HillVets Top 100 Veteran in 2015 and 2019, and was awarded the Excellence in Advocacy by An Up and Coming Practitioner award from the Women in Professional Advocacy in 2016. She was a 2019 George W. Bush Stand-To Veteran Leadership Scholar. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Virginia Tech. Lauren and her husband, Charles, also own Revolutionary Fitness in Old Town Alexandria where they live their dogs and cat.
AGENDA ITEM

A-3. UNC Military Affairs Update.......................................................... Kathie Sidner and Siobhan Norris

Situation: Committee members will receive an update from UNC System staff on a variety of initiatives related to the priorities of the special committee.

Background: Special committee members voted to approve the following priorities in 2019: improve enrollment, retention, graduation, and employment success for military-affiliated students; grow strategic internal and external partnerships; award more academic credit for military experience; grow digital-learning opportunities; and provide up-to-date military supportive policies.

Assessment: UNC System staff will provide an update to the committee on various initiatives based on approved committee priorities to include: recent external Department of Defense partnerships; military student enrollment data; System-wide mental health initiatives; and newly established goals from the UNC Military Affairs Working Group.

Action: This item is for discussion only.
MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Meeting of the UNC Board of Governors
February 17, 2021
GUEST SPEAKER

Ms. Lauren Augustine, Vice President of Government Affairs, Student Veterans of America
COMMITTEE UPDATES

Ms. Kathie Sidner and Ms. Siobhan Norris
New Partnership with
XVIII Airborne Corps & 82nd Airborne Division
White House Briefing

• Supported President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End the National Tragedy of Suicide
• Shared State and Systemwide initiatives to White House officials
• Collaborated with Dr. Antonio Puente, 2017 President, American Psychological Association
Student Mental Health Statistics

• Depression rates increased by 15% within college students between 2014-2018
• Anxiety rates increased 8% in college students between 2014-2018
• UNCG Study: Students reporting that depression significantly impacted their academic performance rose from 15% in 2014 to 20% in 2018.
• 40% increase in crisis management engagement (Starfish data) 2019: 173 flags vs. 2020: 439 flags
COVID-19 Impact on Student Veterans

Source: Student Veterans of America Census Report, 2020
UNC System Approach to Care

- Counseling Centers Tele-behavioral Health
- Student Advocate (Ombudsman)
- Student Veteran Organizations & VA Center Reps “Office Hours”
- "Buddy" Checks Socials/Rec Activities Green Zone/QPR Training
Key Take Aways

1. Military connected & traditional students have high risk factors for depression, anxiety, and suicide
2. Faculty feel unequipped to provide proper mental health support
3. More research is needed to better understand effective campus programs and support services
4. Federally funded resources to support campus wide suicide prevention training programs and 3rd party contracts for services like ProtoCall, Mental Health First Aid, and PsychArmor Institute are absolutely critical to supporting mental health and suicide prevention on college campuses
Recommendations for System Support

Recommendations from UNC System Survey

- Outreach
  - Digital marketing
  - Base engagement

- Credit Transfer
  - Standardized credit transfer process

- Faculty and Staff Training
  - Credit articulation, JST evaluation
  - Military cultural training
  - Academic advising /counseling

Recommendations from Market Research Study

- Outreach
  - Centralized website with links to 16 institutions
  - Enhanced social media presence, digital ads, videos
  - Partnerships with military-serving organizations

- Policies
  - System-wide promising practices and clear policies

- Credit Transfer
  - Clear and simplified credit transfer process
  - Community college articulation agreements

- Flexible programs
  - Condensed courses, hybrid/online

- Staffing
  - More FTE’s dedicated to MA students
  - VP military leadership position at system level
  - Military cultural training for faculty and staff
FACULTY UPDATE

Dr. Alan Freitag, UNCC
QUESTIONS?

Siobhan Norris  
Program Manager, Military & Veteran Education  
UNC System Office  
srnorris@northcarolina.edu  
202-802-8484

Kathie Sidner  
Director of Defense & Military Partnerships  
UNC System Office  
ksidner@northcarolina.edu  
919-962-6291