

UNC System President Peter Hans
Remarks to the UNC Board of Governors
May 26, 2022

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As we all know, North Carolina is home to one of the largest populations of veterans and active military personnel in the nation. We want to make it as easy as possible for those dedicated Americans to build a life and a career in our state. Providing a world class education is the best way to do that, and I'm proud of the steps we are taking to connect military students with public universities.

We currently serve 21,000 veterans and active-duty personnel, but we have the potential to reach more. Through targeted outreach, we can make sure that military students get the most out of their educational benefits and have the resources they need to take the next step in their lives.

We have launched a campaign to do exactly that, and you can see more information on the chart behind us. "I don't know but I have been told, UNC schools are solid gold."

We have to do our part to make sure our credit policies are clear, fair, and consistent.

Our new policy on military credit will ensure that students get proper recognition for the training they have completed, and that credit is applied consistently across all of our institutions. This will help us reduce barriers to enrollment for service members and promote more efficient use of VA benefits. In the past, I think we have missed out on the chance to serve talented military students because our credit policies weren't easy to parse, or we weren't as generous as those of our peers.

Hundreds of faculty and administrators have worked to correct that problem, and I applaud their dedication, as well as board members.

As I officially sign the new rules into action — provided madam secretary will let me borrow her pen — I'll point out this isn't just a win for military students, but for the entire university. I hear from faculty all the time about how veterans and active-duty students contribute to the classroom, enriching discussion and bringing new perspectives to their peers.

Now, I'm pleased to be able to have Jasmine Coleman join us online. She is a US Army veteran who works with military students at UNC Pembroke and works on improving credit policies, while also studying online for a graduate degree from Appalachian State herself. She has some hard-won insight about the rewards and challenges of pursuing higher education. Listening to her will, no doubt, underscore why we want so badly the talent and the dedication of people like Jasmine to stay right here in North Carolina.

Jasmine, will you please share a few words with us?

Coleman addresses the board

Yes, thank you President Hans, members of the Board, and everyone in attendance there. I would have loved to join you in person, but I actually have to support a mentor and veteran during a time of loss for his family, so I have to leave here and go attend a memorial service.

But I wanted to be sure to join in and let everyone know that as a veteran, as a military spouse, military dependent, I used to think I might be kind of a unicorn, but that's not the case. About seven percent of our student veterans are married to other veterans, and so we have to look at how we assist veterans and how it will enable us to provide a holistic approach to military families.

Not every spouse is a woman. Not every spouse is just a spouse.

I had the joys of transitioning out before my husband and being treated as a spouse and as a veteran. I look at how we approach this community and realize that we need to do more in really gaining a sense of who this population is and what we can do to support them.

I've been blessed to work at two system schools and a North Carolina Community College. I always say I started at Fayetteville State where I learned that higher education is what I love. Then I moved to Fayetteville Technical Community College where I really learned the ins and outs of what goes into military transfer credit and how we can have dynamic and diverse programs to support our military students. And I was blessed with the opportunity to move on to UNC Pembroke where they gave me the chance to lead.

So, I take every opportunity to sound the horn, beat the drum, and let people know that military transfer credit is imperative to us being military friendly. We may have different surveys and different awards that say we are military friendly, and that can give us the verisimilitude that we are. But the reality is, what we do for students and what they say we do for them is what's really reflective of us being military friendly.

I actually did not go to a system school as a young soldier because the private school on Fort Bragg had more transfer credits that I was able to receive for my military service.

And that was something as I moved into the UNC System that I began to ask questions about, and I saw those of us who were on the campuses doing the work. I was able to be involved with the system-level projects and seeing all of these subject matter experts pull together and pool resources and implement technology to make it easier, especially for the smaller campuses to assess this credit, it really is a wonderful opportunity for us as a system to strengthen what we

are able to do in recruiting military students, and further, providing that holistic support for military families.

President Hans

Jasmine, thank you for your service and your leadership. As the Chair will attest and the secretary will attest, I have signed the rule into effect. We'll properly move forward with awarding prior credit for military service. So thank you all.

That concludes my report, Mr. Chairman.