

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
OF THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

**Vice Provost Steven G. Brint  
University of California, Riverside  
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[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good afternoon. I am Steven Brint, Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education at the University of California, Riverside. I am honored to be invited to be here before you today to share information about UCR's success helping veterans transition into higher education.

The G.I. Bill provides the financial resources for veterans to earn a four-year degree. And UC Riverside has an excellent record of combining opportunity through access and excellence in teaching.

We do not just recruit students; we are committed to their success in school and in life. That success has important consequences for the development of America's competitiveness in the global economy, and is one of many ways that a university contributes to the public good.

Many of UCR's 21,000 students have stories that can make success more difficult. They are frequently from low-income backgrounds, and from under-represented minority groups. Many are the first in their families to attend college. Sometimes they are reentering school after a long absence. In the case of military veterans, they are coming from an environment with tight unit cohesion and specific direction and order. They sometimes feel isolated in a higher education setting that focuses on the individual. At UCR, we work to keep our military members, veterans and family members in close touch with each other, and to continue that sense of unit cohesion as they move through their studies.

Our veterans' services coordinator, Chryssa Jones, sits on the regional board of directors of the National Association of Veteran's Program Administrators, a testament to the caliber of expertise available to our students. In addition to meeting with each VA beneficiary face-to-face every quarter, Chryssa advises our

student veteran organizations, coordinates campus programs and services, and is frequently asked to speak at regional, state, and national conferences about veterans in higher education. Her office suite includes space for a “Veteran’s Lounge” so that the campus can offer an informal gathering space for veterans and military members on campus.

Veterans have gone the extra mile for us, so let me tell you about some of the ways that UCR goes the extra mile for veterans.

We have a scholarship fund, “Operation Education,” that is geared to help cover funding gaps for veterans who have suffered combat-related injuries at any time following September 2001. In fact, we are currently finalizing the details of a formal relationship to streamline the process for veterans transferring from here at the community college to UCR.

We have orientation sessions specifically tailored to the needs of veterans, as well as a welcome event for veterans and their families. In April we teamed up with other colleges in the Inland Southern California region – home to nearly 300,000 veterans – for the Inland Empire College Boot Camp, to offer resources and answer common questions about how veterans can get off to a good start in college.

At UCR, student veterans receive priority class registration, as well as assistance with the paperwork associated with the GI Bill and state benefit programs. We send out regular updates on policy and legislative changes that may affect military benefits. We offer a deferred payment plan, and an exemption from the application fee and the first late fee each quarter, just to make sure that we are removing some of the most common causes of frustration. When the federal government shut down last month, UCR prepared a contingency plan to waive additional late fees, lift registration holds, and provide emergency loan funds to veterans and military families impacted by the shutdown.

We have a Veteran Support Team with members from about 20 departments all over campus to make sure we hear about veterans who need assistance. For instance, our campus housing office provides a veteran roommate matching service for students who choose to live in a campus apartment. Our alumni office coordinates a mentorship program between student and alumni veterans. Veteran Peer Mentors are available to offer experience and advice.

The UCR Career Center has developed “Operation VETS” which stands for

Veteran Employment Transition Success. This program is organized as a bi-weekly workshop for a small group of veterans and service members. In these workshops veterans polish their resumes, practice networking and interviewing, pick up job-searching strategies, and enjoy exclusive recruiting opportunities and job leads from prospective employers, and other benefits.

Of course, we offer academic and environmental accommodations for all students with disabilities. If called to duty, service members can obtain a leave of absence, and be admitted automatically upon return without repeating admissions paperwork.

UCR offers a workshop that helps staff and faculty learn how to recognize and remove the frequently occurring academic and social barriers that many student veterans face. We even have an annual workshop for our graduate student teaching assistants to help them create “Veteran Friendly Classrooms.” By empowering these graduate students, we are working to remove learning barriers not only here at UCR, but everywhere that these future faculty members end up teaching.

We know that service members and veterans are at risk for feeling out of place on a university campus. We have drawn on research and environmental scans for best practices to develop these programs. Our success with veterans comes from applying some of the same practices that have worked with low-income and first generation students to our population of veterans and service members.

UC Riverside currently has about 500 students who are military members, veterans, or family members. One of those students is Luis Contreras, a 2012 UCR graduate who majored in biological sciences. He credits UCR with helping prepare him for a career in medicine. I am proud to say that Luis is now a member of UCR’s inaugural medical school class. He said, “UCR programs helped me connect with fellow veterans, and not feel like an outcast for being a non-traditional student.”

We expect great things from him, and from the many other highly-motivated and conscientious veterans on our campus. They have provided outstanding service to our country; in turn, we work to provide an outstanding educational and social support environment for them.

If you have questions, I will be happy to answer them.