

Terence Harrison

Remarks to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
March 17, 2015

Good afternoon. I'd like to thank Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and Members of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity for inviting me to participate in today's hearing on the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) administration and its education programs, as well as the educational and training needs of our newest generation of veterans.

My name is Terence Harrison and I am the Manager for Veterans Programs and Services at the University of Cincinnati. The University of Cincinnati, or "UC," is a public research university, enrolling more than 43,600 undergraduate and graduate students in 2014. Our campus is made up of students from all 50 states and from 100 countries around the world. Recognized as a Military Friendly School, UC is both a leader and champion in military and veteran related issues. Currently, UC enrolls about 2,250 military-affiliated students, including active duty military, members of the National Guard and the Reserves, veterans, and family members. Of this total, 1,007 students are using GI Bill benefits, as of the fall 2014 semester. With the anticipated draw-down of active duty personnel, the University of Cincinnati is energetically positioning itself to accommodate these students. UC adheres closely to the VA's principles of excellence in providing a high-quality educational experience tailored to the unique needs of veteran students.

UC has instituted a number of resources and programs to best assist our youngest generation of veterans. To assist veteran students with administrative needs on campus, UC has a centralized veterans' "one-stop shop" located in the same building as Admissions and Registration. With most of our student services for veterans in the same building, these students do not need to navigate a large campus to find the right offices to meet their needs.

To foster a sense of community and ensure a smooth transition to civilian life, UC is home to the Ohio Beta chapter of Omega Delta Sigma. This co-ed, veteran-only fraternity has assisted countless veterans in their transition to the University of Cincinnati by providing social support and peer to peer mentoring.

Additionally, to assist prospective students and current recipients of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, we are pleased the VA has developed the GI Bill Comparison Tool and the VA feedback system. Allowing students to compare their benefits across institutions is a valuable tool. To ensure that our veteran students continue to understand and best utilize their GI Bill benefits upon enrolling, the University of Cincinnati

boasts a VetSuccess on Campus Counselor. This resource allows veterans to have any GI Bill related questions answered in a timely manner. UC is one of only three Ohio schools with such a counselor.

To meet the medical needs of veteran students, UC's proximity to the VA hospital allows for students to quickly receive any required medical services. UC is a partner with the VA sponsored Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership program. Veterans with psychological issues can meet with a VA clinical psychologist on campus, or if they choose, the VA Hospital. Additionally, the University of Cincinnati's Center of Psychological Services has a professionally trained and licensed staff that can address the needs of student veterans free of charge.

In addition to these campus-based services, UC remains on the cutting-edge of interdisciplinary research and training that benefits the nation's active duty military, veterans, and their families. For instance, University of Cincinnati is participating in a joint study with the VA, regarding the lingering effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This ongoing study, which opened in 2010, is charged with seeing which types of therapy would be beneficial to those veterans who experience PTSD. UC also fosters strong partnerships with the military, including the Center for Sustainment of Trauma and Readiness Skills, or C-STARS, a joint training program between the Air Force and the University of Cincinnati Medical Center. C-STARS pairs both civilian and Air Force medical professionals in trauma and critical care through simulation training.

The University of Cincinnati is also an active participant in the Tri-State VETS educational group. This group is comprised of veteran representatives from nine universities and colleges across the region and meets quarterly to discuss best practices. Additionally, they develop programs that will improve the quality of life for the veterans on their respective campuses.

With regard to the implementation of section 701 of the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014, UC does not anticipate any obstacles in offering the Fry Scholarship to spouses of deceased or permanently disabled veterans. At UC, we currently have three students receiving the Fry Scholarship.

And as for implementing section 702, UC has offered in-State tuition to all student veterans since 2009. Because of the Ohio GI Promise, all the veteran has to do is show proof of residency (utility bill, lease statement, etc...) and the school will immediately grant in-state tuition. One problem that is slowly eroding is that the veteran does not realize that they have to apply for residency.

This has been a priority for us for years and I encourage all schools seeking to meet the requirements to look to UC as an example.

In closing, I want to thank you for allowing me to share the great work that the University of Cincinnati is doing to accommodate current and future veteran students and their families. I look forward to working with you as you expand services for veteran students and again offer the University of Cincinnati as an example to inform policy and to guide schools in shaping their programs.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.