



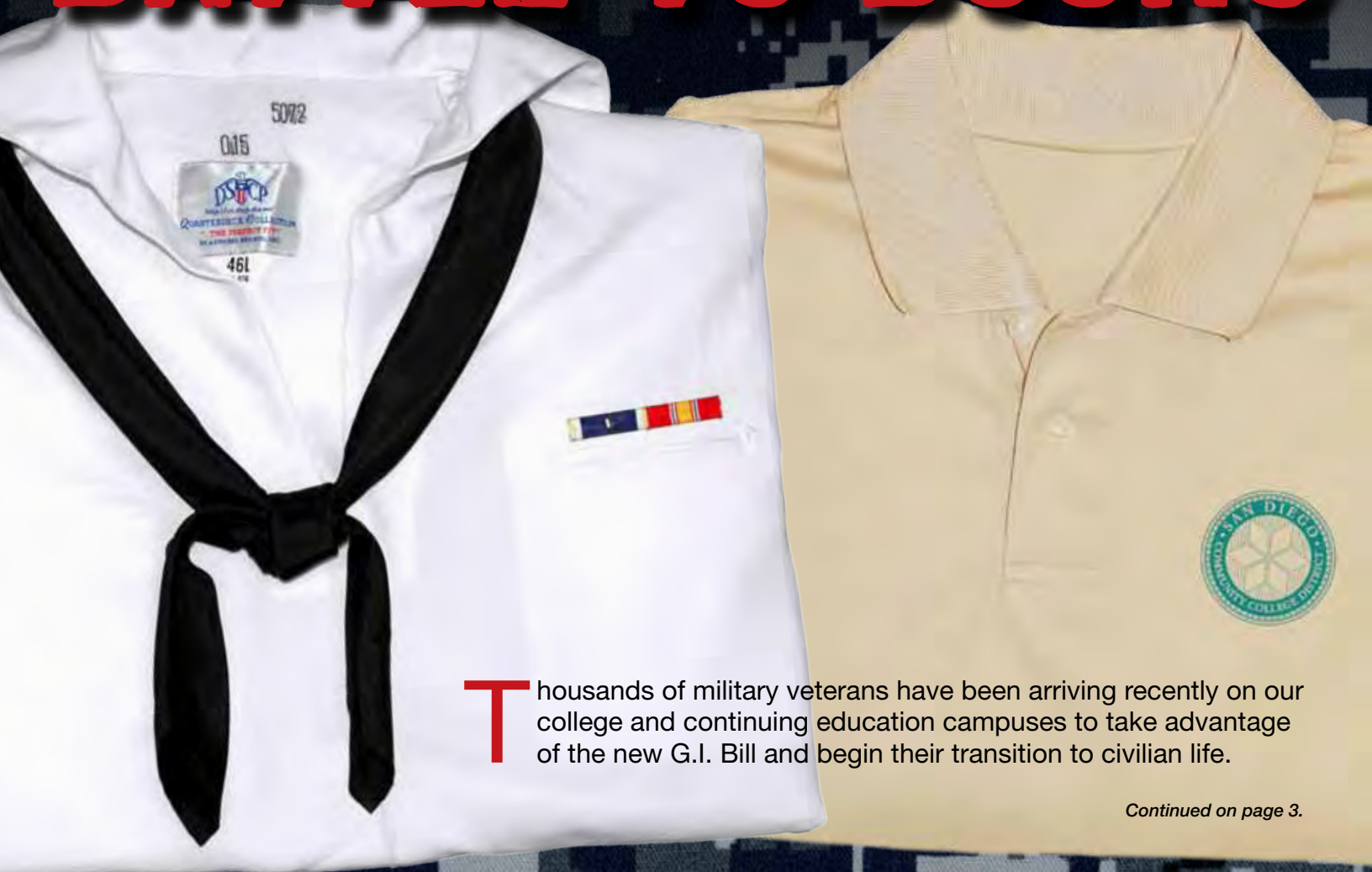
City College
Mesa College
Miramar College
Continuing
Education

San Diego Community College District

WE *with excellence*

May 2010

TRANSITIONING FROM BATTLE TO BOOKS



Thousands of military veterans have been arriving recently on our college and continuing education campuses to take advantage of the new G.I. Bill and begin their transition to civilian life.

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Chancellor's Message



Constance M. Carroll, Ph.D.
Chancellor, SDCCD

PROVIDING FULL SERVICES TO THE MILITARY



The San Diego Community College District has a long history of service to the military, both in providing direct education at over 30 military bases throughout the nation and in assigning priority to returning veterans.

Several decades ago, the four branches of the military began to outsource some of their education and training responsibilities to higher education. In fact, the San Diego Community College District began to receive contracts for providing general education and technical training at a variety of Navy bases as early as 1980. At the present time, these contracts now include not only the Navy, but also Army and Marine bases, bringing our total enrollment of service personnel to over 100,000 off-site students who are primarily enrolled through San Diego City College and our Military Education Program.



Some military students are studying geography and satellite-based information systems. Some are mastering land-based communication systems designed to keep U.S. troops in contact during fierce weather conditions, such as sandstorms. Others are learning aviation and methods of safely landing a jet on an aircraft carrier in turbulent seas. Still others are improving their command of mathematics, English and other disciplines necessary to their success. What is unique about these students is that they are all soldiers, sailors or marines.

When veterans return to San Diego, they are treated as a priority by City, Mesa and Miramar Colleges by providing priority registration for classes and by offering a wide range of services for returning veterans, as well as for their spouses

and families. Ever since the G.I. Bill we view this priority and these services as recognition of the debt that all of us have as Americans to those who are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

The District's Continuing Education division has addressed a more poignant aspect of need for some returning veterans. More and more veterans of modern warfare, most notably the war in Iraq, are returning to their homeland with an all-too-common wound: traumatic brain injury. Known as the "signature wound" of the Iraq conflict, this disability has a profound impact upon the men and women affected by brain trauma.

In response to this challenge, the San Diego Community College District's Continuing Education division has recently added the Naval Medical Center of San Diego as a new site for its Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Program. Although ABI is a well established program within the community college district, the new program was designed and is exclusively provided for veterans, almost one hundred percent from the war in Iraq.

These returning veterans are unique in that they seem the same as when they left for war, but have been forever altered by this unique form of injury, suffering neurological changes, cognitive changes and psychological changes as a result of the trauma they have sustained. Addressing their needs requires more than offering a few classes or providing financial aid; it requires a rigorous curriculum and program of therapy designed to address both the physical and emotional needs of these student veterans.

From training to employment to aftercare in tragic cases, the San Diego Community College District is a model of the growing collaboration between the military and higher education. As a community college organization, we long ago realized that the boundaries of our "community" extend beyond our geographical borders in order to reach those who have put themselves in harm's way for the benefit of all of us. ♦

BATTLE TO BOOKS

Continued from cover... Student profiles begin on page 4.



These are not ordinary students. They are extraordinary individuals, many of whom are veterans of the Mideast wars. It is likely that several of these student veterans may be suffering the nightmare known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Sadly, PTSD is not the only challenge facing student veterans. Most have had financial problems, difficulties navigating state and federal bureaucracies and trouble transitioning from the highly structured military life to the many freedoms that come with being a civilian college student. Many lack academic preparedness and virtually all suffer from an information void when thrust back into civilian life.

City College student Danielle Coulter is among veterans that fall victim to the lack of information needed to survive. Not long after discharge from the U.S. Navy, she "ran out of money for three months."

"A lot of veterans don't know what's out there for them," said Counselor Ana Bravo, who was appointed Miramar College's first-ever veterans transitions coordinator last fall.

The District's increased service to veterans is due to a recent major wave of veterans recently seeking a college education or a continuing education. This influx began to rise appreciably in August, when the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill for training became effective.

If eligible, tuition and fees are covered by the Veterans Administration, plus annual allowances are issued for housing, textbooks and school supplies.

The colleges and Continuing Education are charged with the labor intensive task of certifying applications for G.I. Bill benefits. Currently, SDCCD serves an estimated 5,000 veterans and nearly 2,000 active military, making it one of the largest educators of veterans in the nation. (Military spouses and other dependents are not included in estimates.)

Despite funding limitations, the three colleges and Continuing Education are working to accommodate their special needs by expanding services.

Significant help came in the form of a \$100,000 Wal-Mart Foundation grant, awarded last spring to SDCCD's nationwide Military and Government Education and Training program (MGET). Miramar College was first within the District to receive Wal-Mart grant monies (\$26,000), used to stage special campus events for veterans, including focus groups and a spring 2010 resource fair.

Miramar student veteran Corcynthia Williams was grateful for the new services. Not along ago, "I didn't know who to turn to for support when my husband deployed. The fair helped me."

Last fall, Mesa received \$20,000 of the Wal-Mart grant, triggering plans to provide a resource fair and other veterans' services, including career assistance workshops held in March and April.

The remaining \$54,000 went toward supporting personal financial management courses taught through the MGET program at 24 military installations located in 15 states, reported MGET Director Lisa Curtin. The Wal-Mart Foundation grant was acquired largely through her efforts.

About 18 months ago, student-run organizations for veterans began forming at the colleges. Their primary function has been to provide critical information to fellow student veterans as well as act as a support system.

At Mesa, student veteran Joshua Ray and four others founded the Student Veterans Union a year ago. Ray, who served aboard a Navy destroyer patrolling the Persian Gulf, said it is gratifying "to see someone get help with a problem from another student. So many times it is just a matter of letting people know how to avoid common pitfalls associated with being a returning student."

Raising awareness of the unique needs of these students and creating veteran-friendly campus environments are helping to develop effective support services for these unheralded heroes. ♦

VETERANS SERVICES*

- Priority registration
- Veterans Affairs offices
- G.I. Bill benefits certification process
- Student-run advocacy/support groups
- Wounded Warriors Disability Support Programs & Services (DSPS)
- Acquired Brain Injury Program (Continuing Education)
- Career workshops
- Individual résumé writing
- Focus groups
- Mental health support groups
- Drop-in counseling
- Counseling by veterans
- Specialized tutoring
- Textbook scholarships
- Faculty and staff workshops
- Resource events
- "Meet and Greet" orientations
- Specialized academic services
- Mental Health Aide/Advocate
- Certificate program – Mesa College
- Military Leadership Studies
- Degree program – Miramar College

* Some services listed are not available at all three colleges or Continuing Education.

BATTLE TO BOOKS

Profiles of SDCCD Student Veterans.



DANIELLE COULTER, 27

Petty Officer, 2nd Class
U.S. Navy, 2002-2009

Deployments: Persian Gulf, 2004; Hurricane Katrina search and rescue, 2005; Kuwait/Iraq border, 2006
Enrolled: City College, second full-time semester; Online student while active-duty
Campus Activities: Associated Students Senator, member of BEAT (Bringing Education and Activism Together) activist for GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender) community
Educational Goals: Transfer to a four-year college or university in fall 2011, major in performing arts
Career Plan: Dance Studio Owner/Operator



NOTES AND QUOTES:

- Coulter served aboard an amphibious assault ship, her first deployment.
- She volunteered to serve with the Navy's helicopter ambulance division. In Kuwait, became part of a crew that made sure all helicopter life support systems were in place and operable.
- "Helping to save lives was a very rewarding experience."
- At City College, she embraces campus activities. Currently a student government senator, the former Navy Petty Officer is planning to run for Associated Students president.

EDGAR ROMERO, 37

Petty Officer, Third Class
U.S. Army National Guard, 1998-2006

Deployment: World Trade Center, September 11, 2001; New York City, 2001-2003
Enrolled: Continuing Education/North City Campus, 2009-2010

U.S. Navy, 1992-1997

Deployment: Persian Gulf, 1993; North Korea, 1994; Persian Gulf, 1994-1995; Somalia, 1995

NOTES AND QUOTES:

- As a National Guardsman, he was among the first responders to the 2001 World Trade Center attack, guarding Ground Zero for the first two weeks. For the next two years, Romero guarded New York City's bridges and tunnels.
- In 1994, the Navy Petty Officer served on board an aircraft carrier dispatched to the Sea of Japan when North Korea mobilized one million troops to the demilitarized zone.
- Romero described this transition to civilian life as "very tough." Since September, he has been at Continuing Education's North City Campus, taking a four-month Web Server Maintenance and Security class and plans to enroll in a follow-up course of the same length.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Romero preferred not to have a photograph published.



CORCYNTHIA WILLIAMS, 23

Private, First Class
U.S. Army National Guard, 2005-2007

Enrolled: Miramar College

Campus Activities: Secretary, Student Veterans Organization

Educational Goals: Transfer to SDSU and join its Army ROTC, then transfer to Army's physician assistant school in Texas

Career Plan: Become a Physician Assistant, perhaps as an officer in the Army

Corcynthia Williams (right) with her mother, Colonel Darlene McCurdy.



NOTES AND QUOTES:

- Military life is truly a family affair for Corcynthia. Mom is a National Guard Colonel, Dad fought as a soldier in Vietnam War and is an Army helicopter pilot, and her husband, Timothy Williams, is in the Navy.
- Corcynthia trained as a combat medic. During a training accident, she sustained permanent nerve damage to her left foot. "I didn't have the privilege to serve in a combat."
- "PTSD is huge. I see signs of it" on campus. "I don't think families were prepared for it." She feels that PTSD from the Mideast war is easily triggered because "Iraq is an urban conflict, and they (veterans) come back home to urban areas."

DUSTIN BARFIELD, 27

Corporal
U.S. Marine Corps, 2006

Deployments: Iraq, 2004

Combat: The Second Battle of Fallujah

Campus Activities: Associated Student Council Vice President, 2008-2009

Enrolled: Miramar College, 2006-2009; Stanford University, 2nd semester. Major: Material Science and Engineering, (Had also been accepted to MIT and UC Berkeley)

Career Plan: Medical Doctor



NOTES AND QUOTES:

- In just six years, the 27-year-old Texan has gone from Iraq to Miramar College to Stanford University.
- Barfield managed to get through combat without physical injury, but sudden sounds "still bother me."
- While attending Miramar, he experienced "a big-time support system, personally and academically."
- Although obtaining G.I. Bill benefits was "the biggest obstacle" in transitioning to civilian life, Barfield indicated that the financial situation eventually became relatively smooth. "The G.I. Bill kept me absolutely afloat. Without it I would have had to work full-time and not be able to attend college full-time."

RICHARD GILBERT, 25

Sergeant
U.S. Marine Corps, 2003-2008

Deployments: Iraq, 2004-2006

Combat: The Second Battle of Fallujah

Enrolled: Mesa College, fourth semester

Campus Activities: President and DSPS liaison for the Mesa Student Veterans Union

Educational Goals: Transfer to UCSD or the Brookes Art Institute

Career Plan: Professional Photographer

Thanks to Rich Gilbert, many Iraqi children no longer went without shoes.



NOTES AND QUOTES:

- In Iraq, started a shoe drive for local children after coming across a young boy who had cut his foot. "We patched him up. I quickly noticed none of the kids had shoes, wrote home and got all the schools and churches involved with sending me boxes of shoes." When on patrol, he would hand them out to children. Managed to provide shoes for "a few hundred kids from the villages."
- The Texas native travels extensively to raise awareness of PTSD, which he calls "Trigger Journeys." Last summer, Gilbert took a 14,000-mile road trip from San Diego to Deadhorse, Alaska (northern most point in America by road). Along the way, he sought out veterans and others to let them know that they are not alone in suffering from PTSD. His photographs and article he penned about the road trip was published in the April edition of *Real Travel Magazine*.
- Gilbert is a campus activist, blogs and has a website www.richardvgilbert.com. "I am trying to break the negative stigma that comes with PTSD."
- This summer, he plans to backpack from coast to coast in South America on "My Trigger Journey."

JOSHUA RAY, 26

Petty Officer, 2nd Class
U.S. Navy, 2001-2007

Deployments: Tsunami rescue and relief, Indonesia, 2004; Persian Gulf, 2005-2006

Enrolled: Mesa College, 2008-2010

Campus Activities: Co-founder, former President of Mesa's Student Veterans Union. Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society President, Associated Students Senator

State Activities: California Director of Student Veterans of America

Educational Goals: Transfer as international relations major to George Washington, Brown or other major university; Graduate degree (perhaps law school)



NOTES AND QUOTES:

- Ray served as a ballistics missile defense systems specialist aboard a destroyer that patrolled the Persian Gulf.
- For three months in 2004, Ray helped rescue tsunami victims on the Indonesian island of Sumatra. "My unit was one of the first responders."
- Throughout the rescue and relief, 14-hour days were common. "It taught me the meaning of a hard day's work."
- Ray's decision to major in international relations at Mesa and beyond is a direct result of serving overseas.
- He and four other veterans founded Mesa's Student Veterans Union. Ray has been gratified to see that their organization has been able to assist other veterans to avoid common pitfalls associated with being a returning student.