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BEACON MAGAZINE

A Forum for Free Student Expression at Florida International University

Vol. 1 Issue 12

One copy per person. Additional copies are 25 cents.

I HAVE A SPECIAL VETERAN'S
DAY SURPRISE FOR YOU,
CLOSE YOUR EYES N' WAIT



ERNESTO GONZALEZ/THE BEACON

A VETERAN AFFAIR

A PORT IN THE STORM

Department of Veteran Affairs helps veteran students find their way

CAITLIN RANDLE
Contributing Writer
news@fiusm.com

The building that houses FIU’s Department of Veteran Affairs has turned into a home away from home for veterans on campus, according to the department’s director Michael Pischner.

Housed in the renovated Tower Building, the office acts as a place for veterans to take a break from the stress of university life.

“We have a place where they can hang out and escape from academia for a while,” Pischner said to Student Media.

A lot of students returning from life in the military find it difficult to adjust to such a different environment, he said.

“In the military, it’s very rigid,” said Pischner. “Someone tells you when you’re going to wake up, what you’re going to do, when you’re going to eat.”

The freedom that comes with attending college is a complete change from the structured environment of the military according to Pischner.

“When they come to FIU, you don’t

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Only one percent of the country joins the military to protect the other 99 percent

Michael Pischner
Director
Veteran Affairs

”



CHARLOTTE ALBA/THE BEACON

From left to right: Veterans Matthew Thompson, Matthew Convington, Marian Patrick, Patricia Delacruz, Christopher McRae, Israel Najarro, Erick Vidal pose for a picture in the University veterans office on Tuesday November 8th, 2016.

even have to go to class if you don’t want to. Some of them find that kind of unsettling,” Pischner said. “So we offer a port in the storm. A place where they can relax a little bit.”

The center features a computer lab where veterans can print out documents for free. There’s also a living area for the students to spend time together between classes and study, as well as a kitchen area so they have a space to eat on campus away from everything else.

During finals, the office provides additional services to help veteran students. The center stays open late and provides food so the veterans can eat while

they’re studying.

In addition to the center itself, the veterans’ office also provides in-state tuition for veterans and for their dependents, including spouses and children. Veterans also receive priority registration and can receive a deferment for their tuition.

FIU was the only state university to give veterans in-state tuition before it became a state law in 2013, according to Pischner.

As a result of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, veterans also have their tuition paid based on the amount of time they served, and they receive a housing stipend, as well as money for textbooks.

Pischner said the goal of the benefits is to “take out any road bumps” the veterans may face.

“They put their education on hold while they serve the country, so now it’s our turn to help serve them,” he said.

The Veterans’ Office also has an annual career fair specifically for veterans.

Every February, major employers come to campus for a hiring fair. The companies that attend the event must prove that they can provide jobs for the veterans.

“This is not something where they [employers] can come in and feel good

SEE OFFICE, PAGE 3

University atmosphere an obstacle for veterans

ARIANA RAMSUNDAR
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The Veterans Affairs Office is the hub when it comes to providing aid and assistance to veterans. They offer computers and printing, career fairs, guidance for class selection, help with aid and benefits disbursed by Veteran Affairs and a place to de-stress and talk to other veterans. Veterans such as Aurelia Rodriguez see the Office as a way to meet and interact with students who have had the same experiences going from a military to university setting.

“Compared to other universities the Veterans Affairs office is quite small. But we are happy that we do have a place to come and talk to other people who have had similar experiences. When you’re a veteran

it is difficult to make that change so having people that are going through the same thing helps a lot.” Rodriguez said.

Aurelia Rodriguez is an United States Army veteran and has served six and a half years, dedicating her service both at home where she is stationed in Georgia and Homestead and abroad while deployed for service in Iraq.

As a junior studying biomedical engineering and on the pre-med track, Rodriguez wants to be able to improve the quality of life through inventions that will help those in need. She has seen the effects that permanent disability has on people and believes that the future of medicine is in technology – not in what she called the ‘pump and grind’ practice where medicine is used to only treat symptoms and pain and not the cause.

“I want to change the system not

just be part the part of the system,” She said.

When Rodriguez first transferred to FIU she had to learn everything on her own.

“The orientation that they give you as a transfer student is a video,” Rodriguez said. Her military background allowed her to overcome this issue easily. “Being in the army, you are used to being self sufficient. On my first day I grabbed a map and figured out my way around,” She explained.

However, finding her way around is the least of her worries, she said. According to Rodriguez, The biggest challenge veteran students face is getting reacclimated to the school environment.

“We come from a high stress job with no excuses, we have demanding situations and responsibilities

SEE VETERANS, PAGE 3

EDITOR’S NOTE

We learned from our Vets

CAYLA BUSH



EDITOR IN CHIEF

As you’ll notice when reading through this week’s magazine, the day-to-day experience for student veterans is unlike that of their peers.

From Veterans’ Affairs to the Student Veterans’ Association, these individuals have carved spaces out of their own.

Putting together this magazine, I learned more about the life of these students. I learned their average age is 29.7, that some are still enlisted in the Reserve or the National Guard. I also learned that they sometimes feel ostracized by their peers because they’re so much older.

This magazine was a learning experience for us as a staff, and one of the things that we learned was how often the experiences of these students is overlooked – something we’re guilty of at Student Media.

We thank our veterans for the work they’ve done to fight for our freedoms, and we hope that students reading this learn as much as we did.

Veterans not treading alone

OFFICE, PAGE 2

about themselves because they're looking for jobs for veterans," Pischner explained. "They must have a job for veterans."

In the past, the employers that have participated in the fair included large federal agencies include well-known companies, including Starbucks, JP Morgan Chase and Coca-Cola.

This year, the fair is expected to be much bigger.

"It's grown to the point that this year we're probably going to look at the arena," Pischner said.

Part of the reason for the growth is a large grant the veterans' affairs office just received that will go towards helping veterans with their careers.

Pischner said finding a career for veterans was one of the main goals of the office.

"The name of the game is not just to get

them a degree, the name of the game is to get them a career," he said.

Pischner said the employees at the veterans' office are able to help veteran students so effectively because they are all veterans themselves and have had similar difficulties.

"When someone comes in here because their check is late, chances are the person helping them has a late check also," he said.

Helping veterans get their degrees and find careers is so important because of the sacrifices they've made,

"Veterans are a very special population," he said. "Only one percent of the country joins the military to protect the other 99 percent,"

Pischner said. This is why helping veterans get degrees and find careers is so important to the Veteran's Center.

Veterans struggle to adapt to University campus life

VETERANS, PAGE 2

where we learn to be self sufficient," Rodriguez explained. "However, I haven't taken a math course since 10th grade, I am 29 years old so I won't remember some of the math that is not used on a daily basis. When we return sometimes we just need a refresher."

Finding help during this adjustment period is one of the most challenging aspects according to Rodriguez.

"During that time that we are trying to get back on our feet. Any misstep affects your GPA," She explained.

While the Veterans Affairs Office does not provide their own academic tutoring, they refer veteran students to the tutoring services that FIU offers in the University Learning Center located in the Green Library at MMC and Academic One at BBC.

Unfortunately, these services are taught by students and offer limited time slots which makes it difficult for a veteran student to attend according to Rodriguez.

“I want to change the system not just be part the part of the system

Aurelia Rodriguez
Junior/US Army veteran
Biomedical engineering

"Most of the Veterans returning to school have adult responsibilities, we have a mortgage, a car, some have children and some are even in the reserves and the national guard. So the services that have these limitations sometimes aren't enough," Rodriguez explained.

Rodriguez explained

that some Veteran students may only have a thirty minute time slot for tutoring among their other responsibilities.

"We don't have time to put down our stuff and ask a question before time's up. For most of us this, isn't enough to catch up. The only other option that we have is to go to our professor's office hours," She said, mentioning that office hours create difficulties similar to tutoring times.

Student veterans utilizing the benefits Veteran Affairs offers must meet a certain number of credits in order to receive aid. According to Rodriguez, a veteran student not only must meet these credit criteria, but they must do it while re-adjusting to university, juggling a job, studying and sometimes children which is where the difficulty lies.

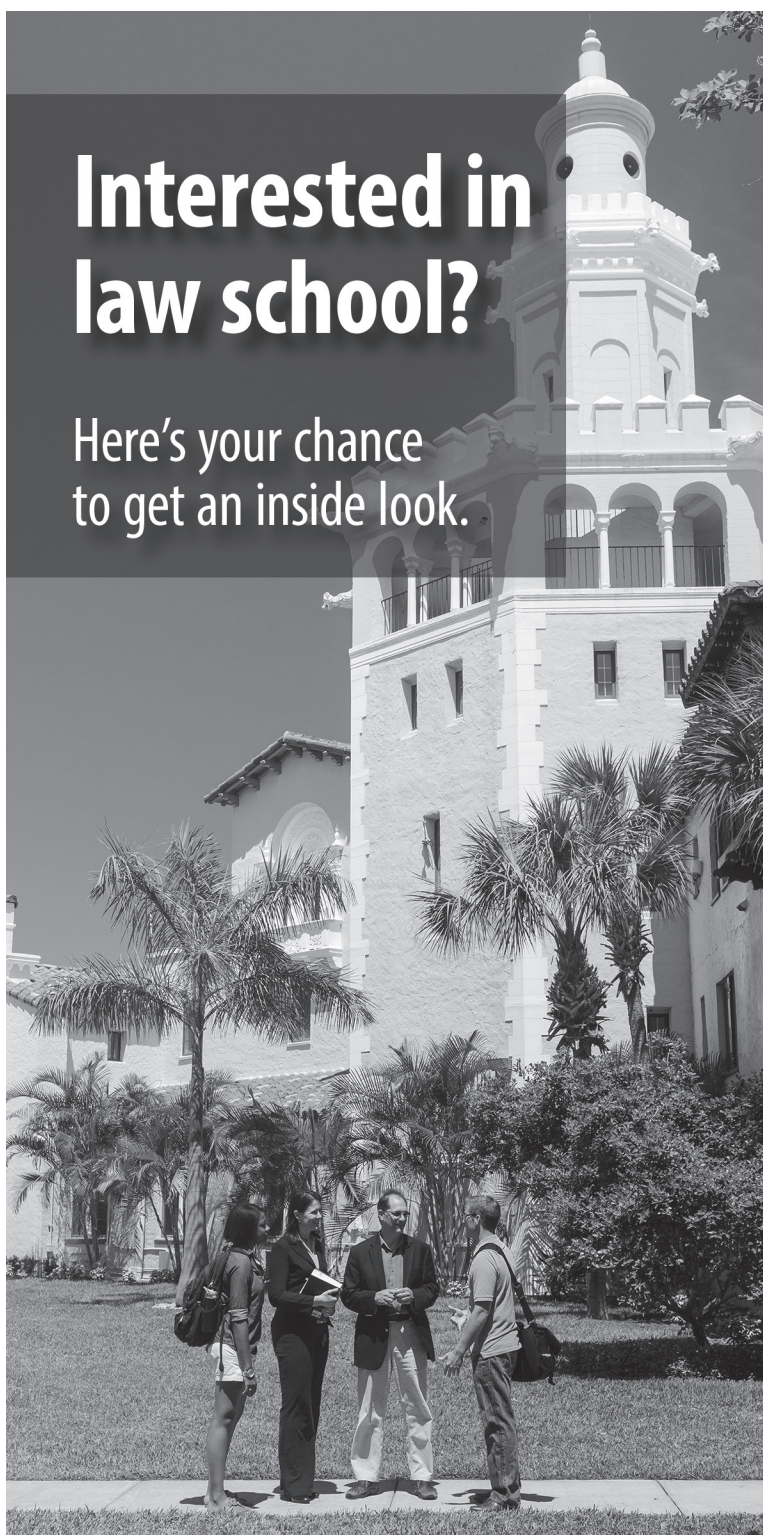
"For example during a summer semester you have to take between eight

to 12 credits in order to receive any kind of aid," Rodriguez explained. "These stipulations do not help for those of us that are returning and may need help. The limited time that we have is jammed packed with classes."

The Veteran Affairs Office does not come without faults, according to Rodriguez.

"The limited space that the office has does not provide enough space for those who need a quiet place to study," She said. "The office contains only one conference area and in order to use the conference room you have the schedule a time."

Rodriguez mentioned that the Veteran Affairs Office prioritizes students who are working on projects or presentations, leaving the main area as the only other place to study which Rodriguez described as loud with people eating, hanging out and just relaxing.



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VET SUCCESS

Veteran Affairs Office provides a home for student veterans



The Veteran and Military Affairs office, located at MMC in TWR 100, offers assistance to all veteran students on FIU campus.

QUIANA MAJOR/THE BEACON

NAREEMAH GRIFFITHS
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The Veterans and Military Affairs office mission is to help students who are also veterans in their vocational and academic journeys at FIU.

The Veteran's Center was founded in 2013 and is located at MMC in TWR 100. The office assists approximately 1200 self-identified students.

At FIU, a veteran is considered to be anyone who has served in the military and has been honorably discharged. However, the Veterans and Military Affairs office also provides assistance to service

members, Active Duty, Reservists, eligible dependents and spouses enrolled at FIU.

To receive benefits, veterans must be enrolled at FIU and apply to the Department of Veteran Affairs where the students enrollment and attendance is reported by the school. Student veterans receive in-state tuition, priority registration, a tuition deposit waiver, GI-Bill Post 911 and Montgomery GI Bill benefits to make the transition to attending a University easier.

Student veterans bring a unique perspective to the diverse student body at FIU with their wide variety of knowledge, skills, abilities, diverse life experiences and training. However, differences

“Veterans often have a high level of expectations that are considered lofty in a university setting.”

Marquay Smith
Vocational Rehab Counselor
VA Veteran Affairs

in veterans age, maturity, experience and responsibilities make it challenging for veterans to achieve their academic goals. “[Some of the difficulties veterans face trying to go to school is] readjusting

to the academia and most importantly getting familiar with an environment that is not as structured as the military setting,” said Marquay Smith, Veterans Affairs Counselor. “Therefore, veterans often have a high level of expectations that are considered lofty in a university setting. Veterans often feel as if their not amongst their peers in the class setting.”

To combat these challenges, the Department of Veterans Affairs has collaborated with numerous departments at the University to provide counseling, mentoring, grants, tutoring, mental health services, VA claims and Enrollment Certification to the VA for student veterans.

“VetSuccess on Campus is a program that FIU and VA agreed to place an experienced VA counselor on campus to assist veterans and veteran dependents on campus,” said Smith. “And we also have a student veteran organization on campus, Student Veterans of America at FIU, which provides peer to peer support.”

With each student being different, the Veterans and Military Affairs office has programs and knowledgeable staff in place to ensure the success of the student veteran population at FIU. For more information about the Veterans and Military Affairs office, call 305-348-2838.

FIU student shares experience as a veteran

DELANIE GARCIA
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ISRAEL
NAJARRO

One traditional aspect of the college experience is when students

seek out a higher education after high school. Many students who attend a University after graduating high school do so to prepare themselves for their careers and what is ahead.

However, for student veterans the timeline is a bit different.

Israel Najarro, a senior public administration major and current president of the Student Veterans of America, shares his story with Student Media on how his experience being in the military has shaped his experience here at FIU.

He enlisted in the United States Army fresh out of high school, having been recruited by the military to serve in the field of Human Intelligence. He joined in 2004, and went on to complete basic training in Oklahoma.

His history in the military has taken him

worldwide: from Iraq and Afghanistan, to Germany, as well as along the border of Mexico.

For Najarro, going from an average high school student in Chicago to a member of the U.S Military is no simple task.

“When I was younger I was more reserved and

“I remember who I was when I first came here. I remember being that guy fresh in Miami, and I didn't know anything”

Israel Najarro
President
Student Veterans of America

introverted. When I joined the army it forced me to change a lot about myself, both for the betterment of the United States Army, as well as for myself,” he said.

Najarro believes the military has helped shape him into who he is today. He listed assertiveness,

focus, passion, and task-orientedness as only a fraction of the skills he acquired during his time with the military.

Success in the United States Army can be defined by different individuals in different ways. For Najarro, one of the most life-changing moments in his career was when he was promoted to Sergeant.

“My heart swelled with such pride and emotion,” he said. “I got so much love that day.”

Najarro believes his impact at FIU rests upon his ability to create a sense of inclusion and belonging among student veterans on campus.

“I remember who I was when I first came here. I remember being that guy fresh in Miami, and I didn't know anything,” he said. “At orientation, someone brought me to the office of Veteran and Military Affairs, and I felt welcome.”

Through his position as the president of the Student Veterans of America Association, Najarro hopes he can serve as a beacon for engagement and awareness, as well as a link to Student Veterans across FIU's campus.

“The community service and development is good, but I'm at peace knowing that if a battle-scarred veteran feels welcome here, I have done my job,” said Najarro. “This organization has done its job.”

A Ceremony for Heroes

Student veteran ceremony in pit



From left to right: Christopher Johnson, Mathew Convington, Christopher McRae, Ayaz Parbtani and Israel Najarro gather during the student veteran’s ceremony on Tuesday, Nov. 8 to honor those students who served.

STEPHANIE ESPAILLAT/THE BEACON

LISBETTE CASTILLO
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The Student Veterans of America held a ceremony in the GC pit to honor fellow Veterans from FIU and their service to this country.

The event was held on Nov. 8 from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

“This event is simply to give notice and appreciation to my brothers and sisters who, in a time of war, stepped up and volunteered to do great things on behalf of this nation,” said Israel Najarro, president of SVA.

For student veteran Ayaz Parbtani, a sophomore studying Computer Science, helping with this event is important because it allows the opportunity for the student veteran community to feel welcomed at FIU.

“I think it is very important to welcome the veteran community back into the school services because these young men and women often leave out of high school,” said Parbtani. “It is very important that we kind of merge them with the student body so they can understand that their is not just one focused area that is whatever they were doing as a veteran and as a soldier.”

Parbtani explains that there are opportunities after being in a University, and that networking is imperative for student veterans to succeed her at FIU.

“For me, the most important thing as a student veteran or a veteran is to network and get into contact with people,” said Parbtani. “The more people you know, the more people know you and the better at life you will be. I think if we do not work together we cannot succeed together.”

The ceremony consisted of a short speech

given by Najarro honoring his fellow Veterans followed up by a meet and greet.

During Najarro’s speech, he reflected on his fellow FIU student veterans and shared how each of their experiences are unique.

“Each of these heroes carries a different story in their heart while these differences are important and valuable, it’s their similarities that we should seek to emulate,” said Najarro. “Loyalty, strength, courage, selflessness, compassion, integrity and dedication to duty are a few things that bind these veterans together as pillars of our community here at FIU and elsewhere.”

Students had the opportunity to speak to the SVA about their experiences in the service. There was also photos of FIU Veterans on display throughout the day.

The SVA Veterans Ceremony was open to everyone in the FIU community and public.

Najarro encouraged people to attend the event and show their support for the Veterans.

“We are absolutely blessed to live in a society with such a strong and proud military tradition and legacy,” said Najarro. “Such a small segment of our population served during the recent conflicts and often times it’s hard to notice that these people are even among us. The least we can do is recognize them and applaud their service and efforts.”

The SVA Veterans Day Ceremony is just one of many activities going on for Veterans Day. The SVA has a list of functions happening throughout the week, which can be found on their Orgsync page.

“I would like our fellow students to understand that Veterans are people just like them and that they aren’t damaged commodity. They are heroes who sacrificed much for the country and we should be honored to have them among us,” said Najarro.

Additional reporting by Stephanie Espaillat

VETERAN VOICES



“I think that student veterans, it is a unique population because of the many challenges. We are older veterans and most of us getting out of service we come to school and therefore it is a different challenge than a regular student has to face. Therefore, here at FIU we do have resources but not enough. I think that we can do a lot more, and I think we are trying to do a lot more for our veterans.”

Patricia De LaCruz
Public Administration
Alumnus

“It is awesome being a student veteran. Being in school is a result of many years of dreaming and hard work to get here to use our GI bill benefits. For most of us, we have worked really long and hard dreaming about the day we could go to school. Being an older student, we still find so much value being able to come and get an education and we see that it is such a valuable and tremendous thing because we had to work so hard beforehand to even be able to be here right now.”

Joseph Lipscombe
Nursing
Junior



“I feel like Billy Madison”

Christopher McRae
Information Technology
Junior

“It is a lot to take in, it is a totally different environment than where I came from. So a lot of adjusting. I haven’t been in a school type environment since high school, so like five years ago. I’m behind everyone else. I have to do extra work to keep up, and still maintain the grade point average I want. It is a little extra work, but I can handle it.”

James Gulliver
Information Technology
Freshman



ARMY JACKET



SAMUEL PRITCHARD-TORRES/THE BEACON



“I kind of did it the other way around. After high school I joined the service and now I am a student. As compared to leaving high school, joining a school for higher education and then joining the service. I feel like I have more life experience than your regular student and so one of the most difficult things is trying to relate to the younger generation.”

Erik Vidal
Communications
Junior

VETERANS DAY

Remember to thank veterans for serving our country

EYES ON THE EARTH



AMANDA JUNG

Years ago, I began to learn what it really meant to be a veteran of war.

At the end of my eighth grade year, my classmates and I visited historic Civil War battlefields and World War monuments. My history teacher only made one request of us while we were there; he told us if we saw a veteran, to shake their hand and thank them.

Thank them for bidding their normal

lives goodbye. Thank them for embracing the possibility of death so that our nation could succeed. Thank them for accepting that they might never see their families again.

A handshake was the least we could offer these selfless men and women.

It was surreal — we were standing on the battlefields where brave soldiers fought, and exploring places a textbook could easily gloss over.

Although I did not personally see any veterans there, the pathways were filled with people lost in a shuffle.

Some were crying while others silently reviewed the endless list of those who lost their

lives in battle.

I was in the presence of so many strangers, but I instantly felt like I knew

“

I remember clearly the Nazi armband he showed me. This was considered a trophy of war; something he took to remember America’s victory by.

these people because we were connected by one thing, veterans.

At that point in my life, while I was standing at the National World War II Memorial, I realized how much had been sacrificed for the good of our country. It’s safe to say that without these veterans, America

would have a different history, and for that matter, a different fate.

We all are connected

”

to a veteran somehow. It might be a grandfather who was a pilot during the World War or perhaps an ancestor who fought in the Civil War.

Once you stand on the battlefields once covered in blood, sweat and tears, it puts your life in perspective.

You want to sit

down with these people and understand their experiences. Of course, it’s not an easy thing to do for a veteran.

They have to sift through memories of war, many of which aren’t positive.

This was definitely the case for my grandfather, a pilot during World War II.

I had the honor of sitting down with him many years ago and talking to him about his experiences in the war.

Racking his brain was not an easy task considering how many years it had been since he served. But something I remember so clearly was the Nazi armband that he showed me.

This was considered a trophy of war; something

he took to remember America’s victory by.

Without these victories of dedication and bravery displayed by veterans, we wouldn’t be able to enjoy the same freedoms we have today.

If I could see my grandfather once last time, I would shake his hand in a heartbeat.

Amanda Jung is a contributing writer for FIU Student Media. Her column, Eyes on the Earth, is a commentary on current global environmental issues. For suggestions or comments, please contact Amanda at opinion@fiusm.com.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

FIU is dedicated to our student veterans

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



ISRAEL NAJARRO

The student veteran experience at college is something I feel is incredibly unique and which isn’t reaching its full potential.

The uniqueness comes from a shared experience over the span of our careers in the military which has given us certain skills that set us apart from our younger peers in the classroom.

These skills include task orientation, attention to detail, upstanding loyalty to a group, and the ability to take up a leadership position while providing purpose

and motivation regardless of the task.

The traits brought out of us through the military could be used to great benefit by colleges across the country but oftentimes aren’t for a variety reasons.

One reason comes from the nature of the military itself. It is truly a culture detached from that which it defends and many times when a veteran comes out of the military it’s difficult to reconnect with the newfound civilian world.

This happens a lot in college due to age discrepancy between the veteran and their peers and because of that disconnect the veteran finds it less attractive to take an active part in campus life.

That’s where student veterans

“

Veterans want to be engaged in their community so it’s up to us as student and faculty leaders to help facilitate the process.

”

organizations like ours are so needed because it provides that atmosphere of welcoming and understanding to allow a veteran a foundation to build off of and hopefully encourages them to give campus life a try and maybe they can find their niche to bring their experiences and knowledge

to benefit someone else.

Another reason comes from the culture of college itself which often fails to see the potential in their students and use a one size fits all approach that ignores the value of the veteran in particular.

It’s difficult for some teachers to recognize some student veterans as potential peers with information that could be vital to increasing the understanding of those around the classroom.

Additionally, the enrollment process at many universities is insufficient to connect veterans to services and organizations which they want to be a part of, depriving these groups of much needed expertise and input.

Deep down, veterans want to be engaged in their community

so it’s up to us as student and faculty leaders to help facilitate the process.

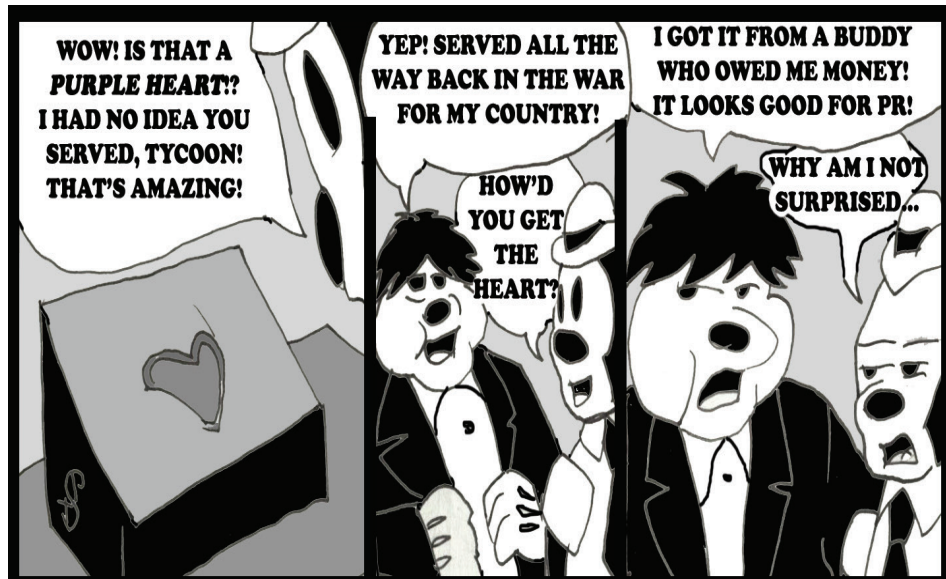
Fortunately, Florida International University has shown dedication to their veteran community.

They have sought out input from student veterans to develop best practices to ensure that our population has the resources and tools it needs to be successful in the classroom and beyond.

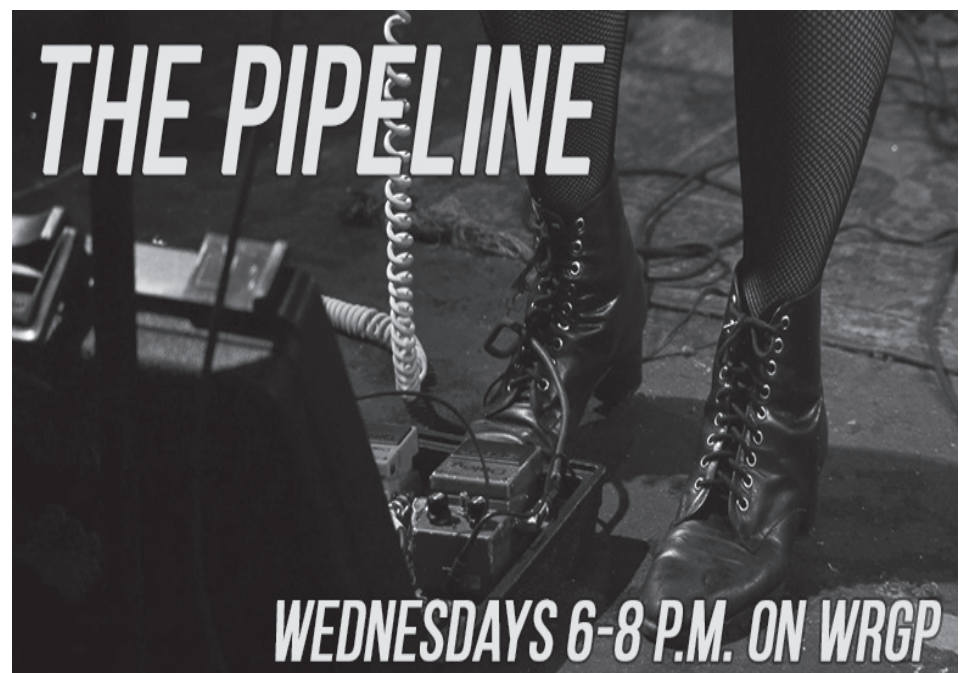
Our student veterans deserve no less and it is up to both sides to continue work towards providing our heroes the opportunity to reach their full potential while here at FIU.

Israel Najarro
President
Student Veteran Association

PURPLE HEART



SAMUAL PRITCHARD-TORRES/THE BEACON



Respect our veterans

Those who have selflessly served in the military are a considerable part of the University's population - many of them sit alongside us in class. As an editorial board, we feel that the student body generally lacks awareness about this special group among us. Veterans walk an untraditional path into higher education and as a result, their experience at the University will be a different one.

While some students struggle with time management, our veteran students struggle to adjust to the freedom and relaxed atmosphere of university life because the military is such a structured environment. As students, we also tend to be more aware of an older classmate; according to Michael Pischner, the director of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the average age of veterans on campus is 29.7.

"For a lot of veterans, they have kids that are the same age as the people they go into the class with and it is like 'I am taking this very seriously but you are not'," said Christopher Johnson, a senior studying information technology and who served in the Army. "It creates almost like a situation where you can be ostracized without even really thinking about it."

We implore you to understand the dynamic veteran students are facing on campus and in class. As students who have lived and grown in the country our peers have fought for, we take their sacrifices for granted.

We ask the FIU community and our fellow students to recognize their peers who have served and who have come to the University to continue to better themselves and find careers beyond tomorrow's Veteran's Day.

Whether you agree with the wars we've been a part of or not, these students' service to their country is a source of pride and a step the majority of us will never take. Now, these individuals are juggling work, sometimes families and their education, all while undergoing retraining of their entire lifestyles and psyche in order to come to classes.

The last thing they need is to be met with peers with a lack of compassion or gratitude.

Student Veterans grow up faster

MILLENNIAL TIMES



SOFIA SANCHEZ

As college students, stress to us is printing an assignment out, knowing we are going to be late, before sprinting across campus toward our next class to make it on time; stress to millennial soldiers is an entirely different concept.

We have never had to decide who lives and dies or had to push aside thoughts about the family of an enemy.

With deployment dates, nights spent sleeping on a cot and missions to complete, stress levels in combat zones are at an all-time high. Overseas, where they ensure our safety in the states, soldiers endure hardships that can be difficult for some to even imagine.

For many men and women, enlisting is a way to pay for school. After they have served their prescribed time nobly serving our country, veterans step onto campus with anxieties arguably lesser than those they felt on the battlefield, but anxieties nonetheless.

This is because what these millennial veterans would consider as stress is foreign to most students. They've seen bombs going off, have been shot at and have seen lethal fiery explosions. They're not so easily fazed by exams and upcoming due dates because they've known times much worse.

This doesn't mean they aren't nervous about these things because it's hard not to be, but they simply cannot relate to the hair-pulling, hyperventilating panic that most coffee-crazed students endure.

These veterans have seen true panic and danger, and the catalysts that typically cause the average student to freak out wouldn't leave them so rattled. They've seen more and experienced more than anyone who wasn't alongside them could ever fathom. I can't even begin to imagine the kind of experiences they've had.

Their time spent serving our country has given them more responsibility and rigidity, and has forced upon them a maturity that most of their classmates probably couldn't handle.

The constant struggle of millennials is wondering if they are "adult enough" to take on the daunting tasks that lie ahead. I can resonate with this concept because I'm habitually questioning whether or not I'm capable of a certain task.

It's this insecurity, I believe, that binds a generation, and millennial vets have been robbed of the opportunity to feel this.

They've had no other choice but to grow up, and grow up quickly, during their time overseas. They had to focus on getting themselves, and the people serving beside them, home safely. That has been their primary focus as they trek across sandy hills and through villages

seen on the news.

Upon a celebratory homecoming, it can also be difficult to try and fall back into rhythm with a group of people whose eyes bug out of their sockets at the sight of their to-do lists.

I know I've had this particular reaction to my assignments more often than not in the past few months.

Millennial veterans don't tread the uncertain line between childhood and adulthood the way their peers do, and therefore, are able to have a more profound outlook on life and enjoy the simple moments.

Millennial vets didn't have time to question whether or not they were ready to become adults, they were simply forced to dive head-first into that and all the responsibilities that entering the world entails.

Though they may be more grown up in those terms, one similarity that strictly bonds all millennials everywhere is the petulant question: What am I going to do with my future? And this is a universal form of stress that can be known to all.

Sofia Sanchez is a contributing writer for FIU Student Media. Her column, Millennial Times, is a commentary on social issues specifically pertaining to millennial readers. For suggestions or comments, please contact Sofia at opinion@fiusm.com

Veterans, face similar struggles as 'traditional' students

SOCIAL REFORM SPEAKS



MICHELLE KWONG

Whether they joined the military out of respect for their country or to help pay their higher education tuition fees in the future, veterans are welcomed into universities for their patriotic services.

FIU, for example, hosts The Veterans and Military Affairs website where student veterans can find information pertaining to state scholarships, FIU's

veteran mental health clinic, and other benefits that veterans are eligible to receive to fulfill their academic careers.

But is it enough to satisfy the struggles veterans face in student life? According to an article in military.com, current issues some veterans face are adapting into the college lifestyle, boredom and isolation from their peers.

Yet, aren't these issues what many newcomers feel when moving into a new atmosphere such as college? Don't most students gradually learn how to adapt to their society so they can live with ease throughout

their adult life?

Akeem Arthur, an army veteran and a senior majoring in chemistry, finds the services FIU offers veterans easy to find. However, Arthur recognizes that while these services are relatively easy to locate, getting approved for them is another story.

"The struggles veterans face is the initial processing of their educational benefits," Arthur said. "It takes time for the process to approve educational benefits."

Arthur feels that if the process could be expedited, it would be a benefit for students.

"It just takes time for somebody to mail them through. But if the documents can be automatically approved, then it would be quicker," Arthur said.

Relating to other students, Arthur said, is another difficulty he faces because of the age gap between him and the other college students. Arthur is 26 and the average student, he said, is usually in their early 20s.

I think the University does care about its veterans judging by the number of services offered to them.

Yes, there are times when

one experiences emotional struggles but finding friends we identify with or have hobbies to overcome emotional obstacles is part of life.

Veterans can join clubs to meet potential friends or visit a peer-to-peer mentoring to talk and have a connection with other veterans who are facing similar obstacles.

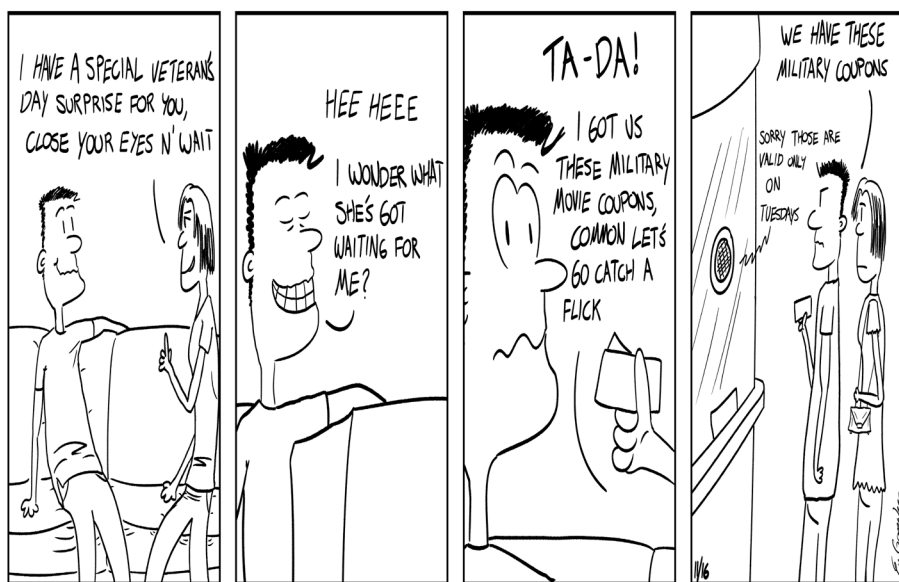
As for the issue Arthur and other veterans experience when it comes to getting approved for these benefits, I think the University should find a way to speed up the process because it's usually better to stop stressing over when the

benefits will be effective and would help prevent any sticky situations as a consequence that the benefits weren't processed fast enough.

Nevertheless, like every other student, veterans have their struggles too.

Michelle Kwong is a contributing writer for FIU Student Media. Her column, Social Reform Speaks, is a commentary on social justice. For suggestions or comments, please contact Michelle at opinion@fiusm.com.

VETERAN PERKS



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Veterans Day in sports: Honoring the holiday

KRISTEN'S
KORNER



KRISTEN KING

For all major sports franchises, Nov. 11 is an extremely important date because it celebrates veterans. It's a day to honor and remember those who have and are still serving in the United States Armed Forces.

Considering the stress that may come with serving the armed forces, many veterans enjoy watching sporting events as a good source of entertainment to help unwind and relax their mind.

There have been close relations between athletes and veterans because they tend to be hailed as heroes in their respective fields. Pat Tillman, the American football player who left the NFL to serve in the army after the 9/11 attacks, serves as the perfect example of this association.

As citizens, it's important to honor these brave men and women by recognizing Veterans Day. We follow the

example of those in the sports industry and join them in recognizing these heroes.

If you've ever noticed, during the commercials of game broadcasts, the major sport leagues always show quick clips of their players giving thanks to the armed forces for fighting to keep our freedom.

"I think it takes a special person and someone with passion for their country to serve in the military," said sophomore Ashley Leon. "It's always important to honor anyone who has chosen to put their life on the line for lives of people they don't even know."

To honor our veterans, the University closes both campuses for the observance of the holiday. FIU also provides benefits, both educational and domestic, for veterans and active duty members of the student body.

It's worth noting that a lot of the freedoms we enjoy today, notably attending college, have been fought for by our veterans.

"Even though it's not like other grand holidays, it

should still be treated as one," said University alumnus Raiesa Ali. "As long as there are men and women out there fighting for my freedom, then they should be celebrated and admired by everyone."

Regardless of the manner through which you observe this holiday, what matters is participation. This holiday is more personal to some than others, said Leon, but the respect should always be expressed.

"I have a good friend who is a marine and takes so much pride in what he does and who he is so I respect and applaud him for that," said Leon. "But even if you don't have a personal experience with veterans, we as citizens need to come together and show them that we appreciate what they have done."

Kristen King is a staff writer for FIUSM. Her column, Kristen's Korner, focuses on issues that affect students interested in sports. For questions, commentary or suggestions, email Kristen at kristen.king@fiusm.com.

Veteran seeks to 'share knowledge' with boxing lovers

PETER HOLLAND JR.
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In the two years they trained together at their local gym in North Miami, it wasn't until recently when Julian Martinez, former amateur boxer in FIU's boxing club, realized his training partner was a veteran. Martinez met Courtney "CJ" Jackson, a six-year Navy veteran, in a gym frequented by trainees from local universities.

"The relationship between me and CJ has always been a mutual respect" said Martinez. "I'm usually the first on our team to promote his fights within our inner team and gather ticket money for him."

Martinez says that he was not informed that Jackson was a vet, and eventually found out when Jackson was announced at one of their fights.

Jackson served in the Navy from 2006 through 2012. He traveled to Illinois, California, and served 10 months in Afghanistan. Looking back at his time service in the military, Jackson highly values Veterans Day.

"I met people that I will be friends with my whole life," said Jackson. "It means a lot. I've seen brothers falling for these freedoms that I exercise daily." For Martinez, honoring those who have served our country with a holiday is the least we can do.

"Veterans Day means a day of honor and love. To give thanks to those people who've contributed a service to our great country and even risk their lives when most people would duck and cover in that position," said Martinez. "I think they should do a lot more to celebrate like maybe a significant parade in all major cities or something. But if you look at it, all holidays just have one day, so I guess it's fair."

After getting out of the Navy, Jackson at one point was studying theater in Los Angeles, California, before being introduced to boxing at a local gym in Hollywood.

"I stayed with it and decided to go pro one random day," said Jackson. "It helps me stay calm and relax, evolve with my patients to another level, stay in shape of course and help others that love the sport by sharing knowledge."

Because the University and UM are in the same boxing program, Jackson wants to train with the students and give advice to them as well.

"I see CJ's hustle when he trains and it's inspiring," said Martinez. "Proves to me that if he can do it, I can do it because we come from the same program."

Jackson is currently studying biology at the University of Miami. Following his graduation in 2017, Jackson plans on going to medical school and becoming a surgeon.

Jackson does not have specific plans in celebrating Veterans Day, but does have words of encouragement to all the veterans, including the ones who are students.

"I'll first say thanks for their service," said Jackson. "And don't take anything or a day for granted."

BASKETBALL'S BACK

Basketball teams look forward to season opener on Veterans Day

PETER HOLLAND JR.
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With opening night being on Veterans Day, Anthony Evans and the men's basketball team has embraced having their first game on that day and takes pride in dedicating their opening night to the veterans who come to see the team play.

It also helps the fact that Evans had friends and relatives who served in the Navy for a long time, which makes it more special for the head coach.

"We have a lot of things that goes on in our lives and our veterans have done a great a job to make sure that we maintain the freedom and the rights that we have," said Evans. "It means a lot to play on Veterans Day, so we looking forward to a good game."

Last season, the team finished 13-19 (7-11 in C-USA) and was eliminated in the second round of the Conference USA tournament against University of Texas El-Paso. Evans will be going into his fourth year as head coach for the Panthers with 44-52 career record. He said he is looking forward to his team taking the next step in having its first winning season

under him.

"We're excited with the group that we have, returners who has some experience and played a lot last year," said Evans. "So we're looking to come in and be consistent and played the way that we have been playing every night and continue to build the program."

The Panthers will have huge shoes to fill in replacing their scoring leaders Daviyon Draper and Adrian Diaz, FIU's all-time leader in blocked shots.

"I don't think we can do it with just one person," said Evans. I think it's going to be a combination of players that has to make up for the loss of Adrian and the loss of Daviyon.

Women's basketball head coach Tiara Malcom will be going into her first season as head coach after the firing of Marlin Chinn. With last season finishing the year 5-26 (2-16 in C-USA), Malcom said she is confident to see the improvements from this year's team.

"I think the biggest thing for us is to try to be consistent and compete," said Malcom. "If we do that, more often than not we put ourselves in the position to be successful."

One of Malcom's challenges she wants to improve for her team is defense. FIU has recorded an average 72.7 points allowed against opponents last season, which was ranked last in C-USA. Malcom made

adjustments and changed concepts to improve other people with more of a scoring role, and

“

We are very proud of the people who represented our country because they gave us a chance to have all the opportunities that we have now,

Tiara Malcom
Head Coach
FIU Women's Basketball

”

on the Panther's defense.

"We had practices where we only do defensive stuff," said Malcom. "So for them to be on that mindset, this is the switch we are trying to make and for us to be successful, we have to hold people to a certain amount of points. And they have to commit themselves into the defensive end of the floor."

Majority of the players returned for the Panthers despite losing their leading scorer Taylor Shade. Malcom assigned different roles for each player. She said she wants to make sure her team is contributing in different ways.

"Even though we have some people that returned, some roles have changed, some people are looking to have a leadership role,

others being a teammate role," said Malcom.

Malcom, just like Evans, enjoys having tipoff on Veterans Day and takes pride in the holiday. Both of her parents served in the Air Force, so she said she is looking forward to dedicating that night to the military.

"We are very proud of the people who represented our country because they gave us a chance to have all the opportunities that we have now," said Malcom. "Hopefully with our play, this is our way to show and thank them for everything that they've done."

FIU's double header tipoff will be at 5 p.m. when the women's team will face University of Central Florida on Nov. 11. The men's team will follow after at 7 p.m. as they will face Florida Memorial University.