DSU recognized for its military friendliness

For the third time, Delaware State University is among the top 15 percent of colleges, universities and trade schools nationwide named to G.I. Jobs' Military Friendly Schools list, joining a select group of just over 1,700 institutions out of 12,000 VA-approved schools recognized in 2013 for the support, flexibility and value they offer to active duty military, veterans and their dependents.

What makes DSU most unique is that it has a dedicated Office of Veterans Affairs.

"It's one of the benefits we have that most universities don't," said Wendelin Henry, who as Veterans Affairs coordinator assists the more than 100 veteran, active duty, National Guard and Reserve, and military dependent students enrolled each semester with all aspects of their DSU journeys.

This includes everything from helping to make the application and registration process easier to assisting with understanding how military benefits may translate into college benefits to providing advocacy, coordinating services and encouraging involvement in campus activities.

Education benefits

For eligible military students or dependents, DSU's Office of Veterans Affairs offers personal attention in managing and administering education benefit programs, including Active Duty, the Post 9/11 Montgomery GI Bill, the Yellow Ribbon Program, Vocational Rehabilitation, Selected Reserves, and Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance.

At DSU, eligible military students who enroll are awarded six elective credits based on their discharge papers. DSU also recognizes the American Council on Education-recommended college credits for professional military education, training courses and occupational experience of service members and veterans.

Active duty military students receive in-state tuition, as do National Guard and Reserve members who are stationed in Delaware, Henry said.

DSU has entered an agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program of the Post 9/11 GI Bill. The University matches the VA up to 50 percent of unmet out-of-state tuition and fee charges for undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students eligible for Yellow Ribbon. Also under the Post 9/11 program, eligible military students attending DSU's VA-approved Flight School may currently receive up to $10,970 in tuition and fees per academic year.

Advocacy, counseling and activities

In addition to financial assistance, the Office of Veterans Affairs works with military students to encourage academic success, positive social interaction on campus and overall enhancement of their experience, making sure their distinctive needs are met while at DSU.

The office coordinates vocational, educational and professional counseling, evaluation of abilities and aptitudes, tutoring and rehabilitative services, and VA Work-Study opportunities available from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It initiates contact with military units and commanding officers on a student's behalf as needed. When a student is deployed, the Office of Veteran Affairs works up front to make sure the readmission process goes "as easy as possible" upon return, Henry said, helping with the transition back to civilian and University life.

Henry, herself a retired master sergeant with 21 years of service in the U.S. Air Force at Dover Air Force Base, said it can be a challenge bringing military students — many of whom are nontraditional students with outside lives and families — into campus activities.

Though academics are the main focus, the Office of Veteran Affairs tries to get students more involved socially through campus and community events. A military student organization, DSU FORCES, was started in Spring 2011.

The FORCES participated in and hosted the first National Roll Call of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom casualties in November 2011, calling the names of more than 6,000 dedicated service men and women.

The Office of Veterans Affairs has an open door policy. In her work with military students, Henry uses a holistic approach, aiming to help students full-circle by easing their transition from the military to a University setting and then continuing to assist during their journeys to graduation.

"I try to connect them with all of the services they need from the beginning ... and then follow them to make sure they are succeeding in their academic careers," she said.

- For more information about veteran services at DSU, contact Veterans Affairs coordinator Wendelin Henry at 302.857.6376 or whenry@desu.edu [1].

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