

## News Release

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### ***Combat veterans will talk about their experiences on campus during one-day summit***

RICHMOND—*We Are Virginia Veterans on Campus*, a one-day summit sponsored by the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, will feature a panel of combat veterans who have returned to the college classroom. The summit will be held on August 9, 2011 at the Virginia Military Institute.

“From the Front Lines to the Classroom,” scheduled from 10:30 to 11:45 a.m. will spotlight four veterans, one of whom is still active with the Virginia National Guard. The panelists will speak frankly about their experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan and the challenges of returning to schools not adequately prepared to support them and an environment sometimes better suited to students transitioning from high school rather than from real world life and death experiences.

Jonathan Hoggatt, a veteran of Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan, and a member of the Virginia National Guard, said, “My transition was horrible . . . I went from Iraq to campus . . . having to deal with a bunch of kids who were not mature . . . It threw me for a loop.” Despite his experiences, Jonathan has been instrumental in changes at his university, including developing a student veterans organization and establishing Omega Delta Sigma, a national honors fraternity for veterans.

Sarah Bonner, an Air Force Veteran who deployed to Iraq, said, “It’s really hard to return to a campus where people don’t know who the veterans are. Some faculty are anti-military and anti-veteran and they don’t mind saying it in class. Persons with disabilities are ridiculed, and that includes veterans.” Sarah says the key is to find the one person or organization willing to help. Her help came from the campus certifying official whom she refers to as “a second mother.” “Anything that I need, she goes out and

gets.” Sarah is also an agent for change. She is working to establish a student veterans organization that will be the first in Virginia to be chartered on a community college campus.

Vivian Greentree, Director of Research and Policy for Blue Star Families, the national organization for military families, is a Navy veteran and military spouse, Vivian utilized her GI Bill benefits to attend graduate school and is currently writing her dissertation for her Ph.D. in Public Administration and Urban Policy. She also is a contributing writer to several military media outlets and has been asked for input and analysis for other outlets such as WebMD, Care.com, and the Defense Centers of Excellence.

Allen Nelson retired in 2006 from the Navy as a machinist mate second class after 20 years of service. For a year he searched for employment opportunities but was unsuccessful. He decided additional education would improve his employment prospects so he enrolled in St. Leo University, seeking an undergraduate degree in criminal justice. He received his B.A. from St. Leo in 2011, graduating summa cum laude and serving as class valedictorian. He is currently enrolled in a master’s degree program; upon completion, he will start teaching criminal justice for Saint Leo and pursue a Ph.D.

The panel will be moderated by Beverly Covington, Policy Analyst, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

For more information about the conference or to register, go to [www.WeAreVirginiaVeterans.org](http://www.WeAreVirginiaVeterans.org), the website of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program.

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