**Rowan College at Burlington County (NJ)**

Rowan College at Burlington County submits this Project plan for Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Support grant, intended to have a significant impact on the capacity of the institution to support, retain, and ultimately graduate veteran students. The attached narrative establishes the intentions to utilize this grant for capacity building, as well as the project plan for developing the same.

This project is in two parts. First, the project will focus on establishing both physical and virtual veterans centers. Each will serve the veteran population by establishing an intentional presence focused specifically and exclusively on the needs of students, with spaces for tutoring, academic support, collaboration, and support for psychological needs. Second, the project will focus on establishing institutional best practices for serving students. Within the spaces described above, veterans will experience enhanced case management support to encourage and support their retention and graduation. Recognizing that the veteran population at RCBC is strong academically, the focus will be on supporting veterans in overcoming non-academic hurdles to their success, and to normalizing and institutionalizing these supports.

**Forsyth Technical Community College (NC)**

Forsyth Technical Community College (Forsyth Tech) is a comprehensive, two-year public institution in the Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina that will establish a Center of Academic Excellence for Veteran Student Success on its main campus at 2100 Silas Creek Parkway in Winston-Salem. The campus is next to an N.C. National Guard Armory, and Forsyth Tech will recruit students from members of the three Guard units that schedule training there.

The project will create the Center of Academic Excellence for Veteran Student Success as the community hub and point of contact for veteran students to receive academic advising, personal counseling, financial aid guidance and other services under a holistic model of wrap- around support. The project goal is to increase enrollment, persistence and completion of veteran students and establish physical infrastructure and policies to sustain the model after funding ends. Measurable objectives of the three-year project are to double veteran student enrollment; increase semester-to-semester persistence by 5%; and increase the completion rate by 50%.

The project will foster the award of credit based on military experience; open a website portal for current and prospective students; create a first-year experience course for veteran students; and denote veteran students as their own cohort for data collection and analysis.

Forsyth Tech seeks $449,203. Grant funding will enable Forsyth Tech to renovate and furnish 933 square feet of office and common space to be the center’s physical presence; hire a full-time coordinator of veteran student services and activities at the center; develop student recruitment and marketing material; and to have an external evaluator provide formative and summative assessments. The impact will be veteran and military-connected students thrive at the college; staff and faculty adapt behavior and practice to enable veteran student success; and Forsyth Tech demonstrates ways for veteran students to succeed at a public community college.

**Pensacola State College (FL)**

Pensacola State College’s (PSC) service area, where military veterans make up almost 16.5% of the civilian population 18 years and over, has a higher concentration of veterans than both the state (9%) and the nation (7.3%). This project will establish the PSC Veteran Student Success Center (VSSC), increasing capacity and improving upon services currently provided. Barriers will be identified and removed, and the appropriate academic and related support services will be provided to the target population. Systems will be reviewed to ensure expedience and accuracy of appropriate referrals including but not limited to academic supports (e.g., tutoring), and supportive services such as financial aid, disability and mental health services, and food pantry.

The overarching goal of the project is to increase veteran student success in postsecondary education, by increasing the postsecondary enrollment, and subsequent persistence and completion of veteran students. Additional measurable objectives include transfers for Associate in Arts students and award of industry recognized certifications for workforce program students.

The PSC administration and staff are strongly committed to this project and our veteran student population, and embrace the project goals, objectives and mission in creating a nurturing learning community for veteran students. With this project, PSC will establish a single point of contact for all veteran students, the Coordinator/Project Director, who will be supported by a robust and engaged Veteran Student Support Team.

Pensacola State College’s proposed project, the Veterans Student Success Center, addresses the Absolute Priority and the Competitive Preference Priorities:

* CPP #1: Applications from New Potential Grantees
* CPP #2: Spurring Investments in Qualified Opportunity Zones

**Las Positas College (CA)**

With the initiation of its veterans program in 2009, and continued effort to increase services and programs for student Veterans, Las Positas College (LPC) is poised to better support the student success of both the increasing enrollment of veterans and the growing population of *underrepresented* veterans, defined as students holding identities from historically marginalized communities. For example, the LPC Veteran population has grown from 27% Latino in 2015 to 34% in 2019. African American student veteran enrollment has plateaued at 6%, and women veteran enrollment has risen from 16% in 2015 to 20% in 2019. Funding from this grant will allow LPC to expand existing services and develop new interventions to assist these veterans and become a true Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success.

The proposed project goals of Mission S.E.R.V.E (Success, Excellence, and Retention for Veterans in Education) include working with faculty and staff to develop an *early alert system* to assist veterans who are struggling due to the immediate transition to distance learning spurred by the pandemic. Fall 2019, data indicated that almost 100 student veterans withdrew from their full- time enrolled classes. Project goals will also include aligning existing campus resources and adding new services to better support veterans; offering internship and career pathway programs in partnership with organizations in our serving area; building alliances with local veteran non- profit agencies and military bases; offering training for faculty and staff to better assist veteran students; improving veteran academic success metrics; and offering annual all-veteran English courses. LPC has an excellent institutional infrastructure to fulfill the project goals, and a strong commitment from the leadership to ensure the sustainability of the program once the grant concludes.

**Pennsylvania College of Technology (PA)**

Pennsylvania College of Technology – the state’s premier technical college – proposes to expand and improve its current support for veteran students by establishing a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CEVSS). With the formal establishment of a CEVSS, the College will increase the already significant resources it provides to the 201 veteran students currently enrolled. With support from the Department of Education through the CEVSS program, Penn College will introduce innovations such as veteran-specific first-year orientation and advising, veteran-student sections of the First-Year Experience seminar, and dedicated career services support. Thus, the College has established a comprehensive plan for providing for the academic, social, financial, and physical needs of veteran students. This program will serve as a model for other institutions, particularly those that are focused on providing a solid technical undergraduate education to the men and women who have served our country.

*Through the planned activities, this proposal meets the requirements for the absolute priority and both competitive preference priorities as established by the Department of Education.*

Furthermore, to address the required performance indicators, Penn College commits to the continuation of all grant activities beyond the funding period and has structured the project budget to fully absorb any additional costs into the operating budget by the end of the three-year project timeline. External project evaluation will be provided by the Executive Director of Assessment, Research and Planning, and the proposed objectives and activities are designed

to support increased enrollment, retention, persistence, graduation, and employment rates for Penn College veteran students.

The project team, led by Project Director and CEVSS Coordinator, Mr. Chet Beaver, MSG, USA, Retired, has identified four project objectives: 1) To improve veteran student success through expanded and coordinated support services to meet the academic, social, financial, and physical needs of veteran students by establishing a CEVSS at Penn College; 2) To improve veteran access by increasing new veteran student enrollment by 30% over three years (by Fall 2024) with a target of 260 enrolled veteran students, an increase of 60 students over the approximately 201 currently enrolled; 3) To improve veteran retention by increasing fall-to-fall persistence rates from a combined 69% to 71% of enrolled veteran students and increasing the rate of veterans attaining associate’s degrees within three years from 47% to 60% and bachelor’s degrees within six years from 50% to 60%; 4) To successfully transition veterans from college to career by ensuring that 98% of veterans are working full time in a position related to their majors or are enrolled in a continuing education program within six months of graduation.

In support of these objectives, the planned activities include hiring a full-time Veteran Support Specialist; creating a veteran-specific recruitment plan; creating a Veteran Advisory Council; creating a Veteran Education Support Team; implementing an effective data collection process; implementing an outreach and partnership program with community agencies; establishing a military experience focused credit transfer system; increasing training of the mental health staff to better meet the needs of veteran students; improving the military deployment process; providing special transition services for veterans, including veteran-specific orientation, first-year advising, and First-Year Experience courses; and developing veteran- specific career services programming with dedicated staff.

Penn College has never received support from the CEVSS program, and the historical enrollment region includes five counties that contain 10 Qualified Opportunity Zones. The proposed activities include increased outreach to veterans in these areas.

**University of South Florida (FL)**

The University of South Florida (USF) has been recognized as a national leader in providing transition support and educational opportunities to help military-connected students maximize the use of their Veterans Administration (VA) educational benefits. Since 2010, The Office of Veteran Success (OVS) at USF has implemented a holistic program that provides admission support, vet-to-vet tutoring, veteran-specific scholarships, and career readiness support for military-connected students using VA benefits. However, the loss of revenue in the State of Florida due to COVID-19 has resulted in a $35 million budget reduction for the University of South Florida. This has made it extremely difficult to meet the growing needs of our military-connected students. Additional budget constraints related to the mandated 2020 merger of all USF campuses (Tampa, Sarasota-Manatee, and St. Petersburg) into a consolidated tri-campus have resulted in increased need for veteran support services for many students that are facing financial and academic challenges for during the COVID pandemic.

To continue supporting students’ needs, USF must develop a coordinated, tri-campus outreach process that provides tailored social, educational, and career supports specifically designed for military- connected students across USF’s tri-campus. USF proposes an alignment of the tri-campus veteran offices under a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success to implement the following goals and objectives:

1) Develop and implement a #OneUSF approach that benefits all military-connect students across USF’s tri-campus network;

2) establish a coordinated outreach effort across the tri-campus using existing staff members to support students with ongoing wellness, financial, or other needs due to challenges associated with their transition into the college environment or COVID-19;

3) increase the conversion of military-connected students who are listed as active (eligible to enroll for courses), but not presently enrolled in courses;

4) implement a targeted recruitment effort to increase the enrollment of military-connected students who reside in Qualified Opportunity Zones (QOZs) surrounding USF; and

5) utilizing existing staff and community support to expand economic and academic opportunities for underrepresented students and those military-connected students residing in QOZs.

**Mt Hood Community College (OR)**

Mt Hood Community college (MHCC) is a two-year, public, nonresidential community college located in Multnomah County, Oregon. MHCC’s main campus houses a Veterans Services Offices (VSO) with a mission to serve veterans and their family members with exceptional service and support to help foster a complete educational experience at MHCC and transition to work upon completion of their educational goals. Veterans are more likely than the average American to have earned a high school diploma, but less likely to have completed a college degree. To move the dial on this metric, enrollment of student veterans and support for enrolled student veterans must increase. MHCC’s institutional data confirms that enrolled veterans are more likely to need developmental education and tutoring and withdraw at higher rates, indicating a strong need for customized and personalized services.

To meet these needs, MHCC proposes to establish a Center for Excellence for Veterans Student Success (CEVSS) that features a model program approach that is evidence-based and adapted from a successful TRIO Student Support Services program that improves academic outcomes (persistence, retention, GPA, and graduation) for smaller student populations at the college. Engaging with Veteran students in a space built by veterans for Veterans is a crucial step to encouraging more veterans to self-identify, access their benefits, and utilize support services designed to ensure successful transition to employment and life after enlistment. To that end, MHCC’s CEVSS addresses the absolute priority and both competitive preference priorities, through an integrative and comprehensive approach for a NEW center, named MHCC Veteran’s Service Center (VSC) that features a model program and all components noted in the absolute priority, and includes the provision of services in qualified opportunity zones.

MHCC’s new VSC plan includes direct services to Veteran students: Academic tutoring; Advising on course selection to reduce time to completion; Financial aid assistance and advising including military benefits and scholarship, Assistance with completing college, financial aid and other applications and forms; Life skill and transition coaching including economic and financial literacy, mental health services and other forms; Intensive advising including regular connections based the students need; Referrals to community service organizations for non-academic support such as housing and solutions to food insecurity; Structure study sessions; Building peer relationships through mentoring; Transfer options; and Mentoring. The overarching goals are to

(1) increase capacity and serve higher numbers of Veteran students, particularly those from underrepresented populations, with comprehensive, integrated academic, and other support services improving their academic goal achievement and (2) foster a Veteran-friendly campus culture to mitigate Veteran students perceptions of a negative reception. The proposed project has the following intended outcomes:

* Comprehensive, integrated, specialized supports are provided by the VSC by June 30, 2022 (Goal 1) including a function of annual review and continuous improvement.
* 152 Veteran students will be actively engaged in VSC services (Goal 2) by June 30, 2024.
* Veteran Student success will increase by 3% each for the following measures by June 30, 2024 (Goal 1): Retention (fall-to-fall), Persistence (fall-to-spring), Graduation.
* Veteran students demonstrating academic need (warning/probation/ withdrawal) will decrease by at least 4 percentage points by June 30, 2024.
* At least 50 faculty, staff and administration will participate in focused dialogue and/or professional development each year by June 30, 2024.

**Green River College (WA)**

Green River College is a public community college in western Washington State. It is accredited by the U.S. Department of Education and has a signed, valid Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Department of Defense. Green River College proposes to found a ***Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CEVSS)*** to develop model programs that will support veteran students’ success in postsecondary education by coordinating services to address their academic, financial, physical, and social needs.

**OBJECTIVES:** By the end of the grant period, the project will increase veteran students’ annual enrollment from 605 to 755 students receiving VA educational benefits; year-to-year persistence from 55% to 70%; and overall rate of credential completion from 48% to 65%.

**ACTIVITIES:** The project will improve Green River College’s ability to (1) orient veteran students to campus; (2) build veteran students’ financial management skills and economic self- sufficiency; (3) maximize credits earned for prior experience; (4) engage veteran students in campus life; and (5) keep veteran students on track for their career and educational goals. These will incorporate all of the activities required by the ***CEVSS*** program.

**OUTCOMES:** The project will achieve long-term outcomes such as improving veteran students’ understanding and satisfaction regarding College policies, procedures, and services; their understanding and use of financial aid, and overall financial proficiency; and their receipt of academic credit for skills and experience gained in military service. The project will reduce the number of veteran students who academically struggle or must interrupt their studies to resolve non-academic challenges.

All of the proposed activities are associated with objectives to measure their ongoing performance, for quality control and process improvement; and their ultimate impact, to identify effective, cost-efficient practices to replicate elsewhere. This project will address the Absolute Priority and both Competitive Preference Priorities for the FY2020 ***CEVSS*** grant competition. Green River has a successful record of executing grant-funded projects, including four FIPSE awards (#P116B011622, P116Z090190, P116K120007, and P116K140011).

**Norco College (CA)**

Norco College (NC) has been serving veteran students since 2010, when it was approved by the California Community Colleges System as Riverside Community College District’s third accredited college. Norco College is located in Southern California’s Inland Empire region (Riverside and San Bernardino Counties), which is home to nearly a quarter of a million veterans—the eighth largest veterans’ population in the U.S. Over the past ten years, there has been an influx of veterans who have returned to the region as the U.S. has pulled troops out of Afghanistan and Iraq. As veterans have returned home, many have made the decision to start or return to higher education within community college systems in an effort to ease their return to civilian life. In 2010, Norco College enrolled 50 veterans; in Fall 2020, 302 students on campus self-identified as veterans. To support this increase in student veterans, Norco College established a Veterans Resource Center (VRC) to offer a coordinated approach to providing student support services for student veterans. The VRC provides assistance to veterans with accessing their VA education benefits, registering for courses, and applying for financial aid.

Working with student veterans on campus, Norco College found that many veterans who enroll in college post-service do so without proper academic preparation or the transitional knowledge necessary to be successful in academia, which includes obtaining credit for prior learning (CPL). Veterans may not know about CPL or find that while their military training may earn them some college credit, it often does not provide credit toward an actual degree or certificate. Many veterans become frustrated by the lack of progress towards goal completion and may stop-out, or drop-out, altogether.

As such, NC is pursuing a Department of Education Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success Program (CEVSSP) that will address veterans’ needs through a four-pronged approach that includes: (1) expanding veteran student support services; (2) completing the Veteran Self-Service Function of the Military Articulation Platform (MAP), a cloud-based system that allows Norco evaluators and faculty to match military training with college courses and give veterans the college credit they deserve) at NC; (3) configuring MAP to match veterans’ CPL to programs offered at NC; and (4) using MAP as a veteran recruitment tool. Norco College’s CEVSSP will support veteran student success in postsecondary education by coordinating services to address the academic, financial, physical, and social needs of veteran students.

Through these activities, NC’s CEVSSP will: (1) strengthen the capacity of the Veterans Resource Center to support veteran student success through credit for prior learning and the military articulation process and (2) improve veteran student success. The first goal will maximize credit for prior learning, decrease the time to completion, reduce the cost of education, and increase the enrollment of veterans at Norco College. The second goal will increase veteran students’ success rates, increase fall-to-fall persistence rates, increase GPA, and increase the number of external partnerships to offer veterans additional support services outside of the Norco College campus.

**Concord University (WV)**

Concord University Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CU CEVSS) Abstract: Concord University (CU), a public, career-focused liberal arts institution located in rural southern West Virginia, has a long, rich tradition of supporting members of the military and veterans. Serving one of the poorest regions of the nation with only limited resources available has been challenging. CU seeks funding to create a vital CEVSS to serve as a comprehensive veteran support service center on campus. The proposal addresses the absolute priority and the competitive preference priorities. The overall goals are to increase veteran enrollment, improve veteran academic success, and increase veteran post-graduation outcomes. To achieve these, CU will centralize holistic veteran support services in the CEVSS and substantially increase and improve outreach to local veterans. Services will include, but are not limited to, wrap-around veteran support—academic, financial, physical/emotional, and social support—through individual Action Plans, equipment to assist those with disabilities, career planning, an early alert system, an updated veterans’ lounge/computer lab, and referrals to on- and off-campus help. A Veteran Support Team (VST) comprised of a variety of staff across campus will regularly review campus processes for roadblocks and work closely with the CEVSS Coordinator to ensure veterans have appropriate support to navigate challenges that arise. Outcomes of these activities include the increase of veteran enrollment by 100% of baseline over the three-year grant period, the increase of veteran retention by one percentage point each of the three years of funding, the increase of graduation rates one percentage point each year, and the increase of veteran alumni engagement and veterans entering jobs within chosen career fields or graduate schools.

**Florida State College at Jacksonville (FL)**

Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) proposes to fill a critical gap of postsecondary services for the student veteran population within North Florida, specifically in the College’s service area of Duval and Nassau counties. The **large number of service members choosing the FSCJ service area as their end-of-duty residence** and the **need for integrated postsecondary services for veterans** necessitates the establishment and expansion of a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success at Florida State College at Jacksonville. FSCJ’s Center, entitled the *Military and Veterans Service Center* (MVSC), will identify and serve at least 350 veteran participants per year (1,050 duplicated) by coordinating services to address the academic, financial, physical and social needs of veteran students. The additional academic and counseling supports offered to students through the proposed project will enhance the student experience beyond the scope of services currently being offered by FSCJ, which we believe will lead to greater retention and completion rates for eligible program participants. **The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the educational experiences of millions of college students around the country, including for students who are military veterans.** The project team has designed targeted and continued support for student veterans due to these disruptions. This proposal addresses the **Absolute Priority** as well as **Competitive Preference Priorities 1 and 2**. *MVSC* targeted activities include: offering individualized personal or mental health counseling as needed; establishing a dedicated space/facilities to create a true “Center” on campus; solidifying our Student Veterans of America chapter; strengthening our tracking of veteran students utilizing National Student Clearinghouse and the Florida Education Training and Placement Information Program (FETPIP); installing vet-specific assessment software and utilizing smartphone mindfulness intervention apps; establishing a mentoring program; increasing student veteran usage of virtual academic resources and campus-based tutoring services; creating an on-going internal outreach campaign with published articles, college-wide email blasts, digital signage and social media presence; developing an external outreach campaign including recruitment events with Jacksonville’s Qualified Opportunity Zones; veteran serving agencies, the VA, local bases, service organizations, and military job fairs, etc.; establishing a technology-loaner program for veterans; dissemination and on-going communication regarding the program for faculty and staff including creation of a Vets Student Support Team (VSST), a *Vets 101* newsletter, emails, workshops and presentations. The following are performance measures for the *MVSC* project:

**Goal 1:** The extent to which the project is institutionalized at the end of the project period

**Outcome A:** Sustainability and institutionalization including increased growth and demand of

the *FSCJ Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success.*

**Goal 2:** Increase enrollment, persistence, and completion rates of veteran students

**Outcome A: *Enrollment -*** The number of student veterans enrolling in certificate, associate’s

and/or bachelor’s degree programs at FSCJ will increase by an **average five percent (5%) enrolling annually** during the project period.

**Outcome B: Persistence – Fifty-five percent (55%) of students enrolled will persist** from one academic year to the next based on Fall to Fall retention rates.

**Outcome C: *Completion*** - The program will support at least a **forty-four percent (44%) graduation rate** among program participants.

**Outcome D: *Transfer* – 8% of participants** served each year will graduate with an associate degree and continue through FSCJ bachelor’s programs or will transfer to a university with an associate’s degree within four (4) years.

**Northern Virginia Community College (VA)**

The application seeks support to establish a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CEVSS) on the Annandale Campus of Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) to provide a single point of contact to coordinate comprehensive support services for veteran students. The NOVA CEVSS project will establish a comprehensive veteran support team, including representative from the offices within the college responsible for admission, registration, financial aid, veteran benefits, academic advising, student health, personal or mental health counseling, career advising, disabilities services, and any other office that may provide support to veteran students on campus.

The goal of the NOVA CEVSS is to improve veteran students’ enrollment, persistence, retention, and completion.

**Eligibility**

* The NOVA Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success is open to all student veterans;
* Honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces; and,
* Living in a Qualified Opportunity Zone.

**Costs**

Requested Grant Funds:

The grant application requests $446,224

**Sustainability**

To sustain the program beyond the Department of Education CEVSS Grant, efforts will be made to work with NOVA’s Educational Foundation to secure external funding dedicated to providing scholarships to veteran student to help support enrollment, retention, persistence and completion. Moreover, veteran programming will be institutionalized in the Office of Military and Veteran Services at the conclusion of the grant period, which will provide continuity of support services to veteran students.

**Indiana Institute of Technology (IN)**

Indiana Institute of Technology (Indiana Tech) is a comprehensive, private, not-for- profit, four-year university located in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Indiana Tech proposes the creation of a Virtual Veterans Center (VVC), an online one-stop Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CEVSS) to improve the enrollment, persistence, completion, and career attainment and career persistence of student veterans. The project meets each of the five requirements of the Absolute Priority as defined by the program legislation, and Competitive Preference Priorities 1 and 2. The project will serve an estimated 1,575 undergraduate student veterans. The University’s core purpose is to provide career-focused, professional programs of [higher](https://www.indianatech.edu/about/our-mission/) [education.](https://www.indianatech.edu/about/our-mission/) Indiana Tech offers associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees, as well as undergraduate and graduate certificates. The institution has 19 [locations](https://cps.indianatech.edu/locations/) throughout Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky and is a leader in online education with over 40 such programs. Indiana Tech has been recognized as a Military Friendly® School for nine straight years and participates in the [Yellow Ribbon Program](https://www.yellowribbon.mil/) through the VA Chapter 33 Post-9/11 G.I. Bill. In fall 2020, the University served 620 veterans and active military. Nearly 90% of student veterans and active military students at Indiana Tech are considered online students.

The proposed VVC has five goals: **(1)** strengthen Indiana Tech’s capacity to provide responsive and excellent service to student veterans; **(2)** improve the enrollment of student veterans in Indiana Tech degree programs; **(3)** improve the retention of student veterans in Indiana Tech degree programs; **(4)** improve the 150% of normal time graduation rate of student veterans at Indiana Institute of Technology; and **(5)** strengthen student veteran career attainment and retention in employment. Measurable objectives focus on enrollments, retention, degree completion rates, expansion of faculty and staff veteran-based cultural competencies, and career attainment and career persistence rates.

Indiana Tech has identified the following key strategies, which will provide the blueprint for the Virtual Veterans Center: (1) adapt wraparound academic and student support services such as tutoring, advising, mental health counseling, financial aid counseling and financial literacy into a virtual platform leveraging the Indianatech.edu portal and enhance these services specifically to the online veteran learner; (2) ramp up persistence and completion efforts through a student veteran success advisor to provide personalized intrusive advisement services, success coaching for improved engagement, and direct linkages to other internal and external services— both online and face-to-face; (3) develop and implement a comprehensive synchronous and asynchronous online orientation for student veterans that will include live interaction with one of the University’s military and veteran services representatives, as well as “click and go” modularized content broken out by topic area; (4) build a worldwide online virtual veterans’ student community; (5) through cross-referral partnerships (including online links to services) with Indianapolis-based Operation Job Ready Veterans (OJRV), INvets, Hire Heroes USA, and Still Serving Vets, provide student veterans with a full suite of virtual career assessment, development, and placement services and increase post-graduation employment levels and job satisfaction; and (6) increase the cultural competency of University staff and faculty regarding the needs of student veterans through Operation Green Zone training.

The project adds to the body of research by examining how online financial literacy training tailored toward student veterans impacts retention and completion rates. The project will also demonstrate the effect of a virtual student veteran success advisor on providing enhanced academic and engagement supports for student veterans.

**Mississippi Valley State University (MS)**

In the fall of 2017, Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU) introduced a new model for the oversight and administration of the enrollment management (EM) function. This model consists of three core functions: EM Steering Committee, EM Committee, and three sub-committees (Retention, Recruitment & Marketing & Scholarship). Most importantly is the development of a cabinet-level steering committee, which is responsible for maintaining oversight of the University’s enrollment management activities. MVSU proposes the development of a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CEVSS), which will utilize a comprehensive enrollment management approach to veteran recruitment, enrollment, matriculation, and graduation. To meet the holistic needs of this vulnerable population, MVSU proposes to develop a model whereby a single point of contact works with the population to connect them with the resources needed to support the academic and social needs of these students. MVSU will do so by 1) identifying a single point of contact (Veteran Student Success Coordinator) that works with the various entities on campus (Veteran Student Support Team) to coordinate activities such as academic support, faculty advising, social engagements, etc.; 2) vet-to-vet peer mentorship program; 3) academic support through an intrusive advising model; 4) specialized career services and planning; 5) enrollment coordination through targeted recruitment, financial aid, and financial literacy counseling; and, 6) the implementation of a data collection and analysis process to assist with monitoring veteran student success to include monitoring the rates of veteran student enrollment, persistence, and completion.

**Riverside Community College (CA)**

Riverside City College (RCC) is a two-year community college in Riverside County, California. Riverside is located approximately 60 miles east of Los Angeles in the rapidly growing Inland Empire region. Currently, there are over 30,000 students enrolled at RCC. Our campus is designated a Minority Serving Institution, with more than 60% of our students being Hispanic. The college enrolls more than 1000 veterans annually, which marks a more than 400% increase in the veteran population over the past five years. Our veteran population is comprised of a high percentage of low-income, and first generation students. Like our college student body, the majority group are Hispanic veterans. RCC has an exceptionally high proportion of female veterans (40.5%) as compared to national, annual percent of women in active service (~16%).

RCC promotes a student-centered, equity-focused service model. Students are given the opportunity to participate in campus governance, and administrators, faculty and staff strive to meet students’ needs whether they be academic, personal, or financial. Nonetheless, with such a significant population of students in need of support, RCC does not have the resources to provide the depth and breadth of services our students deserve. Our veteran population in particular, has unique support needs due to having very different life experiences and educational backgrounds than the majority of RCC students. Our veterans are more likely to suffer from post-combat mental health problems, are older and often have familial and employment responsibility, and most have had some college level education while in military service. However, our veterans still struggle with their academic goal achievement, which is reflected in low levels of graduation and transfer.

RCC proposes a model program to expand our veteran services to become a national Center of Excellence. Numerous foundational investments and long-term commitments have already been made by upper administration, including expansion into a dedicated space that is nearly three times the size of the current support office. New staff have also been added to the existing veteran center. The model program will have the capacity to serve our entire veteran population with comprehensive wrap-around support services, and substantially expand both internal and external programs and institutional collaboration to benefit the veteran population. The primary focus is to provide guidance and support for students to navigate and effectively manage academic, personal, and financial obstacles that impede their academic success. RCC with create ***A Place to Call Home*** for our veteran students and work to transform the campus climate into a national model and destination campus for individuals with military experience—both student and employee.

RCC’s application has comprehensively responded to the Absolute Priority and to both Competitive Preference Priorities.

**Azusa Pacific University (CA)**

A four-year, accredited, comprehensive university with a current enrollment of over 9,500 students, Azusa Pacific University (APU) is a designated Hispanic Serving Institution and Yellow-Ribbon, Military Friendly School ranking in the top 15% of veteran-friendly colleges in the nation. Main APU campus is located 26 miles northeast of Los Angeles in one of the most culturally diverse regions in the nation. Additionally, APU has seven regional campuses with two of those located in Qualified Opportunity Zones. The veteran and military connected (MC) population at APU has consistently increased over the past five years, reaching 516 students in 2019-20. The current enrollment is 384 students with more expected to enroll in spring 2021.

Presently, 33% of the veteran and military connected population at APU identify as Hispanic and over 60% identify as students of color.

APU proposes **establishing a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success** (CEVSS) as a single point of contact to provide MC students augmented transition, academic, financial, emotional, and social support which in turn will increase enrollment, persistence, and completion rates in veteran students. APU is committed to have this single point of contact **institutionalized by the end of the project**. The Center will use an internal/student-oriented model program which will aim to facilitate - at three specific junctures - a multifaceted process of effectively supporting MC students. First, military connected students must obtain accurate information and make timely decisions *before* enrolling in the college or university of their choice. Second, they must know how and where to access critical services *during* the time they are enrolled. And third, they must know how to prepare for life and careers *after* college. With these three phases in mind, APU has conceptualized a seamless, comprehensive program that will increase MC students’ access to higher education, provide first- and second-year support services that augment their personal and academic success, and prepare upper-division students for a civilian career that follows their graduation. A **Program Coordinator will be hired** with primary responsibility to coordinate this new model program. Within its first year of operation, CEVSS will do a baseline evaluation and identify the services that need to be initiated, improved, or expanded. A **Veteran Student Support team** will be created to provide timely and effective access (face-to-face and virtual) to services. The CEVSS program coordinator will **monitor the rates of enrollment, persistence, and completion** and implement an early alert system.

Additionally, the CEVSS team will make significant efforts to support the MC students on our regional campuses. The CEVSS, in collaboration with APU’s admissions office, will increase the number of activities targeted to Regional Center military connected students by 30%. By year two (2022-23) of the new model program, the goal is to reduce the *attrition*, that is the number of MC students who fail to return, by 25%. For the 2022-23 entering cohort of MC students, the goal is to achieve a first-to-second year *retention* rate of 85% - five percentage points higher than the general transfer retention rate. The enhanced program here will provide MC students at APU new levels of support from day one of attending APU leading to their academic success.

This proposal addresses the Absolute Priority, including all required activities. Competitive Preference Priority 1 is met as APU has not received a grant under this program. Finally, three of our campuses are in Qualified Opportunity Zones (06037404201, 06071012400, 06037212410), thus meeting Competitive Preference Priority 2.