SUNY Empire State College
Announces New Graduate Certificate in Veterans Services

Certificate program is a national model

By David Henahan, Director of Communications

President Alan R. Davis has announced that the college now offers an online Advanced Graduate Certificate in Veterans Services.

The certificate program, offered through the college’s School for Graduate Studies, is designed to provide professionals with additional education and skills to meet the needs of veterans in accessing available social services such as health care, education, employment and housing.

“The effects veterans experience as a result of war are as old as human conflict and warfare itself. Today, the urgent need of veterans for skilled professional assistance arises as a result of the challenges they faced in service to the nation,” said Davis. “The college’s new graduate certificate program will enable professionals to help veterans to better cope with the challenges of reintegrating into their families and communities and with accessing available services.”

The new certificate was developed by School for Graduate Studies Professor Elana Michelson. “Providing professional training in veteran services is a clear social and institutional imperative,” Michelson said.

New York state is home to more than one million veterans. Currently, there is no national model for training in veterans services at the level of a graduate certificate. The college’s certificate program address a critical need in New York state and provides a national model. For more information contact MilitaryPrograms@esc.edu or 518-587-2100, ext. 2779.

Jesse Eisenberg, of “The Social Network,” Headlines Performances with Theater of War

By Hope Ferguson, Senior Communications Associate

Actor Jesse Eisenberg, who shot to stardom with his Oscar-nominated performance as Mark Zuckerberg in “The Social Network,” was in Saratoga Springs and Albany Oct. 24 for two readings from the ancient Greek plays by Sophocles about war and warriors, “Ajax” and “Philoctetes.” The programs were sponsored by SUNY Empire State College, the Military Museum in Saratoga Springs and the New York State Museum.

About 200 people, many of them veterans, turned out for the two Capital Region performances, one at the Military Museum and one at the New York State Museum.

More than 35,000 veterans have attended the dramatic readings to date, followed by a panel discussion with audience participation about the challenges faced by veterans returning from war. The plays aim to destigmatize psychological injury, increase awareness of post-deployment psychological health issues and inform vets of where they can find resources, according to the Theater of War website www.outsidethewirellc.com. The cast also featured John Doman, who has appeared in “Blue Valentine” and HBO’s “The Wire;” Glenn Davis, who has appeared in “24,” “The Unit” and “Jericho;” and Chinas Ogbuagu, who has appeared in “Nurse Jackie” and “Petunia.”

Join the Student and Veterans Military Club

For more information contact ESCmilitaryclub@esc.edu or www.esc.edu/Veterans-Club.
Lauren Wynn Joins the Office of Veteran and Military Education

Lauren Wynn, has joined the Office of Veteran and Military Education as a military outreach specialist. Her primary duties include providing outreach, and pre-advising for prospective students as well as ongoing support for enrolled students at military installations in Hampton Roads, Virginia Beach, and throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region.

Wynn has more than five years of experience in higher education. She worked as a graduate assistant advisor helping undergraduate business students at Valdosta State University and as a student success advisor and first-year experience class instructor at Savannah College of Art and Design.

As a military spouse and active volunteer, Wynn is aware of the unique challenges facing military members and their families. She holds a B.A. in psychology from Marshall University in West Virginia, and an M.S. in marriage and family therapy from Valdosta State University in Georgia.

Spotlight on Nicasio Rios Jr.

Area of study:

Military service:

What prompted you to return to school?
After the stock market crashed in 2008, I wanted to learn more about business finance, how it affects America and to try to build a career in it.

Was adjusting to college a challenge after military life?
I take online courses and residency courses, so adjusting to college after the military has been easy at SUNY Empire State College.

What has your experience been like at SUNY Empire State College?
My experience has been excellent. The staff, professors and advisors have been focused on my educational success.

Do you believe your military experience has made you a better student?
My military experience has been invaluable when it comes to my return to school. The discipline and determination I have gained from my career in the Marine Corps has allowed me to focus on my studies. I don’t think I would have been so focused as an 18-year-old college student.

What advice do you have for veterans returning to school?
My advice to other military members thinking of going back to school is to follow through with a degree program that allows them to function in an area of interest for them. College is more rewarding when you follow a path you want to take. Take advantage of your GI Bill benefits, you earned them. SUNY Empire State College is a great college for current or transitioning military members as their courses are tailored for students with unique talents and schedules, such as military professionals working towards educating themselves for a new career.

Missing the Target by a Few Degrees: Veterans Unemployment

By Kevin Dean, Assessment Specialist, Center for Distance Learning

It is often noted in the media that veterans’ unemployment is higher than the overall unemployment rate. However, unemployment in veterans is not necessarily the problem the popular media would have society believe. Veterans face many unique challenges that civilians will never have to worry about such as PTSD, disabling injuries and multiple deployments that vary in length. And certainly, unemployment is not a problem that any veteran should come home to after serving their country.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks monthly unemployment data in the current population survey and this includes veterans. Veterans are examined in the context of unemployment, so there is an accurate comparison to the general population. This data does show that unemployment for veterans is slightly higher in the last few months for veterans ages 18-24 that recently separated from the service. For both civilians and veterans ages 18-24, the unemployment rate has doubled since 2007. So current young veterans may have a disadvantage when first leaving the service. Does this mean that veterans are destined to be chronically unemployed?

When you examine all veterans and compare the unemployment rate to the general population, the data actually shows the overall unemployment rate to be lower for veterans. It appears that there is an initial difference in unemployment, but a small one for returning veterans. One effective way to combat the difference in unemployment rates for returning troops is with a college degree or certificate.

For those with a either an associate or a bachelor’s degree, the unemployment rate is always lower than those without
a degree. The good news is that veterans attend college in larger numbers than the general population, although, veterans do not receive as many bachelor’s degrees as civilians. This is an important point because a bachelor’s degree is essentially the tipping point at which lifetime earnings increase dramatically and unemployment is always lower than the general population.

A second important reason is that veterans will make more money. The value of a college degree has even been shown to affect those still in the service. A study by Garcia, Joy and Reese (1998) found that sailors get promoted more than 40 percent faster than those who did not attend college while in the Navy. For returning troops earning a bachelor’s degree is one more tool they have in their arsenal to combat unemployment and earn more money.

There is currently legislation pending that could address the issue of veteran unemployment by strengthening the military’s transition program and providing more training before troops leave the service. But in the meantime, veterans need to educate themselves and take action. Empire State College, for example, offers a college transition class at the upper level that lets veterans and service members explore transitions and career options.

1 http://www.kansascity.com/2011/09/12/3137272/commentary-us-must-do-better-for.html [Can’t be accessed]
4 http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm
5 http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/education_FINAL.pdf

New Empire State College Online Writing Center is Live

By Craig Lamb, Director of Academic Support Services, Center for Distance Learning

The new Empire State College Online Writing Center (www.esc.edu/WritingResources) is now live. Services include writing tutoring and assistance, writing workshops in person and online and paper submission options available through SMARTTHINKING.com.

• The functionality of the new site is quite simple for all users. Visitors arrive at the “front door” of the site and select the material or the service they wish to engage with. Students no longer need to sift through multiple sites to find the different writing resources and/or writing services.

• Students will now see contact information for their local office of academic support throughout the Empire State College Online Writing Center, should they need specific assistance or should they wish to make an appointment for unique or uncommon writing concerns. Some of our learners have issues that require more intensive assistance and the easy connection to the local academic support office provides an easy linkage for support.

The Department of Defense Offers the Homeowners Assistance Program

By Desiree Drindak, Military Academic Development Coordinator

The Department of Defense offers the Homeowners Assistance Program to eligible service members and federal civilians, including nonappropriated fund, employees. The program was implemented to assist eligible homeowners who face financial loss when selling their primary residence homes in areas where real estate values have declined because of a base closure or realignment announcement.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 temporarily expands the HAP to assist service members and DoD employees who are wounded, injured or become ill when deployed, surviving spouses of service members or DoD employees killed or who died of wounds while deployed, service member and civilian employees assigned to BRAC 05 organizations, and service members required to permanently relocate during the home mortgage crisis. For more information and eligibility requirements go to the HAP website at http://hap.usace.army.mil/.

Tuition Assistance Changes Benefit Troops

By Desiree Drindak, Military Academic Development Coordinator

The Department of Defense has announced changes to the current military Tuition Assistance program that will ensure colleges that accept TA are offering quality educational opportunities. Effective Jan. 1, 2012, all schools that participate in Title 10 assistance programs will have to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the DoD. This memorandum will replace the current tuition assistance agreements and provide uniform policies and procedures for all services.

Under the new MOU, colleges must agree to maintain a uniform tuition rate for all military students. They also must be accredited by an agency recognized by the Department of Education and follow the policies established by the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges. Colleges must work with students to minimize the duplication of coursework, maximize acceptance of transfer credits, maintain a maximum standard of required in-residence courses and ensure acceptance of military experience credit and alternate competency testing programs. For more information http://www.DoDmou.com/.
College Introduces 12th Area of Study in Public Affairs

By Hope Ferguson, Senior Communications Associate

SUNY Empire State College has introduced a new area of study in Public Affairs. Whether the student’s goal is to expand professional opportunities; become part of public service at the national, state or local level; or cultivate specific skills and expertise or contribute to society in a volunteer role, the Public Affairs program accommodates a broad array of interests.

The new program provides the opportunity to explore problems and issues in such fields as public administration, health policy, journalism, not-for-profit management, political science, criminal justice, homeland security, emergency management and fire service administration, among others.

These fields, and others, are united by a common strand of operating in the public arena and having an impact on the well-being of society-at-large.

The Public Affairs area of study also offers students the chance to create a wide range of academic concentrations. Some popular concentrations that students previously took under other areas of study are:

- public administration
- public policy
- political science
- criminal justice