Alumna Helping Fort Drum Families and Local Citizens

By Mindy Boenning, Communication and Development Coordinator, OVME

SUNY Empire State College graduate Denise Young first came to the college with no college credits but lots of experience from a wide range of jobs and personal interests. Working with her Watertown Unit faculty mentor, Maureen Kravec, she turned that experience into the maximum 96 college credits through prior learning assessment, a unique feature of the college. Kravec says, “Denise was a truly remarkable student, very motivated in her studies, and a pleasure to work with.”

A Bachelor of Science degree in Science, Mathematics and Technology opened up new employment opportunities for Young, including regional director of safety and health for Rexam, DSI and health planner with the Jefferson County Public Health Service. Building on her academic background, Young earned a Master of Business Administration in Health Care Administration and went on first to become the director of the Center for Community Studies at Jefferson Community College, and then to her current position as executive director of the Fort Drum Region Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO).

The Fort Drum Army Installation

Fort Drum, near Watertown, N.Y., does not have a school or a major hospital on the installation and more than 70 percent of soldiers live off the post. When the 10th Mountain Division was reactivated in 1985 and stationed there, the Army and the surrounding communities created a unique plan to integrate soldiers and their families into the local community, both physically and economically. Members of both groups generally agree this approach has been a huge success.

This is where Denise Young has made a big impact. As the first executive director of the FDRHPO, created five years ago to strengthen local health care services for Fort Drum and the surrounding communities, she has spearheaded a number of important projects, including:

- attracting more than $9 million in federal, state and local funding to support health care facilities, technology, and employee and physician recruitment;
- tripling the number of behavioral health care providers in the area, especially as soldiers, veterans and family members struggle with the emotional aspects of repeated deployments; and
- surveying the general population and health care providers about what their needs are and whether services provided are good quality.

The group that Young heads also has a long-term focus on increasing the number of local residents who choose to enter health care careers, since they prefer to stay close to their home towns to appreciate the natural beauty and friendly atmosphere that northern New York state offers. The FDRHPO vision includes: introducing health care career information to middle-school and high-school students and teachers, arranging for nursing and other students to complete their clinical work in local hospitals, coordinating with local colleges to offer targeted certificate and degree options in a cooperative way and encouraging adult learners to seek health career choices. SUNY Empire State College is among the colleges working with FDRHPO to improve educational opportunities for students in mental and physical health care services.

Regional and National Recognition

Young and her efforts have been featured on local and national public radio programs. To hear more, check out the radio stories:

Changes to Post-9/11 GI Bill

Congress passed changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill in December 2010 and President Obama has signed the bill. Some highlights for veterans using this educational funding include:

Effective now but not payable until Oct. 1, 2011

- Eligibility for National Guard members being able to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits will be expanded. Details are still being worked out by the VA.

Effective Aug. 1, 2011

- Funding from the Post-9/11 GI Bill will only be available after students have applied for any available financial aid (state, federal, institutional or employer-based).
- Changes to tuition and fee rates (doesn’t affect Empire State College students)
  - Public colleges/universities not affected: All tuition and fees still covered minus what is covered by financial aid. Both undergraduate and graduate degrees covered.
  - Private colleges/universities: Instead of a state-by-state rate cap, now capped at $17,500/year or actual tuition, whichever is less, minus financial aid. Yellow Ribbon program still exists for costs above the cap.
- Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) prorated to rate of pursuit: Students more than half time (at least 7 credits) but less than full time (12 credits) will no longer get full-time BAH. The BAH will be prorated, rounded up to the nearest tenth. For example, Empire State College students enrolled in 8 credits (0.66 time) will get 70 percent of the BAH.
- Voc rehab students can get higher GI Bill BAH if eligible for both.
- More reimbursement of fees for licensing, certifications and tests.
- Break or interval pay generally not available: Students in any VA education program will only get BAH during actual semester dates, not during breaks between semesters.

Effective Oct. 1, 2011

- BAH for distance learning students: Veterans taking courses in a distance learning format will receive a housing allowance at half the national average of the BAH for an E-5 with dependents (2011 full-time enrollment rate is $673.50).
- Active-duty students get stipend for books and supplies. (Previously available only for veterans.)
- Post-9/11 GI Bill expanded to include noncollege degree programs such as on-the-job training, flight school, apprenticeship training, etc. (Previously possible under the Montgomery GI Bill, but excluded from the current version of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.)


TogetherWeServed.com

By Bill Yaeger, Military Outreach Specialist, OVME

SUNY Empire State College is listed online on Military Education Centers part of the TogetherWeServed family of websites. TogetherWeServed.com has produced a series of secure, feature-rich U.S. military community heritage websites to help current or former U.S. service members reconnect with old friends, create a lasting legacy of their service and share in the camaraderie of those who served.

The sites are for current and former members of the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Army Air Force, Air National Guard and Coast Guard Reserve and include:

- www.army.togetherweserved.com/army
- www.navy.togetherweserved.com/usn
- www.marines.togetherweserved.com/usmc
- www.airforce.togetherweserved.com/usaf
- www.coastguard.togetherweserved.com/uscg

Click ‘Education’ to link to the Military Education Centers where Empire State College is listed in the Military Friendly School Directory. The center lists resources, communications, military-friendly schools, career resources and opportunities, and benefits for the military community, veterans of the armed forces and military spouses and dependents.

Each institution on the website has its own page that shows college details, benefits, why it is military friendly, accreditation, facts, college programs, videos, alumni photos, alumni roster and alumni testimonials. Empire State College lists more than 250 alumni, including 153 Navy, 57 Army, 36 Marines and nine Air Force personnel.

CCAF General Education Mobile Program

The General Education Mobile (GEM) is a new partnership between the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) and SUNY Empire State College. GEM offers “clustered” general education courses for airmen to meet CCAF Associate in Applied Science degree requirements. Courses are offered in a distance learning format, with anytime, anywhere availability. This approach reduces the impact of deployments or permanent change of station and makes it more convenient to fulfill family commitments.

GEM enables Air Force students to sign up for their general education requirements in a single block of courses with SUNY Empire State College, providing greater educational continuity and quicker completion of an associate degree. Credits will transfer and apply toward the CCAF degree. The Air Force Virtual Education Center serves as the central online location for most current information on Post-9/11 changes.

for the program. From there, airmen are able to browse course offerings, register for the five-course sequence and order transcripts.

SUNY Empire State College offers a diverse selection of 19 pre-approved general education courses that meet CCAF requirements, including Fundamentals of Public Speaking, College Writing, Statistics, Economics/Macro and Introduction to Ethics.

For more information, contact Military Outreach Specialist Bill Yaeger at William.Yaeger@esc.edu or 518-859-0794.

TexVet

SUNY Empire State College has earned a spot on the TexVet: Partners Across Texas website for making a positive difference in the lives of Texan veterans, active-duty, guard, and reserve members and their families. TexVet reaches out to service members and 1.6 million veterans in the Lone Star state and, with support from the Department of State Health Services, connects them to veteran service organizations. Visit www.texvet.com for more information.

Defense Threat Reduction University

SUNY Empire State College’s Office of Veteran and Military Education is coordinating a Memorandum of Agreement with the Defense Threat Reduction University (DTRU) in order to accept American Council on Education credits from 10 DTRU courses. The goal is for military members to be able to use these credits towards an undergraduate degree with the college, primarily in emergency management, homeland security and/or criminal justice programs.

The university, part of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), is located on Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque. The DTRA is dedicated to reducing the threat to the United States and its allies from nuclear, chemical, biological, conventional and special weapons through training, education and research at international, federal, state and local levels. This partnership provides a national capability for managing these activities. The DTRU is both a virtual and real university, offering hands-on training, distance learning and thought-provoking education.

About 60 percent of DTRU students are in the Colorado Springs area where Empire State College’s military outreach specialist can meet with them and conduct pre-enrollment advising face-to-face, and DTRU students across the globe also can participate through online learning. For more information please contact military outreach specialist Bill Yaeger at William.Yaeger@esc.edu or 518-859-0794.

Active-Duty and Veteran Students’ War Stories Sought

Northeast Center mentors Claudia Hough, Cindy Bates and Elaine Handley are seeking stories, thoughts and reflections on all aspects and perspectives about war. These submissions will be woven together into a dramatic program to be performed by actors in upstate New York in honor of Veterans Day 2011.

Submissions are welcome from current students, faculty and staff who have experienced war firsthand as warriors or victims; those who have had loved ones involved in war; and individuals who have actively protested war, lost friends or family to war or who have trained for war.

The deadline for submissions is Tuesday, Feb. 15. Instructions for submitting stories and more information are available at http://commons.esc.edu/warstories.

Navy Establishes Virtual Education Center

By Susan Lawson, Center for Personal and Professional Development

The Navy has launched a Virtual Education Center (VEC), a state-of-the-art, one-stop call center for Voluntary Education Services including education counseling and tuition assistance processing.

“As 21st century sailors increasingly turn to the Web and other technologies to conduct business, VEC provides the virtual venue for Voluntary Education Services in addition to traditional support through the Navy College offices. Together, they will provide the utmost level of educational service to the Navy’s most important asset – our sailors,” said presiding officer Rear Adm. Arnold Lotring, chief operating officer for the Naval Education and Training Command (NETC).

The Navy College Center (NCC), the predecessor of VEC, offered comprehensive voluntary education services. Weekly, NCC handled more than 3,000 contacts, updated more than 200 college transcripts and degrees, and processed more than 1,400 official SMART requests.

“The establishment of VEC has not changed our focus in any way. It’s all about helping sailors achieve their education goals,” said Capt. Jon Picker, former commanding officer of the Center for Personal and Professional Development.

The VEC will be open five days a week, from 6 a.m. until 9:30 p.m., and will be staffed by academic advisors who will answer questions and process requests pertaining to all facets of the Navy’s voluntary education programs.

For more information, go to https://www.navycollege.navy.mil/.

Got News?
Contact Desiree Drindak at Desiree.Drindak@esc.edu.
The Student Connection

Danielle Clum, an English major at the Northeast Center of SUNY Empire State College, is the editor of the college's first student e-newsletter, The Student Connection. This bi-weekly online publication features collegewide news, profiles of faculty and students, resources and fast facts contributed by students, faculty and staff. It also will showcase students' creative writing. To view The Student Connection, go to http://www.esc.edu/esconline/escdocuments/studentvoice.nsf/html/home.html. To get involved or to share suggestions, contact Clum at Danielle.Clum@esc.edu.

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