



Photography by Joe Mehling, Dartmouth College Photographer.

SERVING Those Who Have Served Their

By James Wright

In April, the number of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan passed the 4,500 mark while the conflict entered its sixth year.¹ Today, hundreds of thousands of young men and women are serving their country, but unlike the World War II generation, these young people are not eligible for the same level of educational benefits made possible by the GI Bill of 1944. That piece of legislation, signed by President Franklin Roosevelt, provided fully for postsecondary education and the results were revolutionary. The GI Bill democratized ambition and access to American higher education by expanding to an altogether different population the idea of attending college and providing the means for them to do exactly that.

The GI Bill, along with the civil rights movement and the women's movement, transformed American higher education by improving access. But there is still much work to be done to ensure that our institutions are fully accessible. Currently, two-thirds of high school students go on to college, but the percentage of low-income students who pursue higher education is far lower.² Many military veterans have low incomes and a new GI Bill that provides adequate support to veterans would enable more low-income students to attend college while also paying a national debt to these young people and investing in the future of this republic—just as the original GI Bill did in the 1940s. During World War II, the higher education community was at best indifferent to the GI Bill. This time around, we need to stand together in affirming how important educational benefits are to the men and women serving in the military.

JAMES WRIGHT is president of Dartmouth College.

Helping Heal the Wounds

In fall 2004, I watched television accounts and read newspaper reports on the battle taking place in Fallujah and the heavy casualties that resulted. I felt a tremendous impulse to reach out in some way to the wounded Marines, who appeared to be the same age as many of our students at Dartmouth. Moreover, when I was their age, I had also served as a Marine. I had enlisted when I was 17—a week after I graduated from high school in 1957. During my three years in the Marines no one ever shot at me, nor was I ever asked to shoot at anyone else. It was a formative time in my life surely, but in recent years it has not been one that I thought about very much. Until Fallujah.

In the winter of 2005, a friend, a retired Marine officer, encouraged me to visit the wounded Marines at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and he secured permission for me to do that. I first visited in July 2005. It was a remarkable experience, one

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that moved me very much and inspired me. Service personnel hospitalized at places such as Bethesda and Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC, are in serious condition. I had to learn to transcend the shock of seeing seepage from wounds, newly missing limbs, horrible face and head injuries, speech and memory problems as a result of head injury or medication, and obvious pain and discomfort. But unless they were too heavily medicated, the service personnel I saw wanted to talk.

I went from bed to bed in the Marine Casualty Ward visiting with them. I asked what had happened to them and they told me, sometimes in great detail. I asked what they wanted to do next, and I encouraged them to think about pursuing their education. No one

in my family had a college education and during high school I had never thought of this as an option. I had gone on to college only after my three-year tour of duty in the Marines. I told these young people my own story and encouraged them to consider college.

As the gunnery sergeant who

was the senior NCO (non-commissioned officer) in the Marine ward at Bethesda Hospital at the time said to some visitors, "Do you believe that there is a Marine lance corporal who is president of an Ivy League school?"

During my initial visit to Bethesda, I met Lynn Pace, the wife of General Peter Pace. General Pace was about to become chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the first Marine officer to hold that position. Mrs. Pace asked me to join her on a trip to Walter Reed to speak to the veterans there about going back to school and I readily agreed. On these early trips, the wounded veterans expressed a real interest in continuing their education but had some specific questions for me, such as wanting to know if there were elevators in the buildings where they would go to school. For veterans missing one or sometimes both legs, this was an important question. Others had questions about transfer credits at a particular institution. And some wanted to know about courses of study that were available at a local college or university. It was quickly clear to me that there was no way that any one person could provide the individual

counseling that was required without some significant support from the higher education community. I asked David Ward, the then-president of the American Council on Education (ACE), if ACE, as the umbrella association of higher education institutions, might explore setting up such a program in the major hospitals. Ward was eager to look into this and I agreed to help out in any way I could.

Ward asked Jim Selbe, director of Program Evaluations at ACE, to take the lead on this initiative for them. Selbe, coincidentally also a former Marine, was exceptional in moving this ahead, and by early 2007, ACE's Severely Injured Military Veterans: Fulfilling Their Dreams project was up and running (visit www.acenet.edu/programs/siproject for more information about this initiative). Heather Bernard, a former secondary school counselor whose son is now in his second tour in Iraq, is involved at Walter Reed and Bethesda; and Jeff Stevens, a disabled Vietnam veteran who completed a doctorate at Texas A&M, is at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio. They provide counseling similar to what a good secondary school counselor would do—they link the patients with colleges or programs of interest to them. I had assured Ward that I would raise money to support the new incremental costs and was successful in identifying some \$350,000 of support for the program. Since then, other donors have stepped up and the ACE counseling program is now in place at Bethesda, Walter Reed, Brooke, and most recently at Balboa Naval Medical Center in San Diego.

I have yet to have a chance to go down to Brooke but have visited the other hospitals 15 times over the last two and a half years. These visits continue to be an energizing, inspiring, and very moving personal experience for me. And I am also pleased that there are more than 100 students enrolled during this academic year who have received counseling through the ACE program. Perhaps all of them would have made their way into college on their own, but this program assisted them by connecting them immediately with a counselor or support staff at the institution or program that they wished to pursue. It seems to work very well.

On Friendly Soil

In this effort, I have never had the objective of recruiting students specifically to come to Dartmouth. I was recruiting students to pursue an education, though a few of the Marines expressed an interest in coming here. I tried to support them without leading them to make this choice and without involving myself in the admissions processes. In any event, we did admit four Marines for the current academic year. Ironically, one of them was a young man who had been wounded in Fallujah in November 2004 and

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Higher Education and the Military: A Special Partnership

By Constance M. Carroll



Like the nation's colleges and universities, the military has had to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances affecting education and training. It is a fact that almost all new jobs and career fields require some level of postsecondary education, including career specializations within the military. Moreover, new and more advanced technologies have emerged as critical aspects of military life, requiring extensive technical training.

Following World War I, the military began to contract with universities and colleges for research and also to outsource areas of education and training. In the past several decades, all four branches of the military have intensified their reliance upon postsecondary institutions due to the establishment and training needs of the

All Volunteer Force. For example, the San Diego Community College District began to receive contracts for providing general education and technical training at a variety of Navy bases in 1980. In 2008, these contracts include not only the Navy, but also Army and Marine bases across the nation. As a result, more than 50,000 service personnel receive instruction and vocational training through the San Diego Community College District each year, primarily as off-site students of San Diego City College.

Some military students are studying geography and satellite-based information systems. Some are mastering land-based communication systems designed to keep U.S. troops in contact during fierce weather conditions, such as sandstorms. Others are learning aviation and methods of safely landing a jet on an aircraft carrier in turbulent seas. Still others are improving their command of mathematics, English, and other disciplines necessary to their success. What is unique about these students is that they are all soldiers, sailors, or Marines.

The institutions of the San Diego Community College District also resemble other colleges and universities in offering a wide range of services for returning veterans, as well as for their spouses and families. Ever since the GI Bill was introduced following World War II, as well as later measures, higher education has endeavored to provide educational opportunities for veterans. Providing these services recognizes the debt that all of us have as Americans to those who are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

Most recently, the military's partnership and reliance upon higher education has taken a poignant turn. More and more veterans of modern warfare, most notably the war in Iraq, are returning to their homeland with an all-too-common wound: traumatic brain injury. Known as the "signature wound" of the Iraq conflict, this disability has a profound impact upon numerous men and women.

In response to this challenge, the San Diego Community College District's Continuing Education Division has recently added the Naval Medical Center of San Diego as a new site for its Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Program. Although ABI is a well-established program within the community college district, the new site was designed and is exclusively provided for veterans, almost 100 percent from the war in Iraq.

These returning veterans are unique in that they seem the same as when they left for war, but have been forever altered by this unique form of injury, suffering neurological, cognitive, and psychological changes as a result of the trauma they have sustained. Addressing their needs requires more than offering a few classes or providing financial aid.

Through a rigorous curriculum and program of therapy, these veterans are studying the anatomy and physiology of the brain in order to understand the nature of their injury. They are learning to develop new life skills, memory enhancement techniques, and other strategies for coping. Working with counselors, these students must also focus on adjustment skills such as anger management and problem solving, because many have complex psychological reactions to their new state of being.

From training to employment to aftercare in tragic cases, the San Diego Community College District reflects the growing, and necessary, partnership between the military and higher education. Community colleges pride themselves on accommodating and providing educational opportunities for the broadest base of the population. This mission most definitely includes those who serve in the military. ■

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CONSTANCE M. CARROLL is chancellor of the San Diego Community College District.

whom I initially met during one of my first visits to Bethesda Hospital. He is studying Arabic and wants to be involved in international relations. Another of our students has commendations for actions in combat and earned a Purple Heart. He is interested in the classics and hopes to be a writer. A third student has ongoing medical issues that he shrugs off as he pursues a history degree and is passionate about engaging in veterans support activities, perhaps after law school. The fourth will matriculate next fall, after taking additional time to recover from injuries sustained in Iraq. These young men will make a difference in the world. We have other veterans who will be coming here next year because the word is out that Dartmouth is a place that is friendly and hospitable to them.

As we prepared to welcome our veterans last summer, I met with senior college officers in charge of the various areas that interact with students to alert them to these incoming students. I told them that it was crucial to look after the unique needs of these students. I had no doubt the Marines would succeed at Dartmouth, but if they failed, it would have to be

that *they* had indeed failed; we could not fail them. So far, these students have done very well.

Dartmouth has not established any specific veterans program for this purpose. We will, if it seems appropriate, but we have been able to provide customized support with our current system as needs are identified. For example, the admissions office recognizes that normal SAT scores and high school grades may be less relevant to an assessment of 21-year-old applicants with these experiences. We work to respond to individual needs through our housing assignment process (addressing not only physical accessibility, but also spouses and partners not normally found in a traditional college-age population), by facilitating personal connections with medical providers, and with support from faculty, class deans, and other student support services. A faculty committee has been willing to consider alternative ways of recognizing transfer credits. (One of the academic advisers of our veterans has a son in the Army who had been in Iraq until recently.) Our veterans and other students have recently formed an organi-

An Assignment for All Institutions

By Charles B. Reed



At ACE's 2008 Annual Meeting, I spoke to campus leaders about veterans education and gave a "homework" assignment to the assembled university presidents: *Go back to your institutions. Do an assessment of how you're doing with programs and services for servicemembers and veterans. You*

won't find a pretty picture. What you will find is that you need to reorganize and reprioritize.

This is the same assignment I gave myself and our 23 California State University (CSU) presidents 18 months ago after one of our nation's most distinguished military leaders, Major General Mike Myatt, USMC (retired), asked me, "Chancellor, what is the California State University doing to help veterans earn a college degree?" General Myatt was the commander of the Marine Force that defeated 10 Iraqi divisions and took back Kuwait from Saddam in the First Gulf War. It didn't take much to convince me we needed to do far more to help veterans reach their educational goals.

Shortly thereafter, I and other CSU representatives visited California Governor Schwarzenegger, who needed

no convincing that California should do all it can to provide higher education to our veterans and active-duty soldiers. The overarching goal we established from the meeting was to retain these mature, experienced, and ready leaders in the California workforce as teachers, engineers, managers, computer scientists, lawyers, doctors, and even a politician or two. The governor termed the project Troops to College.

A statewide working group with representation from the governor's cabinet, public universities and colleges, and the military quickly identified the following shortfalls in California:

- We had no process of outreach, marketing, or communications to the active duty and veterans.
- Our campuses were not prepared or oriented to welcome new veterans, and for the most part, campus veterans offices were limited to processing GI Bill payments.
- We paid little or no attention to the sophisticated training and formal schooling that military servicemen and women receive in terms of giving credit toward degrees according to standards set by ACE.
- There was no sharing of "best practices" among campuses about services and education for veterans and those in active duty.

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zation called the Dartmouth Undergraduate Veterans Association.

Improving Legislation

Over the last two years, as I became more involved in these issues of veterans' education, I also came to understand the inadequacies of the current GI Bill for all veterans who are returning to civilian life. Wounded veterans rightfully receive more financial support due to their disabilities than do veterans without disabilities. But for the latter, the Montgomery GI Bill is totally inadequate to meet current needs. It provides \$1,000 a month for up to 39 months. This will not pay the cost of tuition, room and board, and the range of expenses incurred as a student at any institution today. Senator Jim Webb of Virginia introduced legislation in January 2007 to enhance the existing GI Bill. I wrote an op-ed piece in February 2008 for *The Boston Globe* on this subject and early in 2008 had the privilege of meeting with Senator Webb, Senator John Warner, and Senator Chuck Hagel regarding the new GI Bill. Senators Webb and Warner specifically

talked about ways to address congressional concerns regarding costs.

As presidents know, tuition charges vary enormously between public universities and private institutions, between small local public schools and large flagship universities. Several congressmen have worried about setting up an entitlement program providing what could be a federal subsidy to some very wealthy private institutions. The issues about the size and distribution of some university endowments raised by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa have complicated the discussion of enhancing GI educational benefits. We could and should debate that issue, but not with veterans' education held hostage to the outcome of the debate. Senators Webb and Warner and I talked about a way in which institutions with higher tuition charges might share some of veteran students' costs. And on February 28, 2008, Senators Webb and Warner introduced an amendment to the existing legislation that would provide for this. We are all hopeful that this will be successful. Both ACE and the National Association of Independent Colleges and

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With the assistance of another Marine general, Major General Mike Lehnert, commander of Marine Corps Installations West, the CSU presidents and myself spent two days at Camp Pendleton. We met and talked to a significant number of enlisted Marines and sailors, and visited them in their highly sophisticated and complex work spaces. We observed them in the field and on the firing line, aboard helicopters and amphibious assault vehicles, and in panel discussions on higher education. We left Camp Pendleton with the realization that these extraordinary men and women were the exact profile of the students we wanted on our campuses: smart, serious but balanced, committed, contributing, and diverse.

The CSU presidents went back to their campuses with the charge to revamp their veterans programs. As a result, we have streamlined and synchronized our efforts. The following is what we have accomplished:

- An accessible, veterans-friendly web site—Troops to College (currently under construction)—with links to resources and information. CSU also has its own web site (www.calstate.edu/veterans/) along with promotional material that we distributed to all California military bases.
- Campus veterans support teams who are trained and prepared to deal with unique challenges facing

today's veterans, including admissions and finance, disabled student services, academic counseling, veterans resources, housing, and jobs.

- Formation of campus student veterans organizations to serve as informal support networks (veterans taking care of veterans).
- Alumni organizations that offer additional help and resources such as part-time jobs, and assistance for spouses and families.
- Credit articulation so that veterans will know what courses are acceptable for college credit.

Other activities include the Everyday Is Veterans Day Conference, Boots to Books courses on campuses, the Combat to the Classroom Conference, campus military and veterans advisory committees, Middle East cultural awareness courses for active duty, the severely injured education program at Balboa and Camp Pendleton Naval Hospitals, and legislative bills that benefit the veteran (for example, priority enrollment).

While we have made significant strides forward, we have much more to do. Today's veterans, like those that preceded them, have given so much. We owe them nothing less than our full attention and commitment to ensure they have the opportunity to go to college. ■



Ronald M. Zaccari
Valdosta State University

Former President
Oil on Canvas

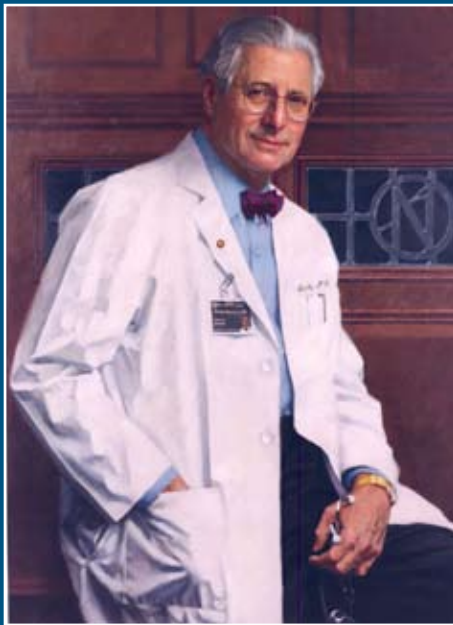


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Universities have endorsed the bill. (As of April 17, the bill has 55 Senate cosponsors.)

My father was in the Army during the Second World War. He was drafted as a parent of two young boys and when he got out, he did not pursue a college education as so many members of that generation did. We have described them, using Tom Brokaw's phrase, as "the greatest generation." And that they were. But their greatness came from more than simply winning a very difficult and vicious global war. It also came from what they contributed to American society, economic life, culture, and public life, over the 60 years since the end of World War II. The "greatest generation" did make this a stronger and more inclusive society. The GI Bill encouraged and enabled them to do this. I have every confidence that the current generation of young men and women serving in the all-volunteer military have much more to contribute during their lives as well. Now we need to find ways to encourage and enable them to do that.

There is no doubt that every college president in the country would eagerly support veterans wishing to matriculate in their institutions. Many are doing this right now. There are some great stories of colleges stepping up to meet this need and take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to add richness and diversity to their student body. What we all need to recognize, however, is that this support has to be more than a passive welcome. It also must be an active invitation to pursue higher education and a commitment to support those who do. And I can confidently say that any college or university that does enroll veterans will find itself richer as a result. Dartmouth certainly has. ■

Editor's Note: To help higher education leaders engage in candid conversation about issues faced by America's veterans as they resume their education after wartime service, ACE is hosting a summit to address this topic. Titled "Serving Those Who Serve: Higher Education and America's Veterans," the summit is being held June 5–6, 2008, at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. For more information, visit ACE's web site (www.acenet.edu).

Notes:

1. See www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf.
2. College continuation rates for recent high school graduates in 2005. (2006, March 29). *Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY*. See http://postsecondaryopportunity.blogspot.com/2006_03_01_archive.html.