



## Background

Since the start of the current decade, armed forces veterans have become an increasingly important segment of the overall college student population. As such, many educational institutions have initiated special programs and increased recruiting/retention efforts to attract and retain this group of students.

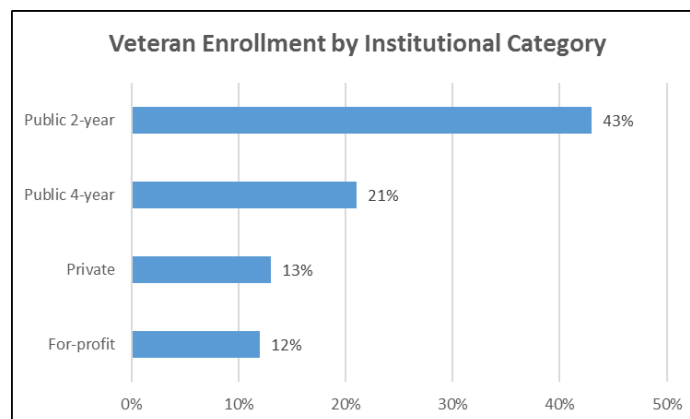
According to a 2015 report from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, between 2000 and 2012 nearly one million veterans and current military members received educational benefits from the VA. Student veterans are typically older than other students and nearly half are married with families which makes them solid prospects for college recruitment by virtue of the reliability they offer. Nearly two-thirds of student veterans are first generation college students compared to 43 percent of first generation non-veteran students.

Student veterans are also more likely to have attended college at another point in their lives typically entering with about 28 credit hours of course work completed. This, of course, allows for a higher student standing and enhances likelihood of degree completion. A higher propensity to enroll in distance learning (online) is yet another characteristic of student veterans. Distance learning options for student veterans offer scheduling flexibility and convenience further promoting retention and completion.

Student veterans have higher completion rates than their non-military peers. A 2014 study conducted by the Student Veterans of America stated about half of veterans who undertook academic degrees or vocational training from 2012 to 2013 under the GI Bill completed their program of study.

## Role of Community Colleges

The Post 9/11 GI Bill enacted in 2009 offers expanded benefits to veterans to more than sufficiently cover the costs of college including living expenses. Yet despite these benefits, only about 40 percent of veterans utilize the GI Bill according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Of those veterans that choose to pursue civilian education, community colleges and for-profit schools were the most popular option as shown in the figure below taken from the National Center for Education Statistics.



Certainly, community colleges are an attractive and popular option for student veterans due to flexible delivery methods and scheduling. Among community college student veterans, 77 percent attend part-time, 33 percent have children, and 14 percent are single parents according to a 2012 case study in the *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*. As such, a unique set of challenges exists for student veterans in which the community college must stand ready to address.

## Challenges facing Community College Student Veterans

The transition from active service to the college campus can often be difficult which in turn affects student success and ultimately completion of a degree/certificate goal. Among the noted challenges facing the student veteran are:

- Lack of sense of camaraderie on the college campus (alienation)
- Military education benefits not providing 100 percent of financial need
- Lack of adequate academic preparation and poor study habits
- Inability to register for classes due to overcrowding
- Health issues such as PTSD and TBI
- Lack of counseling resources (academic and psychological) on campus
- Lack of faculty support
- Difficulty navigating campus “bureaucracy”

## How Ohio is Supporting Student Veterans

Ohio is home to approximately 900,000 veterans which represents the sixth-largest veteran population in the U.S. The State of Ohio recognizes veterans as a valuable, talented and skilled workforce, and to that end is committed to increasing the number of military service members and veterans living and working in Ohio.

In June of 2013, Governor John R. Kasich signed Executive Order 2013-05K to support Ohio’s veterans by ensuring they are receiving the appropriate credit and credentialing for their military training and experience. The Executive Order seeks to streamline the occupational licensing process for veterans and ensure that their relevant military education, skills training and experience are taken into account when determining equivalency for issuing licenses and certificates. The Governor also charged the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents to work with the presidents of the University System of Ohio to conduct a thorough review of current institutional policies and practices, and to make recommendations for simplifying and improving the process for awarding college credit for military training, experience, and coursework.

Specific highlights of Ohio’s support for student veterans includes the following:

- College credit for military training and experience - The University System of Ohio is committed to the acceptance and awarding of college credit for military training, experience, and coursework. The Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents signed a directive providing a

baseline set of standards and procedures for the application of military credit. Having one set of standards and procedures serves to provide uniformity and consistency to the process, makes it easier to communicate with and reach a wider audience, and highlights the priority the higher education community places on assisting veterans and active duty service members with their educational and career goals.

- In-state tuition for qualified veterans from across the country - Upon moving to Ohio, veterans with one year of honorable service (and their dependents) are immediately considered in-state residents for the purposes of tuition, state educational subsidies and financial aid. Active duty, guard, reserve service members, and their families are also eligible for this educational benefit
- Ohio House Bill 488 was passed to help service members and veterans. All Ohio public institutions now have an institutional policy to support veterans, a single point of contact, priority course registration, career services/alumni link for veterans, allow for the establishment of student-led veteran groups, and will periodically survey their veteran student population to identify their needs.
- Scholarship opportunities for veterans and their families - The Ohio GI Promise promotes scholarship opportunities such as the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship, Ohio Safety Officers Memorial Fund, and Ohio National Guard Scholarship. It also helps connect students with financial aid resources through the Federal GI Bill or state-based initiatives like the Ohio College Opportunity Grant.

## Suggested Best Practices for Veteran Engagement

The following guidelines are provided based on those adopted by the Texas A&M University System. They are meant to provide a starting point for conversation, consideration, and evaluation among Ohio TechNet (OTN) Grant Consortium members:

- Colleges must actively support student veteran programs utilizing a central leadership structure. Specifically, college presidents should select a single point of contact for campus veterans program management. This administrator would preferably be a veteran himself or herself and would function as an advocate for all veteran students maintaining direct communications to the college president. This manager would oversee the campus veterans office and consist of at least VA certification specialists. Other student veteran advisors could be added to the office staff as enrollment needs dictate.
- Institutions should have in place a means to track student veteran data. Specifically, this data should include enrollment data, graduation rates, retention data, and involvement in student life programs. This data will provide the means of measuring student veteran success.

- Institutions must embrace a culture of student veteran academic success. This starts with utilizing established policies and procedures for academic standards, transfer credits, and prior learning assessment (PLA). ACE guidelines and TAG/MTAG guidelines must be used as required. Colleges could consider forming an advisory committee in support of student veteran academic success. Other student veteran academic success initiatives to consider include preferred admission, priority registration, flexibility in course offerings/delivery, and special accommodations for armed forces reserve members.
- Success of student veterans is strongly influenced by sense of connection to the campus and camaraderie with fellow veterans. Through active acceptance and inclusion in campus activities, it can be expected that academic success will follow. As such, campuses should sponsor an active student veterans organization. Colleges should also establish peer based counseling to provide a network of advice sharing among student veterans. Colleges also ought to offer social activities, speaking engagements, recognition programs, and community service project opportunities. Upon graduation, special honors/recognitions should be utilized.
- College faculty must actively provide mentoring and advising to student veterans. Special orientation/advising sessions should be offered upon institutional enrollment to get them started on the right path. Faculty mentoring programs should be utilized especially one that pairs a veteran with a faculty member from his or her program of interest.
- Colleges should establish campus veteran resource centers to provide VA certification and general administrative support. The office would have a direct connection to vital student support services (e.g. admissions, financial aid, registration, counseling, and career services). System university presidents should direct the establishment and support of a campus Veterans Success Center or Resource Center (or similar name).
- Support of student veteran physical and mental health needs is of paramount importance. As such, colleges should consider utilizing specially trained veteran mental health counselors, offer a crisis hotline, and act as a liaison to external health partners. All programs should be outlined during initial student veteran orientation.
- Smooth transition into academia followed by entry into the job market post-graduation are benchmarks of success for student veterans. Orientation should be provided each semester for incoming student veterans to acquaint them with the campus and their expectations/roles as students. Ongoing advising would be provided throughout the program of study which would then culminate in a final graduation transition assistance session regarding job hunting and career success strategies.
- Interactive engagement with community stakeholders allows feedback and interaction between the campus-at-large, student veterans, and community organizations. This can include co-involvement in VFW, American Legion, or DAV projects. It could also include involvement in local ceremonies, parades, and college outreach projects to raise awareness of student veterans.

- Communications can be the crucial success factor. This could include interpersonal communications with faculty, staff, and other students to the use of e-mail and social media. The college's website should offer a veterans page that acts as a single means of linking the student veteran to all vital and pertinent pages of interest to them on the college site.

## Benchmarking Survey

During the months of December 2016 through March 2017, an electronic benchmarking survey was conducted to acquire a snapshot of veterans services and programming across the Ohio TechNet Grant Consortium. The following colleges were solicited for a response:

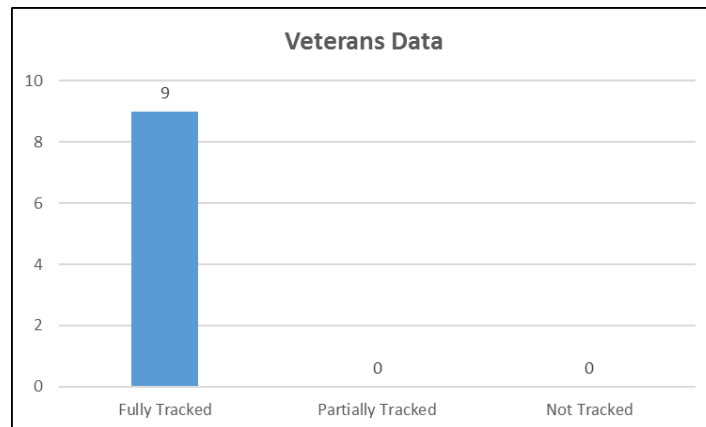
- Cincinnati State Technical and Community College
- Columbus State Community College
- Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C)
- Eastern Gateway Community College
- Lakeland Community College
- Lorain County Community College (LCCC)
- Owens Community College
- Rhodes State College
- Sinclair Community College
- Stark State College
- Zane State College

### **Q1. How many total veterans are enrolled in your institution?**

- Cincinnati State ⇒ Spring 2017 - 295; Fall 2016 - 326
- Columbus State ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Eastern Gateway ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Lakeland ⇒ 179 veterans for Spring 2017
- LCCC ⇒ Nearly 400 veterans throughout the academic year
- Owens ⇒ 606 veterans enrolled for Spring 2017.
- Rhodes State ⇒ 80 veterans enrolled in Spring 2017.
- Sinclair ⇒ 4,000 veterans and spouses of veterans
- Stark State ⇒ 275 veterans for Spring 2017
- Tri-C ⇒ 616 veterans as of October 2016
- Zane State ⇒ 9 veterans

**Q2. How many veterans are being served by Ohio TechNet Grant programs? Of these, how many veterans are enrolled in manufacturing-specific programs? How does your institution track and manage this data?**

- Cincinnati State ⇒ 1 veteran as of 12/31/16. DataTel used to track data. College and grant intake. DD-214s requested.
- Columbus State ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Eastern Gateway ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Lakeland ⇒ 9 veterans in OTN programs, all in welding. Grant Data System, Banner, and FLARE used for tracking.
- LCCC ⇒ All veterans are enrolled in these programs. Grant administrator tracks the data.
- Owens ⇒ 11 veterans in OTN programs (all in manufacturing). Identified in Banner and tracked by the Research Office.
- Rhodes State ⇒ None. Tracked through Banner.
- Sinclair ⇒ Currently 4 veterans in these programs. Tracked with student database and grant database.
- Stark State ⇒ 14 veterans in OTN Grant with all in manufacturing programs. Form required by student to confirm veteran status.
- Tri-C ⇒ 2 veterans in Integrated Systems Engineering Technology (ISET) welding training to date. Tracked by grant administrator.
- Zane State ⇒ 6 veterans. Tracked through the TAACCT grant's Participant Data Templates.



**Q3. How many veterans has your institution conducted outreach efforts to since inception of the Ohio TechNet Grant? What specific engagement methods has your institution utilized (i.e. direct mail, e-mail, newsletters, etc.)? Has your institution performed marketing outreach to veterans specifically regarding manufacturing occupations? Which methods have been the most effective?**

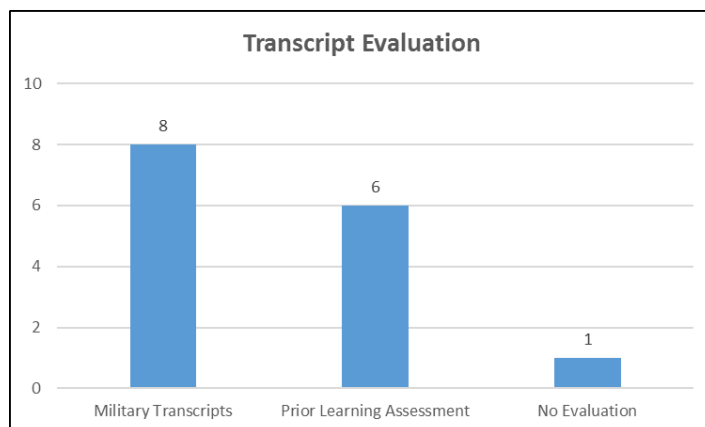
- Cincinnati State ⇒ Ongoing outreach to veterans. Weekly orientations offered. College representatives attend community events. OTN programs shared.
- Columbus State ⇒ No reply to survey request.

- Eastern Gateway ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Lakeland ⇒ No number provided. Utilization of office visits, e-mails, and flyers. Specified marketing for welding. Unable to assess effectiveness of methods currently.
- LCCC ⇒ N/A
- Owens ⇒ No data available. All forms of communication used for outreach. Admissions is in charge of distributing materials.
- Rhodes State ⇒ Postcards, social media, presentations. Most effective have been recruitment tables, flyers given at veterans offices.
- Sinclair ⇒ 39 veterans from a TAA list provided by OTN. Communicate via college newsletter and e-mail. Difficult to obtain tangible data of all outreach efforts.
- Stark State ⇒ Twitter account, e-mail campaigns, direct classroom marketing.
- Tri-C ⇒ 23,201 veterans since Jan 2016. CBS e-mail campaign most effective (18,906 vets). Monthly newsletters also utilized.
- Zane State ⇒ Somewhere between 20 and 30 veterans. Flyers and newsletters used. Specific veteran outreach by visiting local veterans centers by faculty and staff. Difficulty recruiting veterans.

**Q4. How does your institution process military transcripts? Does your institution have a numerical goal for evaluating veteran military experience? If so, how many? What work has been done by your institution in regards to the creation of MTAGs that align to Ohio TechNet areas of focus? How many veterans has your institution provided Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and/or credit for Ohio TechNet affected programs?**

- Cincinnati State ⇒ Registrar's office receives and assesses application for PLA. Recruiters promote PLA credit. ACE guide used as reference. Deans provide final approval.
- Columbus State ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Eastern Gateway ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Lakeland ⇒ Question not answered.
- LCCC ⇒ Admissions Department does initial evaluation utilizing MTAGs and course descriptions. Department chair consulted if student wants additional credit. Veterans receiving PLA not currently tracked.
- Owens ⇒ Joint service transcripts for veterans can be requested online. No numerical goals or MTAG information given. No PLA information available.
- Rhodes State ⇒ Transcripts logged. Office of Transfer forwards to approving Dean. Dean reviews, approves/denies, authorizes Office of Transfer to apply credit and ensure communication to student. MTAGs established at state level.
- Sinclair ⇒ Processes transcripts in office. Currently 25 MTAGs. 497 vets with PLA credit to date, but none in the OTN affected programs.
- Stark State ⇒ Admissions reviews transcripts. If major specific, then sent to department head for review. MTAGS and PLA coordinated through academic divisions. No PLA tracking at this time.

- Tri-C ⇒ College reviews veteran transcripts. College notifies student via mail of classes they can take. Student can then work with faculty to select courses for up to 30 PLA credits.
- Zane State ⇒ Evaluated based on ACE recommendations. Course content must match by at least 70%. No numerical goal. Match MTAGs to courses in SIS system.

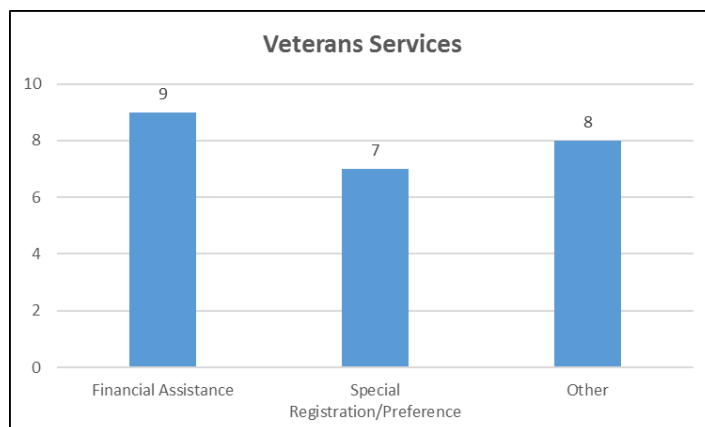


**Q5. What types of special accommodations/programs/services does your institution provide for student veterans (i.e. tutoring, counseling, success centers, special veteran’s spaces, mentoring, VA sponsored programs, guaranteed seats in classes, scholarship assistance, GI Bill/financial counseling, etc.)? What is the effectiveness of offering these amenities?**

- Cincinnati State ⇒ Veterans Center for registration. Tutoring available via Upward Bound.
- Columbus State ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Eastern Gateway ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Lakeland ⇒ Dedicated financial assistance and registration staff for veterans as well as support services.
- LCCC ⇒ Comprehensive educational services, veteran-specific scholarships, benefits/financial aid counseling, referrals, a veteran's lounge. Effectiveness of amenities currently under evaluation.
- Owens ⇒ Counseling, student veteran center, tutoring, priority registration, financial aid assistance, disability services, and a future student club. Promotes stabilization and increase in graduation rates for veterans.
- Rhodes State ⇒ Point-of-contact, career services, priority registration, no transcript evaluation charge, experiential credit application assistance, free tutoring, free counseling, special orientation.
- Sinclair ⇒ All veterans and their spouses qualify for priority registration.
- Stark State ⇒ Military Services Department offers help with GI bills, financial aid, and general navigation. Support counselor available as well and can refer out as necessary.



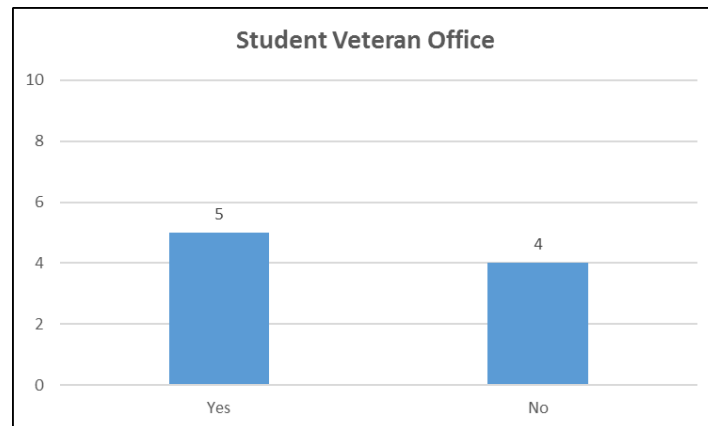
- Tri-C ⇒ Scholarship resources, campus support teams, financial counseling, web resources, career assistance, priority seating. Veterans Education Connection Center (VECC) at Louis Stokes VA Center offers ‘one-stop shop’ for student veterans along with a distance learning lab.
- Zane State ⇒ Priority registration, veteran lounge, veteran computer lab, GI Bill assistance.



**Q6. How would you describe the support given by your institution towards veteran’s services? Does your institution provide students with a direct contact for veterans services? What groups have been put in place to support veteran efforts? How are they being utilized? What means of faculty engagement with veteran students is being utilized at your institution?**

- Cincinnati State ⇒ Support could be enhanced. Periodic convening, assistance with funds and educational benefits offered. Direct contact and certifying official available.
- Columbus State ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Eastern Gateway ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Lakeland ⇒ Support is 'well rounded'. Direct contacts are provided for veterans services.
- LCCC ⇒ Veterans Department developed as a single point of contact. Has a veterans committee and student club. Institution of these services provides a good deal of support.
- Owens ⇒ Institution offers resources and services for vets. Three (3) Veterans Services staff members serve as point of contact. No specific groups in place at this time. No formal faculty engagement.
- Rhodes State ⇒ Comprehensive. Strong support services, direct point of contact, frequent presentations, Veteran’s Day celebration.
- Sinclair ⇒ Has a Veterans Service Department offering a variety of services such as counseling, financial assistance, and a lounge.
- Stark State ⇒ High level of support provided by experienced Military Services personnel. Veteran club staffed by vets. Veterans committee serves vets and plans relevant events.
- Tri-C ⇒ Entire department dedicated to veterans' services. Direct contacts provided. Coordinators are effectively engaged. The Access Program is in place for veterans with disabilities.

- Zane State ⇒ Designated veteran liaison who helps with counseling, admissions, tutoring, etc. Chapter of Student Veterans of America. Monthly meetings and community service.



**Q7. What challenges has your institution faced with veteran recruitment/retention?**

- Cincinnati State ⇒ Budget constraints and limited resources.
- Columbus State ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Eastern Gateway ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Lakeland ⇒ Question not answered.
- LCCC ⇒ No concerted effort to recruit the veteran population. Hoping to increase outreach with development of new Military Services Coordinator position.
- Owens ⇒ College was lacking a proper facility but one is in the works. Noted difficulty in transition for veterans from a group to one-on-one environment.
- Rhodes State ⇒ Slight decline in enrollment due to the abundance of jobs available for veterans.
- Sinclair ⇒ None noted.
- Stark State ⇒ Creation of Military Services Department allows a more concerted effort towards veteran recruitment.
- Tri-C ⇒ Recent small decline in enrollment. Retention is good with transfer and graduation rate higher than average student.
- Zane State ⇒ Struggle due to high availability of jobs for veterans. Retention issues if veteran finds employment while in school.

**Q8. What community partnerships has your institution established in support of veterans?**

- Cincinnati State ⇒ Goodwill, Talbert House, Joseph House, Volunteers of America, VA, City Link
- Columbus State ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Eastern Gateway ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Lakeland ⇒ Question not answered.

- LCCC ⇒ Legislative offices, Veterans Services, Stark County Recorder's office, social service agencies, other colleges' Veterans Services offices, community agencies.
- Owens ⇒ 180th Fighter Wing, local veteran recruiters, local universities, One Stops, VA, Veteran's Center (non-profit).
- Rhodes State ⇒ VA, Ohio Means Jobs, Allen County Veteran Services Commission, American Legion, VFW, Elks, Eagles, Lima Area CBOC.
- Sinclair ⇒ Office at Wright Patterson AFB.
- Stark State ⇒ Veterans Service Commission, Stark County Vet Center, SAM Center, VA, local legislative offices and representatives.
- Tri-C ⇒ VA, VBA, Ohio Means Jobs, CCVSC, The American Legion, VFW, Greater Cleveland Fisher House.
- Zane State ⇒ VA Outpatient Clinic, Muskingum County Veterans Service Office.

**Q9. Does your institution have a connection to health/counseling services for veterans?**

- Cincinnati State ⇒ Yes. Affiliation with VA for outpatient mental health related services.
- Columbus State ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Eastern Gateway ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Lakeland ⇒ Offered minimally through Counseling Department.
- LCCC ⇒ Student support counselor available for veterans. Robust referral source to community mental health providers.
- Owens ⇒ Student Mental Health Services. Counseling and referrals made.
- Rhodes State ⇒ Yes. Offers free counseling. Suicide prevention grant also in place.
- Sinclair ⇒ Counseling services are offered for veterans.
- Stark State ⇒ Collaboration with community partners to provide counseling.
- Tri-C ⇒ Yes. PTSD counseling also available as needed.
- Zane State ⇒ Counseling and referrals as necessary.

**Q10. Are there any other programs or services that your institution provides in support of veterans that you would like to mention at this time?**

- Cincinnati State ⇒ Student Veterans Association Affinity group, meets monthly. Student service events.
- Columbus State ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Eastern Gateway ⇒ No reply to survey request.
- Lakeland ⇒ Question not answered.
- LCCC ⇒ Career Development Office works with many employers who are interested in recruiting veterans.
- Owens ⇒ Community Salutes Program. Partnership with 180th Fighter Wing to assist with veteran benefits. New veteran-focused building.

- Rhodes State ⇒ Only the second institution in Ohio awarded a Special Recognition Award by the Military Order of the Purple Heart.
- Sinclair ⇒ No.
- Stark State ⇒ Stark State College Foundation. Emergency funds for veterans in need. Veteran endowment scholarship also available.
- Tri-C ⇒ A dedicated Veterans Center is in the works at Western Campus in addition to existing center at Eastern Campus.
- Zane State ⇒ Question not answered.

This workforce solution was funded by a grant awarded by the U.S Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. The solution was created by the grantee and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S Department of Labor. The Department of Labor makes no guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, express or implied, with respect to such information, including any information on linked sites and including, but not limited to, accuracy of the information or its completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability, or ownership.



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