

10TH ANNUAL
**TEXAS
VETERANS
HIGHER
EDUCATION
SYMPOSIUM**

THURSDAY & FRIDAY | OCTOBER 11 - 12, 2018

OMNI AUSTIN HOTEL - DOWNTOWN
700 SAN JACINTO & 8TH STREET, AUSTIN, TX 78701

VETERAN
BENEFITS

SPECIAL THANKS

SYMPOSIUM PLANNING COMMITTEE

DR. LARRY WALLACE JR., CHAIRMAN

Director, Veterans Support & Leadership Programs
University of Texas System

GERALD SMITH, VICE CHAIRMAN

Director, Veterans Affairs
Texas A & M University System

JOCELYN GREVES

Program Manager, Veterans Symposium
University of Texas System

RAND BINFORD

Team Lead, Education Coordinator Program Specialist
Texas Veterans Commission

BETTIE BECKWORTH

Program Director, Veterans Services
Texas Health & Human Services Commission

BOB GEAR JR.

Director, Texas Veterans Leadership Program
Texas Workforce Commission

SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

American Legion

City of Austin

National Association of Veterans Program Administrators

Student Veterans of America

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration

Texas Association of Collegiate Veteran Program Officials

Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Texas Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs & Border Security

Detachment 825 Air Force ROTC, University of Texas at Austin

Ronin Tamez, Junior in Chemistry, minor in Russian Minor

Tristan Bueler, Sophomore in Mechanical Engineering

Joshua Hogue, Sophomore in Chemical Engineering

Lowell, Brandon Lowell, Sophomore in Mechanical Engineering

& Marketing – Sophomore

U.S. Air Force ROTC

U.S. Army Medical Command

U.S. Army ROTC

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs

U.S. Small Business Administration

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Western Association of Veterans Education Specialists

Russell A. Steindam Department of Military Science (Army ROTC),

University of Texas at Austin

Kenwoo Kim, Junior in Government

Nate Love, Sophomore in Electrical Engineering

Vanessa Sigala, Junior in Forensic Science

Matthew Duncan, Junior in Biology

BETO O'ROURKE
16TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

1330 LONGWORTH BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4831

303 N. OREGON, SUITE 210
EL PASO, TX 79901
(915) 541-1400

orourke.house.gov

October 6, 2018

Dr. Larry Wallace Jr.
University of Texas
1700 N. Congress Ave. Suite 800
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Symposium Participants,

I write to welcome you to the 10th Annual Texas Veterans Higher Education Symposium focusing on military affiliated faculty, staff, and student populations within the State of Texas. To service members and veterans attending the symposium, I extend a special welcome and would like to express my gratitude for your service to our country.

The University of Texas System and Texas A&M System work to bring together leaders, experts, and members of the community to learn about and share best practices for improved support services and programs on campus. The work of this Symposium is important for the 100,000 plus service members and 1 million veterans living in the Lone Star State; a collaboration of local, state, and national organizations is critical for the successful enrollment, graduation, and employment of veterans.

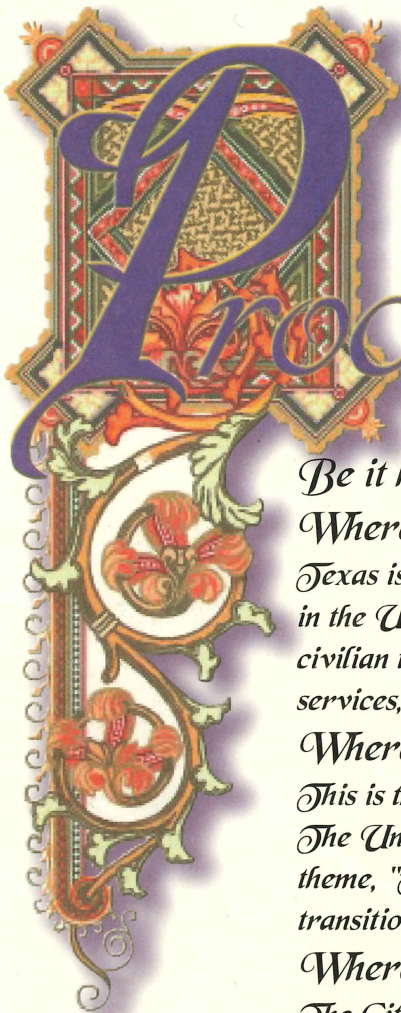
The agenda for the 10th Annual Texas Veterans Higher Education Symposium highlights some of the most important issues for the veteran community: health care, education opportunities, and transition services being just a few. It is also encouraging to see sections of this Symposium focus on women veterans and student veterans – areas veteran committees within Congress are working to better serve. We owe only the best health care, transition support, and employment opportunities to those who have sacrificed to serve their country.

Thank you to all the elected and appointed officials, universities, colleges, veteran service organizations, and individuals in attendance; your support at this year's Symposium is an example of a strong community dedicated to serving America's heroes.

Sincerely,



Beto O'Rourke
Member of Congress



Proclamation

Be it known that

Whereas,

Texas is home to one of the largest population of veterans and military-affiliated individuals in the United States. As veterans start their transitioning process from the military to a civilian to begin a new chapter in their lives, some look towards finding employment, health services, and education; and

Whereas,

This is the 10th Annual Texas Veterans Higher Education Symposium, jointly sponsored by The University of Texas System and The Texas A&M University System. This year's theme, "Transitioning," will focus on the support and resources available to assist veterans transitioning, especially in the context of pursuing higher education; and

Whereas,

The City of Austin is proud to be affiliated and partnered with the University of Texas Austin and Texas A&M University to continue helping veterans, National Guard members, Reservists and their families. This statewide Veterans Higher Education Symposium is a significant opportunity to increase collaboration and communication to provide innovative and resourceful ways to better serve the veterans who served us;

Now, Therefore,

*I, Steve Adler, Mayor of the City of Austin, Texas,
do hereby proclaim*

October 11-12, 2018

as

Veterans Higher Education Symposium Day

in Austin.

*In witness whereof, I have hereunto
set my hand and caused the seal of the City
of Austin to be affixed this 3rd Day of
October in the Year Two Thousand Eighteen*



Steve Adler, Mayor, City of Austin



JEFFREY W. TRAVILLION SR.

COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT 1

Office: 512-854-9111

Fax: 512-854-4897

Email: Jeffrey.Travillion@traviscountytx.gov



700 Lavaca St. Ste 2.200

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 1748

Austin, Texas 78767

October 6, 2018

Dr. Larry Wallace, Jr.
University of Texas System
210 West 7th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Symposium Participants:

Greetings! As Travis County Commissioner of Precinct 1, I am honored to welcome you to the *10th Annual Texas Veterans Higher Education Symposium* jointly sponsored by the University of Texas System and the Texas A&M University System. I wholeheartedly commend the commitment of each Symposium participant in their work to support the needs of the citizens of Texas who served in our nation's military branches.

I can think of no greater work than to serve those who have served, and who have sacrificed so much for our state and our nation, our Texas veterans. Military service is not only a national responsibility, but for many, it is a family tradition. In coordinating with veteran's services who work in various capacities around our state, the Symposium can be a valuable asset in helping veterans access programs and resources to help them build their futures.

Thank you again for your service to our state and to our nation. I hope that you find the Symposium helpful and productive, and once again, welcome!

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jeffrey W. Travillion Sr.", is written over the typed name and title.

Commissioner Jeffrey W. Travillion Sr., Precinct 1



Welcome to the 10th annual Texas Higher Education Symposium.

There are few organizations out here that cater to the veteran community. The Texas Veterans Higher Education Symposium is one such organization.

I am proud to say this organization does an outstanding job in the support of veterans.

The state of Texas has such a huge population of veterans with so many issues to deal with. There are health issues like PTSD, education issues, job opportunities for veterans, transitioning from military to civilian just to name a few.

At this year's symposium these and many more issues will be discussed in-depth.

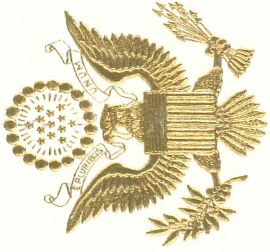
That is why the Western Association of Veterans Education Specialist (WAVES) which I am the current president of, is so very proud of the work that Texas A&M University System and the University of Texas System are involved in.

We need many more organizations like this to represent our veteran population.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tracy Copeland", is written over a horizontal line.

Tracy Copeland
President of WAVES



THIS FLAG WAS FLOWN OVER THE
UNITED STATES CAPITOL AT THE REQUEST OF
CONGRESSMAN JODEY C. ARRINGTON
AND GIVEN IN HONOR OF THE

*10th Annual Texas Veterans Higher
Education Symposium*

OCTOBER 11, 2018

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jodey".

Honorable Jodey C. Arrington, 19th District, Texas

PURPOSE

Helping veterans transition from the military to civilian life while earning a college degree or certification is why the Texas Veterans Higher Education Symposium began.

The University of Texas System and Texas A&M University System annually invite veterans, along with higher education administrators, military leaders, state officials, health care providers and others who offer services to veterans throughout the state in order to share best practices and lessons learned.

The goal of the symposium is to connect support services whether local, state, or national for bodies of higher learning with student veterans and military-affiliated individuals.

“ This convening of leaders from the military, higher education, and other key sectors could not be more timely. Veterans issues are both complicated and complex, and policies and approaches are in a constant state of change. Because Texas has one of the largest populations of veterans and military-affiliated individuals in the U.S., the collaboration between the state’s two largest university systems only makes sense and should send a message of how important this work is. ”

Tony Cucolo, UT System’s Associate Vice Chancellor for Leadership Development & Veterans Affairs for The University of Texas System

To better understand trending conditions impacting veterans and military affiliated populations, session topics are wide-ranging and purposely include state and national initiatives such as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s 60x30TX Plan; the U.S. Department of Education’s 8 Keys to Veteran Success; the U.S. Veterans Health Administration’s Whole Health System Initiative; and the U.S. Substance & Mental Health Administration’s effort to prevent suicide among service members, veterans and their families.

This year’s keynote speaker is Mr. Robert Worley II, Director of Education Services at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Additionally, national and statewide distinguished leaders from higher education, state agencies, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will serve as speakers, moderators, and panelists this year.

“ The statewide Veterans Higher Education Symposium is a significant opportunity to increase communication and collaboration across our state. The focus on helping student veterans transition to civilian careers is a critical component to higher education success for our former warriors and their families. This leadership and collaboration between the UT System and Texas A&M System will help create innovative and resourceful ways to better serve those who have served our country. ”

Gerald Smith, Director of Veterans Services for the Texas A&M University System

AGENDA-AT-A-GLANCE

THURSDAY, OCT. 11

0700 - 0920 **On-site event and exhibit registration. \$50 fee (both days), no cash.*

0800 - 1700 **Exhibition.** Various veteran service organizations

0730 - 0930 **Opening Reception** (Breakfast Provided)

Welcome by UT System – Tony Cucolo (Major General, USA Retired), Associate Vice Chancellor for Leadership & Veterans Affairs

Posting of Colors – Russell A. Steindam, Department of Military Science (Army ROTC), University of Texas at Austin

VIP Introduction(s). Dr. Larry Wallace Jr. (Captain, USA Retired), Director of Veteran Support & Leadership Programs, UT System; Gerald Smith (Colonel, USMC Retired), Director of Veterans Resource & Support Center, Texas A&M University System.

Clifton Jones, President at Texas Association of Collegiate Veteran Program Officials; Thomas Palladino (Colonel, USA Retired), Executive Director at Texas Veterans Commission; Rex Peebles, Assistant Commissioner for the Academic Quality and Workforce Division at Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Julian Alvarez III, Commissioner Representing Labor at Texas Workforce Commission; Honorable Steve Adler, Mayor at City of Austin; Senator Donna Campbell (District 25, Texas), Chair at Texas Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs

Speaker Introduction – Dr. Larry Wallace Jr. (Captain, USA Retired), Director of Veteran Support & Leadership Programs, UT System

Keynote Speaker — Robert Worley (Major General, USAF Retired), Director of Education at U.S. Veterans Benefits Administration

Welcome by Texas A&M University System — John Sharp, Chancellor

Topic(s): Current and future initiatives to enhance healthcare and education benefits

0930 - 0940 **Break**

0940 - 1050 **Panel 1: Education. Moderator** – Dr. Sherri Benn, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, Director of Student Diversity & Inclusion, and Co-Chair of Veterans Advisory Council at Texas State University. Tina Marberry, Operations Manager for Veterans Education Department at Texas Veterans Commission; Jeffrey Singh (Sergeant Major, USA Retired), Program Manager of College Credit for Heroes at Texas Workforce Commission; Dr. Garry Tomerlin, Deputy Assistant Commissioner at Workforce Education at Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Jared Lyon, Vice Chair at VA Advisory Committee on Education & Commissioner at ACE Commission for Education Attainment and Innovation; Schnell Carraway, Program Management Officer (PMO) for “Forever GI Bill” Colmery Act of 2017 Policy and Regulation Development at Department of Veterans Affairs (VBA) Education Service

Sub-Topic: Surpassing 60x30TX via enhanced military affiliated population enrollment and

AGENDA-AT-A-GLANCE

THURSDAY, OCT. 11

completion; supporting the U.S. Department of Education's 8 Keys to Veterans' Success

1050 - 1055 Break

1055 - 1205 **Panel 2: Women Veterans. Moderator – Dr. Monica Mendez-Grant, Vice President for Student Life at Texas Woman's University.** Anna Baker, Women Veterans Program Manager at Texas Veterans Commission; Octavia Harris (Command Master Chief, USN Retired), Chair at VA Secretary Advisory Committee on Women Veterans; Barbara Hector (Colonel, USA Retired), Women Veterans Program Manager at South Texas Veterans Health Care System; Starr Corbin, Commissioner at Commission for Women; Dennis May (Colonel, USAF Retired), Acting Director at Center for Minority Veterans

Sub-Topic: Enhancing enrollment & graduation rates via best practices & lessons learned

1205 - 1210 Break

1210 - 1340 **Afternoon Reception (Lunch Provided)**

Speaker Introduction – Gerald Smith (Colonel, USMC Retired), Director of Veterans Resource & Support Center, Texas A&M University System.

Guest Speaker – Christopher Sandles (Lieutenant, USNR), Chief Executive Officer at Central Texas Health Care System

Topic(s): Planned initiatives; best practices to maximize benefits; VA, SAA, and SCO approval & compliance guidance

1340 - 1350 Break

1350 - 1500 **Panel 3: Healthcare. Moderator – Celina Dugas, Veteran Services Program Director at University of Houston.** Gary Lee (Sergeant Major, USMC Retired), Health Care Advocacy Program Manager at Texas Veterans Commission; Bettie Beckworth, Program Director for Veteran Services at Texas Health & Human Services; Rachele Misiti, Transition & Care Management Program Manager and Integrated Case Management Social Work Lead at Central Texas VA Healthcare System; Jeff Moe, University of Texas' Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) Representative at Central Texas VA Healthcare System; Dr. Justin Benzer, Research Health Scientist for Center for Healthcare Organization & Implementation Research at U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Associate Professor of Psychology at Dell Medical School at University of Texas at Austin, and Research Associate Professor at Texas A&M Health Science Center

Sub-Topic: Enhancing & connecting support services on campus to the VA; supporting the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs' Whole Health System Initiative

1500 - 1505 Break

AGENDA-AT-A-GLANCE

THURSDAY, OCT. 11

1505 - 1615 **Panel 4: Mental Health. Moderator - DeMuntz Bowie (Sergeant First Class, USAR), Veteran Services Coordinator at Prairie View A&M University.** Bettie Beckworth, Program Director for Veteran Services at Texas Health & Human Services; Dr. Erin Andrews, Interim Site Chief for Austin Mental Health & Behavioral Medicine at Austin VA Outpatient Clinic, Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Dell Medical School at University of Texas at Austin, and Co-Director of Psychology Training at Central Texas Veterans Health Care System; Karin Hearod (Commander, USPHS), Regional Administrator at Substance Abuse & Mental Health Administration; Kathryn Bongiovanni, Suicide Prevention Coordinator at Austin VA Outpatient Clinic; Aaron Eagan, Deputy Director for Innovation & Program Development in Suicide Prevention at VHA Office of Mental Health & Suicide Prevention

Sub-Topic: Enhancing support service via rectified perceptions – myth vs fact; supporting SAMHSA & VA's 2018 Mayor's Challenge

1615 - 1620 **Break**

1620 - 1730 **Panel 5: Employment. Moderator – James Davenport, Director of Student Affairs & Student Veteran Services at University of North Texas.** Tim Shatto (Sergeant Major, USMC Retired), Director of Employment at Texas Veterans Commission; Carla Miller, Hiring Our Heroes Program Manager at U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Christina Mortel, Veteran Entrepreneur Program Manager at Texas Veterans Commission; Elizabeth O'Brien, Senior Director for Military Spouse Program at U.S. Chamber of Commerce (Hiring Our Heroes); Bob Gear Jr. (First Sergeant, USA Retired), Director of Texas Veterans Leadership Program at Texas Workforce Commission; Alex Fender, Advisory Committee Member for Veterans Business Affairs at U.S. Small Business Administration

Sub-Topic: How to increase opportunities before, during, and after campus life; supporting the White House's Joining Forces Initiative

SOCIAL MEDIA @ THE SYMPOSIUM

Tweet your thoughts about the 10th Annual Texas Veterans Higher using the Twitter handle and hashtag.

Twitter Handle: @utsystem | @tamusystem
Hashtag: #TXVETS



AGENDA-AT-A-GLANCE

FRIDAY, OCT. 12

0700 - 0900 **On-site event and exhibit registration. \$25 fee (single day), no credit cards.*

0730 - 1630 **Exhibition. Various veteran service organizations**

0730 - 0900 **Opening Reception** (Breakfast Provided)

Speaker Introduction – Gerald Smith (Colonel, USMC Retired), Director of Veterans Resource & Support Center, Texas A&M University System.

Guest Speaker — Feliece Murrell (Sergeant Major, USA), Lead Analyst for the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence Education, Degree Programs, and Executive Transitions, U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy

Topic(s): Planned initiatives, connecting campus programs to the VA Healthcare System, and local community & campus initiatives

0900 - 0910 **Break**

0910 - 1000 **Panel 6: Student Veterans. Moderator – Dr. Janet Bagby, Founder of Veteran Educational & Transition Services (VETS) at Baylor University.** Taylor Lujan, Student Veterans of America President from University of Texas at Austin; Alyssa Knuth, Social Event Coordinator & Student Veterans of America President at Texas A&M University at Commerce; Serita Whiting, Research Assistant and Doctoral Student at Prairie View A&M University; and Elizabeth Rosato, Student Veterans of America Member at Texas Woman's University

Sub-Topic: Enhancing support systems via best practices & lessons learned; implementing the U.S. Department of Education's 8 Keys to Veterans' Success; achieving 60x30TX

1000 - 1005 **Break**

1005 - 1115 **Panel 7a: Skills Bridging. Moderator – Gerald Smith (Colonel, USMC Retired) Director of Veterans Resource & Support Center, Texas A&M University System.** Dr. Larry Wallace Jr. (Captain, USA Retired), Director of Veteran Support & Leadership Programs at UT System; Tommy McGowen (Sergeant Major, USA Retired), Former Senior Human Resources Manager; Bob Gear Jr. (First Sergeant, USA Retired), Director of Texas Veterans Leadership Program at Texas Workforce Commission; Marvyn Mulcahy (First Sergeant, USAF), Former Senior Healthcare Manager

Sub-Topic: The military's management of business operations and systems architecture analyzed; supporting the White House's Joining Forces Initiative

1005 - 1115 **Panel 7b: VA, SAA, and SCOs – Part I. Moderator – Dr. Christine Stuart-Carruthers, Texas State Technical College.** Linda Alexander, VA Compliance Program Specialists - Team Lead at Texas Veterans Commission; Andrea Watts, Veterans Education Program Approval Specialists - Team Lead at Texas Veterans Commission; Rand Binford, Education Coordinator Program Specialists - Team Lead at Texas Veterans Commission; Tina Marberry, Operations Manager at Veterans Education Department at Texas Veterans Commission; Michelle Nelson, Education Liaison Representative at VA Benefits Processing Center

AGENDA-AT-A-GLANCE

FRIDAY, OCT. 12

Sub-Topic: Student Tracking, Certification Documentations, Compliance Survey, Catalog Updating

1115 - 1120 Break

1120 - 1210 **Panel 8a: National Veteran Service Organizations. Dr. Shirley Higgs, Executive Administrator for Veteran Affairs at Dallas County Community College District.** Charles Catoe (Colonel, USAF Retired), Director of Fund for Veterans Assistance at Texas Veterans Commission; Jim Brennan, Legislative Director at Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations; Michael Lacy, State Veteran Service Officer at American Legion; Dan West, State Director of Operations & Past State Commander at Veterans of Foreign Wars

Sub-Topic: Leveraging community resources to enhance graduation rates & mitigate service support gaps

1120 - 1210 **Panel 8b: VA, SAA, and SCOs – Part II. Moderator – Adriana Leal, Director of Center for Veteran Affairs at University of the Incarnate Word.** Linda Alexander, VA Compliance Program Specialists - Team Lead at Texas Veterans Commission; Andrea Watts, Veterans Education Program Approval Specialists - Team Lead at Texas Veterans Commission; Rand Binford, Education Coordinator Program Specialists - Team Lead at Texas Veterans Commission; Charles Bryant, Hazlewood Program Specialists - Team Lead at Texas Veterans Commission; Michelle Nelson, Education Liaison Representative at VA Benefits Processing Center; Reginald Gladney, Assistant Director for Oversight and Outreach at VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service

Sub-Topic: VOCREHAB, Hazlewood, Academic Fresh Start, Study Abroad, Student Workers

1210 - 1215 Break

1215 - 1345 **Afternoon Reception (Lunch Provided)**

Speaker Introduction – Dr. Larry Wallace Jr. (Captain, USA Retired), Director of Veteran Support & Leadership Programs, UT System

Guest Speaker – Darin Selnick (Captain, USAF Retired), Former Veteran Affairs Advisor for White House Domestic Policy

Topic(s): White House Domestic Policy, planned initiatives, and best practices & lessons learned to influence policy

1345 - 1400 Break

1400 - 1430 **Adjournment.** Tony Cucolo (Major General, USA Retired), Associate Vice Chancellor for Leadership Development & Veteran Affairs, UT System; TBD, Texas A&M System

Retiring of Colors – Detachment 825 Air Force, University of Texas at Austin

Administrative Remarks – Dr. Larry Wallace Jr. (Captain, USA Retired), Director of Veteran Support & Leadership Programs, UT System; Gerald Smith (Colonel, USMC Retired), Director of Veterans Resource & Support Center, Texas A&M University System.

1430 - 1445 Break

1445 - 1700 **Breakouts.** Open discussion, symposium topics and current campus activities & programs.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Robert M. Worley II

DIRECTOR, EDUCATION SERVICE

Department of Veterans Affairs

Robert M. Worley II (Major General, USAF Retired) was appointed Director of Education Service on March 29, 2012. In this capacity, Worley provides executive-level oversight in the department for policy, planning, integration, and delivery of education program benefits administered by the Veterans Benefits Administration. Prior to this current assignment, he served as the Director of Programs, Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans and Programs, Headquarters Air Force, Washington, D.C. In this capacity, Worley was responsible for developing, integrating, and analyzing the Air Force future budget program of \$600 billion across the Future Years Defense Program. Worley has held numerous leadership positions leading military space operations to include intercontinental ballistic missile, satellite command/control, space surveillance, missile warning, and satellite launch operations. His military decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal and the Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters. His civilian awards include the Distinguished Presidential Rank Award for 2017.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND ASSOCIATIONS:

Senior Executive Association
Air Force Association
USAF Academy Association of Graduates
Military Officers Association of America
Cherrydale Masonic Lodge #42, AFAM
Air Force Retired Officers Community
Board of Director



GUEST SPEAKER

Christopher Sandles

Christopher Sandles (Lietutenant, USNR), M.B.A., FACHE, was appointed Director for the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System (CTVHCS) effective February 19, 2017. As Director, Sandles is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the largest Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system with an annual budget of \$603 million and more than 4,217 employees. Sandles has 14 years of progressively responsible healthcare leadership roles, beginning his healthcare career in 2002 at Covenant Health System in Lubbock, Texas. In 2003, he was accepted into the Government Health Administration Training Program (GHATP) and served his post graduate fellowship with the VA North Texas Healthcare System in Dallas, Texas. His VA service includes positions as Associate Director of the Houston VA Medical Center, Assistant Director of the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, Chief of Health Administration Service at VA Loma Linda Health Care System, Assistant Chief of Medical Administration at VA North Texas Health Care System, Special Assistant to the Director-VA North Texas Health Care System, and Administrative Director for Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at VA North Texas Health Care System. Sandles received both his bachelor's degree in Business and master's degree in Healthcare Administration from Texas Tech University. He holds a green belt certification in Lean Six Sigma from Villanova University, is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives, and is a newly commissioned Lieutenant in the Navy Reserves.



GUEST SPEAKER

Darin Selnick

Darin Selnick (Captain, USAF Retired) served as Veteran Affairs Advisor for the White House's Domestic Policy Council. He was responsible for veterans policy and coordination of efforts with White House offices, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and other federal agencies. Selnick reviewed and provided input and recommendations on VA policies, reform efforts, legislative proposals, regulations, rules, budget, and congressional testimony. Previously, Selnick served as Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. His responsibilities included advising the Secretary and other senior management officials on sensitive issues and critical matters pertaining to policies, priorities, and the program direction of the Department regarding structure, organization, and operation. Selnick served as a Commissioner for the Commission on Care, which Congress established to examine how the VA could better deliver health care to veterans over the next 20 years. Selnick was appointed into various Department of Veterans Affairs positions such as the Director of Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, VA Liaison to the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, Special Assistant to the VA Secretary, and the Associate Dean for the VA Learning University. He is also a member of the American Legion, AMVETS, Air Force Association, and Jewish War Veterans. Selnick is a retired Air Force officer who attained the rank of Captain.



GUEST SPEAKER

Feliece Murrell

Feliece Y. Murrell (Sergeant Major, USA Retired) serves as the Lead Analyst and Advisor for the Noncommissioned Officer Leadership Center of Excellence for Education, Degree Programs, and Executive Transitions at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy. She began her U.S. Army career in October 1989, graduating as an Administrative Specialist and later reclassifying as a Recruiter. Her military education includes the Recruiting Command Sergeants Major Course, Instructor Course, Guidance Counselor Course, Operations Sergeants Major Course, Battle Staff Course, and Contacting Office Course, to name a few. Murrell earned a bachelor's degree from Oakland City University, a master's degree in Management & Leadership from Webster's University, and a master's degree in Lifelong Learning & Adult Education from the Pennsylvania State University. Murrell's awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, 5th Oak Leaf Cluster; Army Good Conduct Medal, 9th Award; National Defense Service Medal; Army Service Ribbon; Overseas Ribbon; Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Service Ribbon, Numeral 5; Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal; Glen E. Morrell Award; Award Recruiter Ring; and the Gold Recruiter Badge. She is married to Darrin R. Murrell (Command Sergeant Major, Retired). They have two daughters and four grandchildren.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Linda
Alexander

Linda Alexander is the Texas Veterans Commission's (TVC) Compliance Branch Program Supervisor for the Veterans Education Department (VED). She is one of two Dallas Regional Compliance Branch team members whose territory covers North and Northeast Texas. She has worked with the TVC for 12 years and the VED for 15 years. Her responsibilities include being the subject matter expert for Veterans Education; conducting compliance surveys ensuring compliance with laws governing the GI Bill; providing training to new school certifying officials; and conducting outreach activities providing Veterans Education information to veteran, civic, community, and educational entities and organizations. Prior to TVC, she worked for the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) for 19 years in supervisory, management, and leadership roles within various divisions such as Career Schools and Colleges, Employment Services (Veterans/Non-Veterans), Business Services, and Unemployment Insurance. Although not a military veteran, Alexander has worked with veterans since her state of Texas career began in 1986, and she was awarded official "Wings" from the TWC for her dedicated service to veterans and their families. She also has six nieces and nephews currently serving in the United States Armed Forces.



Dr. Erin
Andrews

Dr. Erin E. Andrews is the Interim Site Chief, Austin Mental Health & Behavioral Medicine, Austin VA Outpatient Clinic and Co-Director of Psychology Training at the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System. She is Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Texas Dell Medical School. She received her doctorate in clinical psychology from Wright State University and a bachelor of science in psychology from Michigan State University. She is also board certified in Rehabilitation Psychology. Dr. Andrews is past co-chair of the APA Committee on Disability Issues in Psychology.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



**Dr. Janet
Bagby**

Dr. Janet Bagby is a senior lecturer in the Department of Educational Psychology within the School of Education at Baylor University. With an Army veteran husband and an active duty Marine Corps son, Dr. Bagby is passionate about serving student veterans. After having conducted her initial student veteran-related research, Dr. Bagby realized the importance of providing student veteran services at Baylor and in 2012 founded VETS (Veteran Educational and Transition Services). The mission of VETS is to promote the educational success of student veterans at Baylor. Since that time, the program has continued to grow and in 2016 a full-time VETS program manager was hired. With an array of services, Baylor is currently ranked at No. 38 among national universities in the Best Colleges for Veterans category by U.S. News. Dr. Bagby currently serves on the VETS Advisory Board and continues to conduct student veteran-related research. Her most recent research addressed the characteristics of veterans who choose to attend non-profit private schools.



Anna Baker

Anna Baker is the Women Veterans Program Manager at the Texas Veterans Commission. Before joining the Texas Veterans Commission, Baker led sales and operations at Dell, Inc. and Tech Data Corporation. She is an Air Force veteran who served from 1980 – 1984 as a Korean and Spanish linguist. After military service, Baker moved to Germany working for Federal Electric International as the executive assistant to program and contract managers. Upon returned to Texas, she received her bachelor's degree in Accounting from Schreiner University and an M.B.A. from Baylor University. Baker is an active volunteer with Meals on Wheels, Junior Achievement, and Dress for Success.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



**Bettie Peebles
Beckworth**

Bettie Peebles Beckworth serves as the Texas Health and Human Services' Program Director of Veteran Services. Her career includes academic medicine, healthcare and higher education, including The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, UT Austin, UT Health Science Center at Tyler and UT El Paso. Beckworth has served in the private health care sector, as well as in other state and federal government positions giving her extensive experience in multiple areas of veterans and military-affiliated needs being recognized as a national leader military and veteran affairs. She served as special advisor to leadership of Veteran Integrated Service Networks 16 (Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana), 17 (Texas), and the San Antonio Military Medical Center Defense and Veteran Brain Injury Centers. She founded the former Southwest Military Consortium that included military and civilian brain injury subject matter experts in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana. She is the state team lead for the SAMHSA Mayor's Challenges to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families and is actively involved with the Texas Homeless Network and the Texas Department of Housing and Urban Affairs and others serving the SMVF population. Beckworth holds a Bachelor of Journalism degree from the UT Austin and a Master of Education in Higher Education Administration from Vanderbilt University.



Dr. Sherri Benn

Dr. Sherri Humphrey Benn is the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Director and Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator of Student Diversity and Inclusion at Texas State University. Dr. Benn received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and the Master of Education degree in Educational Administration from Texas State University. She received her Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education Administration from UT Austin. Dr. Benn has served as Interim Director of Residence Life, Assistant Dean of Students, Student Ombudsman, and Coordinator for Student Justice. She has lead, coordinated, and participated in many student life and university programs during her tenure at Texas State, including supervising the Texas State mentoring program and the attorney for students office, coordinating the Dean of Students strategic plan, advising Student Government, Texas State Student Foundation, Bobcat Fanatics, Black President's Council, Hip Hop Congress, Inc., Christian's On Campus, Golden Key National Honor's Society, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., N.O.W. and Sister Circle, Interruptions Multi-racial Anti-racism Peer Educator. Dr. Benn is also the editor and contributing writer to the book *Secret Sins of the Heart*, and former board chair of *Speaking Heart to Heart*, a non-profit organization providing outreach services to women in transition.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



**Dr. Justin
Benzer**

Dr. Justin Benzer is an Associate Professor, UT Dell Medical School's Department of Psychiatry and the Implementation Science Core Chief for the Department of Veterans Affairs Center for Research on Returning Veterans. Dr. Benzer received his Ph.D. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Texas A&M University, and completed his post-doctoral training as a Health Services Research Fellow at the VA Boston Healthcare System's Center for Organization, Leadership, and Management Research. He is the recipient of a VA Health Services Research and Development Career Development Award to study the role of organizational context in the implementation of new practices. His research focuses on the organizational and team factors that impact organizational changes, with specific interest on changes that involve multiple specialties. Dr. Benzer uses a wide variety of methods, including large database research, qualitative research, and survey research. Dr. Benzer served as a Sergeant in the US Army.



Rand Binford

Rand Binford (Colonel, USA Retired) is a Texas native, a graduate of Sam Houston State University, the U.S. Navy War College, the U.S. Marine War College, and was an instructor at the U.S. Army War College. Rand completed 35 years of service as an Army Soldier and Officer serving with and commanding Infantry and Special Forces-Special Operations units with service spanning Southwest Asia, Africa, the Middle-East, South Asia, and the Pacific.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



**Kathryn
Bongiovanni**

As the Austin VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Kathryn Bongiovanni, LCSW, provides direct care to high-risk veterans, clinical consultation, program design, and education with community partners. Additional to suicide prevention and veteran populations, she specializes in substance use, trauma, grief, and poverty. Bongiovanni has spent the majority of her career in mental and physical healthcare settings, including Chicago's VA Medical Center, working in out-pt therapy, inpatient psychiatry, medical & ICU wards, and hospice. Bongiovanni is an advanced Motivational Interviewing Practitioner and Consultant. She is proud to join the legacy of civil service in her family. Members include almost every branch of the armed forces but dearest to her are her grandmothers who were scientists and educators on secret defense projects during WWII. She holds a master's degree from the University of Chicago and bachelor's degree from Southwestern University.



**DeMuntz
Bowie**

DeMuntz Bowie (Sergeant First Class, USAR) currently serves as the Veterans Service Coordinator for Prairie View A&M University. His major responsibilities include processing all VA educational benefits, determining Hazlewood eligibility, and assisting student veterans with job placement. As of June 2018, Bowie helped open Prairie View's Veterans Center. Bowie is also a Sergeant First Class (SFC) in the U.S. Army Reserves going on 15 years as a Civil Affairs professional. He initially entered the U.S. Army in November of 1999, and was assigned to the 321st Civil Affairs Brigade in San Antonio, Texas. During his time in the Army, SFC Bowie deployed to Afghanistan multiple times out of Fort Sam Houston with unit attachments to the 10th Mountain Division and 1st Cavalry Division. He currently serves as the Functional Specialty Team (FXSP) Noncommissioned Officer in Charge with additional duties as the brigade Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC).

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



**James "Jim"
Brennan**

Jim Brennan was appointed as Director for Resources & Research for the Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations in 2009. This appointment followed several years of advocacy at the Texas legislature related to business and veteran issues. In 2013, Brennan assumed the duties of Legislative Director. Brennan served in the U.S. Army from 1969 -1970 as a medic with assignments at Ft. Polk, LA and Ft. Sam Houston, TX. Brennan is also the President and owner of AAUSA Electric Supply, Inc., a Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business, in Austin, Texas, founded in 2004 to support government projects around the world. Brennan has been a relentless advocate for veterans and their families at the Texas legislature. He is committed to protecting the interests of veterans through monitoring proposed legislation and initiating legislative proposals based on the expressed concerns of our members. Brennan's memberships and affiliations include the Texas Veteran Commission Advisory Board for Employment & Training, Past Vice Chairman and Current Board Member; National Defense Industrial Association Central Texas Chapter, Past President and Current Board Member; and Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter #915.



Charles Bryant

Charles Bryant is the Hazlewood Act Program Supervisor for the Texas Veterans Commission. He has worked with the Texas Veterans Commission Veterans Education Department since 2009 and with the Hazlewood Act since 2014. He is a U.S. Army veteran.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



**Schnell
Carraway**

Schnell Carraway is a Management and Program Analyst for Regulation and Policy Development with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Education Service. She works with internal and external stakeholders to communicate complex policy and regulations in clear language. She drafts detailed guidance addressing the most complex implementation issues facing veteran education benefits. She is currently leading the VBA's Forever GI Bill policy and regulation implementation. She recently served as a Workforce Planning (WFP) Learning Circle Leader training entry-level participants in VA's Corporate Workforce Planning Process. In her current role, Carraway utilizes her workforce planning knowledge and skills to carry out the implementation of new bills and laws affecting veteran education benefits. She also ensures all responsible teams are aware of how new laws impact veterans and schools serving veterans across the nation, including initiating the integration of workforce operations and processes with other VA-wide processes to maximize resources, effectiveness, and achieve strategic goals. Carraway began her career with VBA in 2009 as a Claims Examiner. She is a graduate from Southern IL University-Carbondale with a bachelor's degree in Workforce Education & Development and graduated from Webster University with a dual master's degree in Human Resource Development and Management & Leadership. She is also Lean Six-Sigma Green Belt, VA HR Academy Employee Relations, and VA Master Facilitator certified.



Charles Catoe

Charles Catoe (Colonel, USAF Retired) is the Director of the Fund for Veterans' Assistance at the Texas Veterans Commission. In this role he leads the department that administers all grants awarded by the Texas Veterans Commission to non-profits, veterans service organizations and units of local government that provide direct services to veterans and their families state-wide. His division evaluates applications, monitors performance and ensures compliance with federal and state grant guidance for the agency and grant recipients. The broad variety of services involve frequent coordination across state government, including the Office of the Governor, Texas Lottery Commission, Health and Human Services Commission and the legislature on the full spectrum of grant-funded veterans' services from homelessness, mental health, and specialty treatment courts, to transportation, family services and financial assistance. Catoe is a 27-year Air Force veteran and holds a bachelor's degree in Engineering from the United States Air Force Academy, two master's degrees from Air University, one master's degree from Embry-Riddle University, and a graduate certification in Grants Management.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Starr Corbin

Starr Corbin was recently appointed as a Commissioner to the State Commission for Women by Governor Abbott. Currently, Corbin is the Vice President of Programming and Playback Systems for iHeartMedia. She also serves on the Governor's Commission for Women, a Trustee of the First Cavalry Division Foundation, and board member for the First Cavalry Division Association. Although Starr's career is working in the IT industry within both public and private sectors, she began her career in the United States Army as a Signal Officer serving with the 1st Cavalry Division and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in Baghdad, Iraq. Corbin is an alumna of the Texas Christian University and UT Austin, and co-founded the UT Student Veteran's Association. She is also pursuing a Ph.D. in Computer Science at Southern Methodist University.



Tony Cucolo

Tony Cucolo (Major General, USA Retired) currently serves as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Leadership Development and Veterans Affairs at the UT System, the second largest university system in the United States, composed of eight universities and six academic health institutions across Texas. His duties include leader development of students and employees as well as providing focused support for all veterans and military-affiliated students serving in the system. Cucolo served more than 35 years in the U.S. Army, as a General Officer in the last 11 years of his military career, he led soldiers in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, led analysis teams in combat zones and on natural disaster recovery efforts such as Hurricane Katrina, and commanded the largest Army base east of the Mississippi. Additionally, during this time period, Cucolo developed a \$35B equipment program for the Army, served as the U.S. Army's Chief of Public Affairs, and was Commandant of the U.S. Army War College. Cucolo earned a bachelor's degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point and a master's degree from the University of San Francisco. He and Ginger, his wife of more than 35 years, have three grown children, a devoted Great Dane, and recently made their 27th move to an 80-year-old fixer-upper in East Austin.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



James
Davenport

James Davenport is the Director for The University of North Texas Student Affairs department within Student Veteran Services. In this capacity, Davenport manages the daily activity of all programs and staff originating out of the Student Affairs department within Student Veteran Services. He also assists students in accessing support and resources both internally and externally to meet their specific needs. Davenport has over 35 years of military and veterans programs experience with 20 in the United States Army where he taught Military Science at three military academies. Subsequently, he served twice at the Texas Veterans Commission working within employment services. Davenport is a University of North Texas graduate and attended Graduate School at the Texas Woman's University.



Celina Dugas

Celina Dugas, LICSW, came to the University of Houston as the Director of Veteran Services in December 2014. As the Director of Veteran services, she provides services and support to just under 3,000 student veterans and military-connected students. She oversees two full-time program coordinators, one half-time program administrator, and 22 student workers, and maintains MOUS with the VA VetSuccess Program. Prior to taking this position at the University of Houston, Dugas worked as the Program Manager for the VA VITAL program in Bedford, MA. As one of the first VITAL sites funded in the country, Dugas was instrumental in developing the program at her VA medical center. While at Bedford she provided on campus services to veterans who were enrolled in college. Through her work on campus, Dugas provided outreach to many student veterans, providing important services that may have otherwise not been accessed. Dugas provided advocacy for student veterans on campus, assisting them in receiving accommodations and support that would help them to succeed in their pursuit of higher education. Dugas also provided consultation and education to faculty and staff at these and other local colleges in Massachusetts and nationally. Dugas served as the Co-Chair of the VITAL Education and Training National Committee, providing the most up-to-date comprehensive and standardized education and training materials to college and university staff and faculty, community partners and other stakeholders. Prior to the VA, Dugas was a civilian clinical social worker for the U.S. Air Force, working in the areas of Mental Health, Family Advocacy, and Airman and Family Support. She is a U.S. Army Veteran, and is married to a recently retired 22-year Air Force officer with multiple Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM combat tours.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Aaron Eagan

Aaron Eagan leads Innovation and Program Development in Suicide Prevention for the VA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and is the national program manager for the REACH VET initiative. He represents the office on a variety of topics, including VA suicide prevention efforts, predictive analytics and data, innovation, and public health. Eagan has almost 25 years of nursing and healthcare experience and has developed a diverse array of medical, public health, and leadership experience. He has a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Central Florida and a Master of Public Health from the University of South Florida.



Alex Fender

Alex Fender was born in Plano and grew up in the suburbs of Dallas, TX. He served 8 years in the U.S. Marines, graduated Cum Laude from Columbia College with a B.S. in Management, and attended Northwestern University to pursue a master's degree in Predictive Analytics. During and after his service, Fender started three businesses and consulted with more than 1,000 businesses globally. Eventually, he sold two out of the three businesses to focus on growing the third business, Funnel Science. Over the years, Fender was interviewed by various outlets, such as *Vetpreneur Magazine* (May 2012), and received multiple write-ups in the *Dallas Business Journal*. He was honored to be awarded by MTI as the Veteran Entrepreneur of the Year for 2013 during a reception at the Federal Reserve Bank in Dallas. In 2017, Fender entered into the Veteran Business Battle held at Rice University, which is a business plan competition for veteran-owned companies. Funnel Science® won first place and a \$250,000 investment from EO Houston. This year, he was appointed to the U.S. Small Business Administration Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs. As a committee member, he serves as an independent source of advice and also makes policy recommendations to the SBA Administrator, the Associate Administrator of the Office of Veterans Business Development, U.S. Congress, the President of the United States of America, and other U.S. policymakers under Section 203 of the Veterans

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Bob Gear Jr.

Bob Gear Jr. (First Sergeant, USA Retired) is the Director of the Texas Workforce Commission's Veterans Leadership Program. The Texas Veterans Leadership Program is resource and referral network that serves to connect returning veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with the resources and tools they require to achieve a successful transition from the battlefield to civilian life. He brings years of experience working with programs designed for military service members, veterans, and their families. Gear is a co-founder and served two years as the Commander of the first Veterans of Foreign Wars Virtual Post in the nation. Under his leadership, the Post won VFW All-State and All-American Honors two years in a row. During 2016-2017, Bob served as the District Commander for Texas VFW District 28, the District won All-State and All-American Honors. Gear serves as the Veterans Preference & Employment Committee Chairman for the American Legion, Department of Texas as well as the Texas VFW Employment Committee Chairman. Gear also coaches 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade youth tackle football. Before joining the Texas Veterans Leadership Program in July 2008, he served our nation in the United States Army for over 20 years, including a tour of duty in Desert Shield/Desert Storm and two tours of duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Reginald Gladney

Reginald Gladney was promoted to his current position at VA's Central Office in Washington, D.C. as the Assistant Director for Oversight and Outreach in VR&E Service in January 2013. In his new role, he is responsible for the development of new enhancements of existing partnerships linked to the Veteran Employment. He assists with the budget formulation process to ensure funds are in line with VR&E's commitment to continuous improvement plans. A critical focus of his position is on collaboration with field offices, partners and stakeholders to develop and implement innovative products and service to enhance veteran satisfaction. He also oversees the VetSuccess on Campus program at 104 college campuses, and the national compliance program for VR&E to ascertain achievement of program goals and objectives. He began his VA career in August 2004 in Los Angeles, CA as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. He was subsequently promoted to Assistant VR&E Officer with the Chicago Regional Office, Central Office Training Specialist and Supervisor of Training position in the VR&E program. With over 24 years of experience in the field of rehabilitation, Gladney has provided rehabilitation and mental health services in private-not-for-profit and state government rehabilitation organizations. Gladney completed both his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling. He also holds a Master of Business Administration.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



**Octavia D.
Harris**

Octavia Harris (Command Master Chief, USN Retired) was recently appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to chair the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, representing a voice for over 2 million. She was also appointed as the Texas Ambassador of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, the only official National Museum dedicated to honor women who served and are currently serving all branches of the Armed Forces. Harris retired from the U.S. Navy after 30 years as a Command Master Chief having led in commands at sea, ashore and overseas. In 1994 assigned in USS NIMITZ (CVN 68) as one of the first female sailors on a combatant warship she was selected for promotion to Chief Petty Officer. She also led in warships USS TARAWA (LHA 1), USS BOXER (LHD 4), Enlisted Detailer responsible for assignment of 8,500 sailors and their families. As Command Master Chief, she led in USS PINCKNEY (DDG 91) Aegis Guided Missile Destroyer and Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command, leading 10,000 military and civilian personnel in Information and Combat Systems support worldwide. Only 1 percent of the U.S. military are promoted to the rank E9 - less than that are women. In her career she completed seven combat deployments. Honor graduate of U.S. Air Force Senior Enlisted Academy. She earned a B.A. Degree in Healthcare Administration from National University and M.S. Degree in Healthcare Operations Management from the University of Arkansas.



**Karen
Hearod**

Commander Karen Hearod serves as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Regional Administrator for Region 6, which includes Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma & Texas. SAMHSA is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. In her role as Regional Administrator, she supports stakeholders through technical assistance, promoting program development, policy innovation, and system transformation. Prior to accepting her position at SAMHSA, CDR Hearod served as the Indian Health Service Oklahoma City Area Acting Behavioral Health Consultant. In this position, CDR Hearod had oversight over behavioral health and substance use disorder programs across Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas providing services impacting 410,000 Native Americans. In addition to providing leadership as Chair for the IHS National Zero Suicide Advisory Committee, she served as a member of the National Suicide Crisis Policy Committee working to establish the first IHS national suicide care policy. CDR Hearod received a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Oklahoma and a Bachelor of Social Work from East Central University. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and is currently pursuing a graduate certificate in Global Health Engagement from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, MD. CDR Hearod possesses 12 years of active duty uniformed service as a member of the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



**Barbara
Hector**

Barbara Hector (Colonel, USA Retired) has been employed by the Veterans Health Administration and is the Women Veterans Program Manager for the South Texas Veterans Health Care System since 2009. Hector's career includes progressive nursing assignments and leadership roles at 10 military installations and culminated as Deputy Commander for Nursing and Clinical Support Services. A staunch advocate for Women's Health, she was an active consultant to the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services and served for two years as the Women's Health Consultant, 7th Medical Command, Europe. Hector received a direct commission for the Army Nurse Corps in 1979 prior to receiving a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing from Herbert H. Lehman College, City University of New York City. Hector completed a Master of Arts Degree in Management, Supervision, and Administration of Health Care from Central Michigan University. She attended UT Health Science Center, San Antonio, where she earned an alumni scholarship for outstanding achievement in graduate studies. She received dual master's degrees in Women's Health Care and Nursing Services Administration, with a minor in Nursing Education. Hector holds national certifications as a Women's Health Care Nurse Practitioner and as a gynecologic colposcopist. She is a graduate of the Army's Command and General Staff College.



**Dr. Shirley
Higgs**

Dr. Shirley Higgs currently serves as Executor Administrator for Foster Care & Veteran Affairs at Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD). Prior to this position, she served the role of District Director of Student Success at District Office, Dean of Student Success at Mountain View College, Director of The Rising Star Program at Mountain View College, and various other student services positions. With each of her varied positions, Dr. Higgs has carried with her a commitment to help students achieve. Dr. Higgs has over 33 years of higher education experience having served as professional support staff, adjunct faculty, and administrator within DCCCD. As a former community college student, she is excited to share the new DCCCD VA Network support and engagement with members of the military-affiliated community wanting to pursue college credentials and build new careers. Dr. Higgs received her associate degree from Cedar Valley College, a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Dallas Baptist University, a master's degree in Education from American Intercontinental University, and a doctorate in Higher Education Leadership from Capella University.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Alyssa Knuth

Alyssa Knuth is a Marine Corps veteran, single mother of one, and a non-traditional student striving for her Bachelor of Science in Human Resources Development with a Business minor at Texas A&M University. During her time at community college, she served as the President of Blinn College Student Veterans Association before transferring to Texas A&M where she served as the Social Event Coordinator and is their current chapter President. Additionally, she continues her efforts with student veterans, through the VA Work Study Program, as a student worker in the Veterans Resource & Support Center on Texas A&M University's campus. Knuth received an associate degree in Liberal Arts from Blinn College in 2016 and is pursuing a B.S. in Human Resources Development from Texas A&M.



Michael Lacy

Michael Lacy has worked for the American Legion for 12 years serving our veterans and currently serves as the Department of Texas Service Officer. Additionally, Lacy and his wife, Alison, have been proud Legionnaires for 26 years. Lacy served in both the U.S. Army (1989 - 1993) and the U.S. Army Reserves (1993 - 1997). His tours of duty took him to Ft. McClellan, AL; Panama; Ft. Ritchie, MD; Site R, Pennsylvania; and the Pentagon. After returning home from the Army, he attended Amarillo College and West Texas A&M University, where he received a B.B.A. in Marketing. Lacy and his family moved from Amarillo to Houston after working as the Llano Cemetery's Security Manager for 11 years.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Adriana Leal

Adriana Leal is the Center for Veterans Affairs Director at The University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) serving over 1,000 veterans. She also serves as the UIW Student Veterans Association Advisor consisting of over 80 members. Before this role, Adriana was the EAP Business Office Coordinator overseeing the financial side of Tuition Assistance. Leal holds a Master of Business Administration from The University of the Incarnate Word and a Bachelor of Business Administration from The University of the North Texas.



Gary Lee

Gary Lee (Sergeant Major, USMC Retired) serves as the Texas Veterans Commission's (TVC) Health Care Advocacy Program (HCAP) Manager. During his 23.5 years in the United States Marine Corps, he served in various military positions around the United States and overseas, including being a Marine Corps Martial Arts Program Instructor Trainer, and the 3rd Marine Air Wing Inspector General Sergeant Major. Lee joined the Texas Veterans Commission staff in August 2008 as a Claims Counselor at the Audie L. Murphy VAMC office in San Antonio, TX. After two years, he was promoted to that office's supervisor position, working not only with the veterans of this great state, but also with VA, city, county, and local agencies. In 2012, the San Antonio Bar Association recognized him for his training of new lawyers on veteran benefits, and for other contributions to their organization. After two years of managing one of the most productive claims offices in the state, he was promoted to the Training Coordinator for Claims, Counseling, and Representation. He was responsible for the training, testing, and certification of state (and regularly out-of-state), county, and occasionally federal personnel. One of his many accomplishments was helping the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) institute Texas House Bill 634. He traveled to prisons and taught their reintegration personnel to submit claims on behalf of incarcerated veterans in advance of their imminent release. This would facilitate benefit receipt sooner upon re-entry to the general populace, and potentially reduce recidivism. Lee possesses a bachelor's degree in Management and is currently pursuing his M.B.A. from Wayland Baptist University. He is also Project Management Professional certified.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Taylor Lujan

Taylor Lujan serves as the President of the Student Veterans Association (SVA) at University of Texas at Austin, with the purpose of improving the culture of longhorn student veterans to further their social, academic, and professional skills, while advocating for their needs. Through the collaboration and coordination with his officers, the SVA promotes weekly functions, and major events, where he learns and strives to implement the ideas/opinions/requests of student veterans ranging from bachelors, graduates, doctorate, and non degree seeking students. The needs are then advocated to UT councils, such as The Student Veteran Services and Military Veteran Advisory Council, that directly effect the lives of current and future veteran students. Lujan is a US Army - Light Infantry - veteran who has served in Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Freedom Sentinel before returning to his collegiate studies where he is currently finishing his senior year of Business Administration with a focus on Finance at the McCombs School of Business.



Jared Lyon

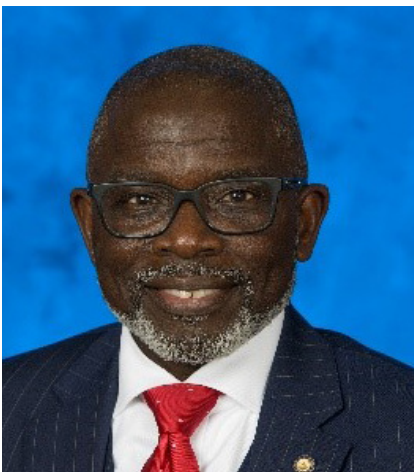
As President and CEO of Student Veterans of America, Jared Lyon leads the national organization's efforts to support student veterans to, through, and beyond higher education. Since his appointment in January 2016, Lyon has overseen SVA's growth to now include a network of more than 1,500 chapters on campuses in all 50 states and four countries representing more than 700,000 student veterans. During his tenure, he co-authored the National Veteran Education Success Tracker Project research, the first comprehensive study of student veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and in 2017 led SVA's commitment to pass the "Forever GI Bill," the largest expansion of college aid for military veterans in a decade. A veteran of the U.S. Navy, Lyon served as a submariner and diver, taking part in multiple deployments in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Lyon holds a Master of Public Administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, where he is an adjunct professor at the Whitman School of Management. He and his wife, Chayla, live in Washington, D.C. with their two dogs, Penelope and Madilynn.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Tina Marberry

Tina Marberry is the Operations Manager for Texas Veterans Commission, Veterans Education Department. She served in the United States Army as a Human Resource Specialist for 23 years and retired on August 31, 2015. During her service she deployed twice to combat areas and received the Bronze Star Medal and Legion of Merit. Marberry finished her career as a Department of the Army Inspector General. She received her Bachelor of Science in Business Management in February 2014 and is a member of Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM-CP), National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA), Western Association of Veterans Education Specialists (WAVES), and Texas Association of Collegiate Veteran Program Officials (TACVPO).



Dennis O. May

Dennis May (Colonel, USAF Retired) is Acting Director, Center for Minority Veterans in October 2017. He previously served as Director, Veterans Employment Coordination Service; Deputy Director, Veteran Employment Services Office; and Deputy Director, Central Office Human Resources Service. Mr. May came to the VA in 2007. He was commissioned in 1981 as a graduate of the Air Force ROTC program at the University of Arkansas, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in public administration. He later earned a Master of Science degree in public administration from Central Michigan University and a Master of Science in Human Resources Management from Strayer University. He is also a 2013 graduate of the Federal Executive Institute's Leadership for a Democratic Society. While on active duty, Mr. May held a variety of key assignments in administration, manpower and personnel career fields. He served on the Air Staff, at Joint Commands and at Major Command levels. He commanded the 17th Mission Support Squadron, Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, which was twice named best mission support squadron in Air Education and Training Command. He served in the Pentagon as Director of the Headquarters Air Force Executive Secretariat, as well as Chief of Personnel Issues for the Secretary of the Air Force's Executive Issues Team. Mr. May's military awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal. He also earned "Best in the Air Force" recognition as Air Force Senior Personnel Manager of the year for 2000.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



**Tommy
McGowen**

Tommy R. McGowen (Sergeant Major, USA Retired) is a Senior Leader Training Analyst at the United States Army Reserve Command G-37 Leader Development Division. During his 30 years of human resources service to the U.S. Army, McGowen provided personnel support, assistance, mentorship, and career guidance to various organizations in the following roles: Personal Administrative Specialist at 426th Supply and Transportation Battalion, Personnel Service NCO at 556th Military Police Company, Personnel Sergeant at 24th Transportation Battalion, Officer and Enlisted Branch NCOIC at Headquarters Post Fort Eustis, Advanced Initial Training Instructor then HR Operations Sergeant at Adjutant General Battalion, Personnel Sergeant at 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), First Sergeant and Personnel Plans NCO at U.S. Army Alaska Command, First Sergeant at 203rd Personnel Services Battalion, G1 Senior Human Resources Sergeant at U.S. Army Special Forces Command (Airborne), G1 Enlisted Strength Manager at U.S. Army Special Operations Command, inaugural G1 Sergeant Major at U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, G1 Sergeant Major at Europe Regional Medical Command, G1 Sergeant Major at 10th Army Air Missile Defense Command, and G1 Sergeant Major United States Army Special Operations Aviation Command (Airborne). He also holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Wayland Baptist University. He is also married to the former Emma S. McKinnon and proud parents of two sons, Kirk, 29, and Joshua, 20



**Dr. Monica
Mendez-Grant**

Dr. Monica Mendez-Grant serves as the Vice President for Student Life at Texas Woman's University, which is the nation's largest university primarily for women and ranked top 10 nationally for student diversity. Dr. Mendez-Grant's career achievements span the areas of counseling, administration, and teaching graduate level grant writing classes. She has more than 25 years of leadership experience in various areas of student affairs, including student access and success, student development, student orientation, judicial affairs, and auxiliary services. She holds a doctorate in higher education administration, a master's degree in counseling, and a bachelor's degree in business administration, all from the University of North Texas. Dr. Mendez-Grant has been actively leading campus expansion projects, engagement with students, and facilitating The Division of Student Life's priorities in conjunction with the University's Strategic Plan. She also served on Denton County's inaugural team focused on mental health needs.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Carla Miller

Carla Miller is the Fort Bliss and Joint Base San Antonio Corporate Fellowship program manager for Hiring Our Heroes. In her current role, Miller works with transitioning service members on skills needed to succeed in the civilian workforce. She mentors, aligns and organizes fellowship opportunities to help bridge the gap with host companies and service member's transitioning into civilian careers. Miller has experience in curriculum and development, human resource management, marketing, recruiting, course planning, advising, corporate development, fundraising, and veteran initiatives programs. With over 15 years of education experience, Miller is a former middle school teacher, where she taught math, science, and social studies. She has experience working in higher education where she worked for the University of Oklahoma, and currently serves as program management for the Corporate Fellowship with Hire Our Heroes. She is a graduate of Texas State University, and obtained her bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, with a minor in Geography. In addition, Miller holds a dual master's degree from the University of Oklahoma in Human Relations, and a Master of Arts with an emphasis in International Relations.



Rachele Misiti

Rachele Misiti, LCSW-S, is the Assistant Chief of Social Work at Central Texas VA Healthcare System. After starting her career in community care (mental health and homeless case management) she transitioned to the VA in the Transition and Care Management program as a case manager in 2007. After years of providing case management to seriously injured combat veterans, she moved into a leadership position as the Transition and Care Management Program Manager for Central Texas. Additionally, Misiti provides oversight to the rapidly expanding Veteran to Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) and social work site lead for Integrated Case Management. Central Texas TCM teams were recipients of the 2015 Transition and Care Management Team of the Year from the VA Care Management Social Work Service. Misiti leads CTX Social Work Service's Quality Value and Safety Committee. In partnership with Ms. Sanders in Nursing, Misiti developed the innovative Integrated Case Management Model, which has served as the gold standard and led the push for implementing an integrated approach to case management efforts nationally. Misiti has a Bachelor of Social Work and Bachelor of Studio Art from Bloomsburg University (2001), Bloomsburg, PA and a Master of Science in Social Work from UT Austin (2004). Misiti is an avid Dressage horseback rider, angora goat breeder and fiber artist.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Jeff Moe

Jeffrey Moe, LCSW (Staff Sergeant, USA) is a licensed clinical social worker serving as a Student Veteran Coordinator for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at colleges and universities within the Austin, Texas area. Born and raised in Southern California, Moe enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2002 and served for seven years as an Arabic linguist. As a part of his service, he deployed to Afghanistan with the 82nd Airborne Division and to Iraq with 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne). After leaving the military, Moe took advantage of his post 9/11 GI Bill benefits and earned graduate degrees in both Middle Eastern Studies and Social Work. As a part of his current duties, Moe serves student veterans by providing counseling, healthcare enrollment into the Central Texas VA, resource referrals, and assistance with academic accommodations. Additionally, Moe advises the student-led UT Austin Student Veteran Transition Guide Program and provides professional development opportunities for faculty and staff so that they are able to serve and empower student veterans more effectively. Outside of these duties, Moe serves as an adjunct assistant professor at the Steve Hicks School of Social Work at UT Austin, specializing in social work with veteran and military-affiliated populations.



Christina Mortel

Christina Mortel is a Veteran Business Consultant with the Texas Veterans Commission, Veteran Entrepreneur Program. With eight years of small business ownership experience, Mortel provides individual counseling and guidance on business entity formation, business plans, financial forecasting, HUB certification, as well as connecting veterans to local partner resources in the state. Prior to joining TVC, Mortel worked for Hewlett Packard Company as a Global Account Manager providing software, hardware and technology solutions to enterprise and global customers. A U.S. Army veteran, Mortel holds a master's degree in Business Administration in International Business from Regis University and is a graduate of Canisius College, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations and Political Science. Mortel is a member of the Austin World Affairs Council and the Austin Chapter of Project Management Institute.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Marvyn Mulcahy (Senior Master Sergeant, USAF) is currently interning at The University of Texas System as a Veterans Affairs Project Manager through a Hiring Our Heroes Corporate Fellowship Program. Mulcahy retires on 1 Jan 2019 after 25 years of service within the healthcare profession. For the past 7 years, Mulcahy served as a nominative First Sergeant for 2 Aircraft Maintenance Squadrons, Logistics Readiness Squadron, Security Forces, twice for Special Forces. As a Special Forces First Sergeant, Mulcahy oversaw 1400 personnel and won the Air Force's highest leadership award, the AETC Lance P Sijan over 48,000 peers; and the regional First Sergeant of the Year Award twice. Mulcahy is nearly complete with his M.B.A. and currently looking for post-military career opportunities in the Austin area.

Marvyn Mulcahy



Elizabeth O'Brien is the senior director of the Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Program, a program dedicated to measurably impacting military spouse unemployment and underemployment through Hiring Our Heroes' overarching strategies of grassroots engagement and public-private partnerships. O'Brien joined the Hiring Our Heroes team in 2014 and evolved the military spouse program's event-centric focus to become a comprehensive resource at the forefront of military spouse employment. In addition to overseeing the program's research and strategic operations, she co-chairs the Military Spouse Employment Advisory Council, a coalition of companies with innovative spouse recruitment and retention initiatives that focuses on developing and promoting best practices and strategies that effectively address the unique employment challenges military spouses face. One of O'Brien's first initiatives as director was the acquisition of a chapter-based military spouse professional network consisting of 17 chapters and 3,000 members. Now known as the Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Professional Network, today the Network includes 50 location-specific networks and 11,000 members worldwide. O'Brien subsequently sought to enhance the educational arm of the spouse program and, along with the University of North Carolina-Wilmington, in 2017 conducted research for the program's first military spouse employment-specific study, *Military Spouses in the Workplace: Understanding the Impacts of Spouse Unemployment on Military Recruitment, Retention and Readiness*. O'Brien is a member of the SBA Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs, was a guest lecturer at the 2018 Association of Defense Communities Summit, and frequently appears on national and regional media speaking on military spouse employment.

Elizabeth O'Brien

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



After serving eight years in the Air Force, Elizabeth “Liz” Rosato enrolled at American Military University and earned a Bachelor of Art in Management. After struggling with medical issues for years, Rosato discovered that some of the most helpful steps towards pain reduction were through what she ate. She’s now a senior at Texas Woman’s University, earning a second degree in Nutrition with an emphasis in Dietetics to make a positive impact for others struggling with pain and other health issues. Rosato is an active member of the Texas Women’s University Student Veterans of America chapter and looks forward to applying for her internship at the VA and obtaining a job there after she is complete.

Elizabeth Rosato



Tim Shatto (Sergeant Major, USMC Retired) has served as the Director for Veterans Employment Services at the Texas Veterans Commission since September 1, 2017. He began his career with the Texas Veterans Commission in December 2010 as a Local Veterans Employment Representative in Wichita Falls, TX, in 2010. In January 2014, Shatto was transferred to Austin, TX where he became the Public Entity Liaison, which focused on the government sector and providing technical assistance to state agencies while implementing Veteran’s Preference. In April 2016, Shatto was selected as the Operations Manager, Veterans Employment Services and responsible for the daily activities of the Jobs for Veterans State Grant. Shatto was born and raised in Orrick, MO and enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in September 1981. He retired as Sergeant Major in September 2010 after 29 years of honest and faithful service.

Tim Shatto

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Jeff Singh

Jeff Singh (Sergeant Major, USA Retired) currently serves as the College Credit for Heroes Program Manager for the Texas Workforce Commission. He previously served as a Veteran Resource Specialist with Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Veterans Leadership Program assisting Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans transition from the military back into civilian life. Singh is a retired U.S. Army Veteran who served honorably for over 20 years with combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has served in every leadership position from team leader through Sergeant Major and holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Trident University International.



Gerald Smith

Since 2012, Gerald Smith (Colonel, USMC Retired) has been the Director for the Veteran Resource & Support Center at Texas A&M University. In the Summer of 2018, he was also designated as the Director of Veteran Services for the Texas A&M University System. Col. Smith graduated from Texas A&M with a B.A. in Political Science and was commissioned as a U.S. Marine Corps 2nd Lieutenant in 1982. During 30 years of service as an Artillery Officer, he had six command tours with two combat tours (Iraq 2003 & Afghanistan 2007). Other military assignments included eight years in higher education: three years as the Marine Instructor at Rice and Prairie View A&M; one year instructing at the USMC Command & Staff College; and four years as the Texas A&M University Professor of Naval Science from 2008-2012. He has three master's degrees: an M.A. in International Studies from Troy State, an M.S. in Military Studies from USMC Command & Staff College, and an M.S. in Strategic Studies from the National War College.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



**Dr. Christine
Stuart-
Carruthers**

Dr. Christine Stuart-Carruthers is the Vice President for Enrollment Services at Texas State Technical College, where she oversees the enrollment process from start to finish for all 10 campuses. Dr. Stuart-Carruthers has worked in the higher education field for 17 years and oversaw numerous enrollment management and student development departments. She possesses a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the UT Rio Grande Valley, a master's degree in Education from Penn State University, and a doctorate in Higher Education from the University of Nebraska Lincoln. She has also published several pieces on serving Latino and undocumented students.



Gary Tomerlin

Dr. Garry Tomerlin is the Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Workforce in the Division of Workforce, Academic Affairs and Research at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. His primary responsibility is the oversight and administration of state and federal programs that encourage the education, training and development of the Texas workforce through career and technical training, oversight of vocational and technical grant programs, and serves as a liaison on state, community and technical college issues. Dr. Tomerlin's staff manages and administers the Carl D. Perkins Program, oversight of the Workforce Education Course Manual, development and revision of division policies and procedures, and serves as the division lead for dual credit and early college high school initiatives. Dr. Tomerlin and his staff are responsible for evaluating divisional reports on statewide higher education policy issues related to community, state, and technical colleges and work with other divisions and institutions of higher education to achieve the Board's higher education plan, 60X30TX. Prior to joining the staff of the Coordinating Board in 2013, Dr. Tomerlin holds an EdD in education leadership and policy studies from Tarleton State University. He completed his bachelor's degree in business administration and master's degree in business administration from Dallas Baptist University. He is married to Catherine Bottrell-Tomerlin. He has two sons, Carey and Collin.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



**Dr. Larry
Wallace Jr.**

Dr. Larry Wallace Jr. (Captain, USA Retired) is the Director of Veterans Support & Leadership Programs at the University of Texas System Administration and President of Wallace Brothers & Associates which provides small business strategic planning. Prior to UTS, he served as Executive in Residence for VETTED, a nonprofit veterans transition program, upon retiring from the U.S. Army. Dr. Wallace earned his doctorate from Northcentral University, is a UT Arlington alumnus, holds an M.B.A. and master's degree in Human Relations and Business, executive leadership certificates in entrepreneurship by Texas A&M - Commerce and Saint Joseph University, a Business Skills Certificate from the University of Pennsylvania at Wharton, and was selected to attend the National Defense University's Joint Special Operations Master of Arts in Strategic Studies, and received a 2018 Dissertation of the Year Nominee. He is also Lean Six Sigma – Green Belt and project management certified. Recognitions include 42 performance awards; two district staff member of the year awards; a Community Service and President of the Year award; three honorary and 25 invitational memberships; and induction into the Golden International Honour Society, Delta Mu Delta International Honor Society in Business, and the International Scholar Laureate Program for Business & Entrepreneurship program. Dr. Wallace is married to the former Jamilah Sharp of Atlanta, Georgia, and father of newborn Levi and twins Madison and Elijah, 5.



Andrea Watts

Andrea M. Watts is an Approvals Program Supervisor for the Texas Veterans Commission for the past 2.5 years. She has over 20 years of higher education experience with the past 14 years being veterans education. Watts holds a Bachelor in Criminal Justice from The University of Texas at San Antonio.

MODERATOR & PANELIST BIOS



Dan West

Dan West was elected National Council Member for the 2018-2022 term at the 98th Annual State Convention in Dallas, Texas on June 15, 2018. He is a Past State Commander of the Texas Veterans of Foreign Wars, serving in 2015-2016. West served in the United States Marine Corps from 1983-1994 as a Infantryman, Platoon Sergeant and Marine Drill Instructor. His overseas service and his eligibility come from service in Lebanon during the TWA Hijacking, the Korean Peninsula, and in Southwest Asia in Operation Desert Shield/Storm, where he served with 1st Battalion, 1st Marines as a member of “Task Force Papa Bear” in the Al Buquan & Al Wafra oil fields during the ground invasion. A Veterans of Foreign Wars member since 1996, West has served and continues to serve in various positions within his Post and District. At the state level, he served as the State Chief of Staff and has served as the State Assistant Adjutant from 2006 to present. At the National VFW level, he served as the Vice Chairs for the National Iraq/Afghanistan Committee and is a “Certified National Recruiter” and has earned the “Century” recruiter award 13 times. He has also been recognized several times as a National Aide-De-Camp, National Deputy Chief of Staff and National Special Aide-De-Camp. West is a recipient of the renowned National VFW “Triple Crown” award, an honor bestowed upon those individuals who have received during their term of leadership All-American recognition at the Post, District and Department levels thus achieving one of the highest levels of leadership excellence and one of the rarest awards that the VFW issues. West is a Gold Legacy Life member of Maurice T. Suttles Post 3413 in San Marcos, TX and is a Life member of the Military Order of the Cootie, Marine Corps League and the Disabled American Veterans. He has three grown children, John, Louis and Katie. Louis is serving overseas as an active duty member of the United States Air Force.



Serita Whiting

Serita Whiting currently works as a research assistant and doctoral student at Prairie View A&M University’s Juvenile Justice Department. She received her master’s degree in criminal justice from the University of Houston Downtown, and her bachelor’s degree in communications from The University of Houston Downtown. Her research interests include racially biased sentencing, policing, and racial issues throughout the criminal justice system. Whiting served in the Army Reserves as a medical supply specialist in Houston, Texas from 1999-2006 and deployed to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. She is passionate about educating fellow veterans about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which she was diagnosed with later in her career. She also enjoys spending time with family, helping the community, and working in the church.

NOTES



WWW.UTSYSTEM.EDU
WWW.TAMUS.EDU

