

TECHNICAL COLLEGE  
**TCSG**  
SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

# Green Zone

Military & Veteran Assistance

**An initiative to support student veterans, military & their families**

**(Based on programs from the University of New Mexico and Fayetteville Technical and Community College)**

**Patricia Ross**  
Director, Military Affairs TCSG  
[pross@tcsge.edu](mailto:pross@tcsge.edu)  
404-679-1765

**Barry Munday**  
Veteran Services Coordinator  
[Barry.munday@chattahoocheetech.edu](mailto:Barry.munday@chattahoocheetech.edu)  
770-443-3612

1



# The Green Zone Goal:

To create awareness and education about military culture and service members trying to re-acclimate to civilian and university or college life

# What is the Green Zone?

- ▶ An initiative to support student veterans by designating locations recognized as a “safe place”
- ▶ Identifies faculty and staff throughout TCSG who are knowledgeable about issues faced by student veterans and the resources available to assist them.
- ▶ Participants are identified by a Green Zone emblem located outside their office door and/or on their syllabus
- ▶ Is not only a Professional Development opportunity but also a way to be supportive to those who have sacrificed for others
- ▶ Helps faculty and staff provide supportive services necessary to ensure that veteran students are successful in their academic pursuits, adjust to the campus environment, and eventually transition to civilian employment



# Who is a Green Zone Volunteer?

- ▶ Staff and faculty who identify themselves as:
  - ▶ someone who is aware of the issues and concerns faced by student veterans/service members
  - ▶ someone who is available to assist the student
  - ▶ someone who has completed the Green Zone training
- ▶ Volunteers are NOT expected to be experts who can “solve” the problems;  
Instead —
  - ▶ lend a sympathetic ear
  - ▶ be someone who can help the student find the appropriate resources for problem resolution



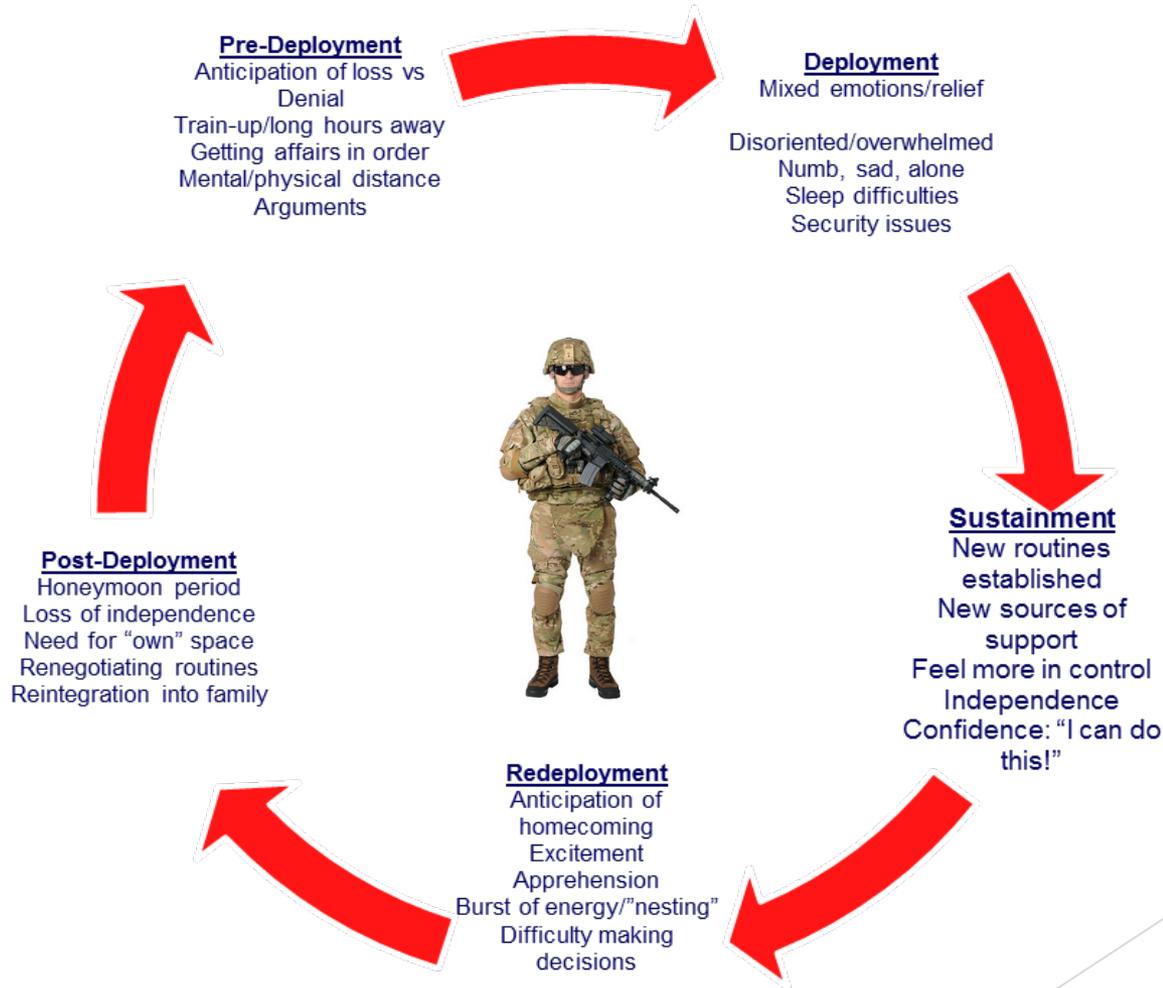
# Veteran Identity as a Culture

- ▶ Heterogeneous
- ▶ Intersections of identity
- ▶ Military service should be viewed as a dimension of personal identity
- ▶ Unique students with unique experiences under a shared umbrella
- ▶ Unique language/acronyms (Military terminology in training guide)
- ▶ Are from all branches of the military
- ▶ Range in age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and political affiliation
- ▶ Have served during times of war and peace
- ▶ Have different education goals

# Military Experience

- ▶ Separation from family or loved ones
  - ▶ Leaving home for the first time
  - ▶ Separation from family, close friends and significant others
- ▶ Relocation to new culture and environment
  - ▶ May be assigned to a base in a different part of the country
  - ▶ Adjustments to new climates and culture
- ▶ Military is a big melting pot

# Emotional Cycle of Deployment





# Battlemind Skills

While Deployed	At Home
Buddies (cohesion)	Withdrawal
Accountability	Controlling
Targeted Aggression	Inappropriate Aggression
Tactical Awareness	Hypervigilance
Lethally Armed	“Locked and Loaded” at Home
Emotional Control	Anger/Detachment
Mission OPSEC	Secretiveness
Individual Responsibility	Guilt
Non-Defensive Driving	Aggressive Driving
Discipline and Ordering	Conflict

# Emotional Cycle of Deployment: Family members and dependents

- ▶ They may be experiencing:
  - ▶ Separation from a loved one
  - ▶ Loss or injuries of a loved one
- ▶ This might appear as:
  - ▶ Difficulty concentrating
  - ▶ Difficulty adjusting to role changes
  - ▶ Sense of helplessness

# Stereotypes of veterans and military servicemembers

- ▶ In a nationwide survey of 800 people conducted in 2012 on behalf of the veterans advocacy group The Mission Continues:
  - ▶ 53% of respondents **wrongly believed** a majority of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder
  - ▶ 45% **wrongly believed** that veterans, on average, have less education than the nonveteran population
  - ▶ 44% **wrongly believed** returning vets are more likely to suffer from drug addiction and alcoholism than the nonveteran population

# The value of student veterans on campus:

- ▶ Veterans take ownership of their actions.
- ▶ They have learned to take charge of the duties entrusted to them and execute tasks with minimal supervision
- ▶ They have a drive to complete assigned tasks on time and are undeterred by obstacles or the lack of resources.



# Transition Strengths

- ▶ Veterans bring a unique perspective:
  - ▶ Military training
  - ▶ Life experience
  - ▶ Established identity
  - ▶ Global perspective
  
- ▶ Skills taught in the military:
  - ▶ Self-discipline
  - ▶ Leadership
  - ▶ Teamwork
  - ▶ Time Management
  - ▶ Work Ethic

# Transition Difficulties

- ▶ Difficulty translating their military skills into a new profession
- ▶ Military skills & training may not translate into college credits
- ▶ Universities may have difficulty deciphering transfer credits for those who have attended multiple institutions
- ▶ Accessing disability resources for accommodations
- ▶ Understanding the requirements and process of the GI Bill



# Transition Difficulties, Part II

- ▶ Adjusting to a less structured and far more independent environment
- ▶ Being an older student
- ▶ Alienation from the difference in life experiences
- ▶ Insensitivity of classmates, faculty, and others on campus in discussions of war and military
- ▶ Pressure or expectation that the veteran/servicemember defend or justify their mission

# Transition Difficulties, Part III

- ▶ Some student veterans in the classroom may:
  - ▶ Have difficulty relating to classmates
  - ▶ Find loud noises to be disturbing
  - ▶ Become anxious with changes in the classroom
  - ▶ Have excessive absences
  - ▶ Have PTSD or TBI

# Easing the Transition

- ▶ Have an open dialogue about frustrations
- ▶ Remember that each student is unique in their experiences
- ▶ Provide them with information about services and resources as seems appropriate
  - ▶ Veterans or military coordinator
  - ▶ Special Populations/Disability coordinator
  - ▶ Career Services
  - ▶ Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Resource Center
  - ▶ VA Hospital
  - ▶ Vet Center



# Disabilities on Campus



# Considering the Needs of Student Veterans with Disabilities

- ▶ New Disability
  - ▶ Adjustment to having a disability for the first time in their life
  - ▶ Learning a new system: may be unaware of campus services for persons with an identified disability
- ▶ May not want to identify as having a disability
  - ▶ Stigma of disability
  - ▶ Implications for future career in the military



# What is PTSD?

- ▶ PTSD occurs after an individual has seen or experienced a traumatic event that involved injury, the threat of injury or death
- ▶ A “normal response to abnormal circumstances”
- ▶ Haunted by memory of a watershed experience
- ▶ PTSD is experienced by some, but not all Student Veterans/ Servicemembers

Have some knowledge of PTSD, but DO NOT expect that every Student Veteran will have these symptoms



# What is PTSD?

- ▶ Stress
  - ▶ Any challenge, daily to major events
  - ▶ Return to normal when stressor is removed
- ▶ Trauma
  - ▶ Subset of stress
  - ▶ Unusual, life threatening, (ex. Combat)
  - ▶ Lasting effects
  - ▶ There is a before and after
- ▶ Both Stress and Trauma require a response

# PTSD Symptoms

- ▶ The three symptom clusters for PTSD include:
  - ▶ Re-experiencing, (triggering events)
  - ▶ Numbing and avoidance (such as avoiding traumatic reminders and talking about trauma, not participating in activities previously enjoyed)
  - ▶ Hyperarousal (such as irritability, anger, difficulty sleeping)

# Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

- ▶ A blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain
  - ▶ Severity of injury can vary
    - ▶ Mild: brief change in mental status or consciousness
    - ▶ Severe: extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury
- ▶ Some, but certainly not all Student Veterans, may have experienced a TBI
  - ▶ Have some knowledge of TBI, BUT do not expect that all Student Veterans/ASMs will have experienced a TBI

# TBI in the Classroom

- ▶ They may
  - ▶ Have difficulty expressing themselves (tongue tied)
  - ▶ Show restless behaviors
    - ▶ Ex: Constant fidgeting and tapping pens or feet
  - ▶ Show inappropriate reactions to discussion
    - ▶ Ex: Becoming aggressive, easily irritated, agitated, or insensitive to others in the classroom
  - ▶ Be withdrawn or not participating in class discussion

# How to Assist Student Veterans with Disabilities

- ▶ Do not ask or suggest that the student has a disability
- ▶ Inquire about the issues they are experiencing to better provide the appropriate resources
- ▶ Contact your disability coordinator

# Suicide Prevention

- ▶ Encourage your Veteran students to seek help. Seeking help is a sign of courage.
- ▶ The following feelings and behaviors can all be signs for concern. It is important to seek professional guidance right away if a veteran is:
  - Thinking about hurting or killing him or herself
  - Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
  - Unable to sleep or oversleeping
  - Withdrawing from friends, family or society
  - Increasing alcohol or drug use
  - Engaging in reckless or risky behavior
  - Experiencing excessive rage, anger or desire for revenge
  - Having feelings of anxiety, agitation or hopelessness
  - Reliving past stressful experiences
  - Experiencing dramatic changes in mood

# Student Voices:

## What students want campus staff and faculty to know

- ▶ “We are having normal reactions to an abnormal experience.”
- ▶ “No two veterans are alike.”
- ▶ “Each of us has had different experiences.”
- ▶ “Do Not assume that you know my politics or beliefs just because I was in the military.”
- ▶ “I may or may not be ready to talk about my experiences.”
- ▶ “Trust can be an issue for me.”
- ▶ “Being friendly and listening can go a long way toward building trust.”
- ▶ *“Do Not be afraid of me.”*
- ▶ *“We are accustomed to being successful and may be too proud to ask for help.”*



# 10 Things You Should Know About Today's Student Veteran

1. Student veterans are a highly diverse group-as diverse as America itself
2. Veterans do not see themselves as Victims. Ever.
3. They can feel very alone on campus
4. They are often unaware of their own TBI
5. Female Veterans suffer deeply, and almost always in silence
6. They often want to go back to the war zone
7. Combat Trauma is an injury, not a mental illness
8. To succeed, veterans need your understanding, compassion, and respect
9. Need a helping hand, not a hand-out
10. Student veterans are one of America's greatest untapped human resources

# Suggested Questions To Ask Veterans

- ▶ What branch of service
- ▶ How long they were in the military
- ▶ How many deployments
  - ▶ When, where, how long
- ▶ How has your experience at school been
- ▶ Could you be called back to active duty
- ▶ Can you still be deployed
- ▶ *Do not ask if they have killed someone*
- ▶ *Do not ask how they were injured*



# Military Educational Benefits

- ▶ Montgomery GI Bill (Chap 30)
- ▶ Vocational Rehabilitation (Chap 31)
- ▶ Post 9/11(Chap 33)
- ▶ Survivors/Dependents Education Assistance (Chap 35)
- ▶ Reserve GI Bill (Chap 1606)
- ▶ Reserve Educational Assistance Program (Chap 1607)
- ▶ Tuition Assistance
- ▶ Georgia Hero Scholarship

# Student Responsibilities

- ▶ Students should be degree-seeking
  - ▶ Student can be non-degree for two semesters however the only courses that can be certified are those required for admission and those required if admitted
- ▶ Student can take online classes
  - ▶ Correspondence course will not be certified until course is complete and grade is posted
- ▶ Students must submit a final concise student schedule to certifying official

# Important thing for advisors and faculty to know about “W” grades

- ▶ If the student drops a class or is withdrawn by the faculty, this may accrue a debt
  - ▶ It’s usually better for the student to get an “F” than a withdrawal
  - ▶ Ask the student before choosing the “W” and “F” for them

# Tips for Advisors

## Courses that *can not* be certified:

- ▶ Courses that do not fulfill a program requirement.  
(Example: excessive free electives)
- ▶ Audited courses

# Remember!

- ▶ Dropping a course or changing their major could create a debt
- ▶ Only courses that go towards a student's degree can be certified
- ▶ Anytime changes are made, the student should see their Certifying Official



*IF A SERVICE MEMBER OR VETERAN OPENLY  
DISCUSSES HIS OR HER EXPERIENCE: DON'T  
INTERRUPT, MINIMIZE, OR INJECT YOUR  
POLITICAL BELIEFS ABOUT THE WAR.*

**JUST LISTEN**

# Things to Remember

- ▶ Students veterans are a unique population with different experiences
- ▶ There are numerous ways to help Student Veterans/Servicemembers just as there are for other student populations
- ▶ Developing trust with this population is important
- ▶ Following-up with the Student Veterans/Servicemembers and carrying out what you say you will do is essential



# Scenarios

# Scenario 1

A student Reservist comes to your office and is anticipating being deployed. He is unsure whether it will be before the end of the semester and is unaware of how he should proceed.

What action do you take to help the student with this issue?

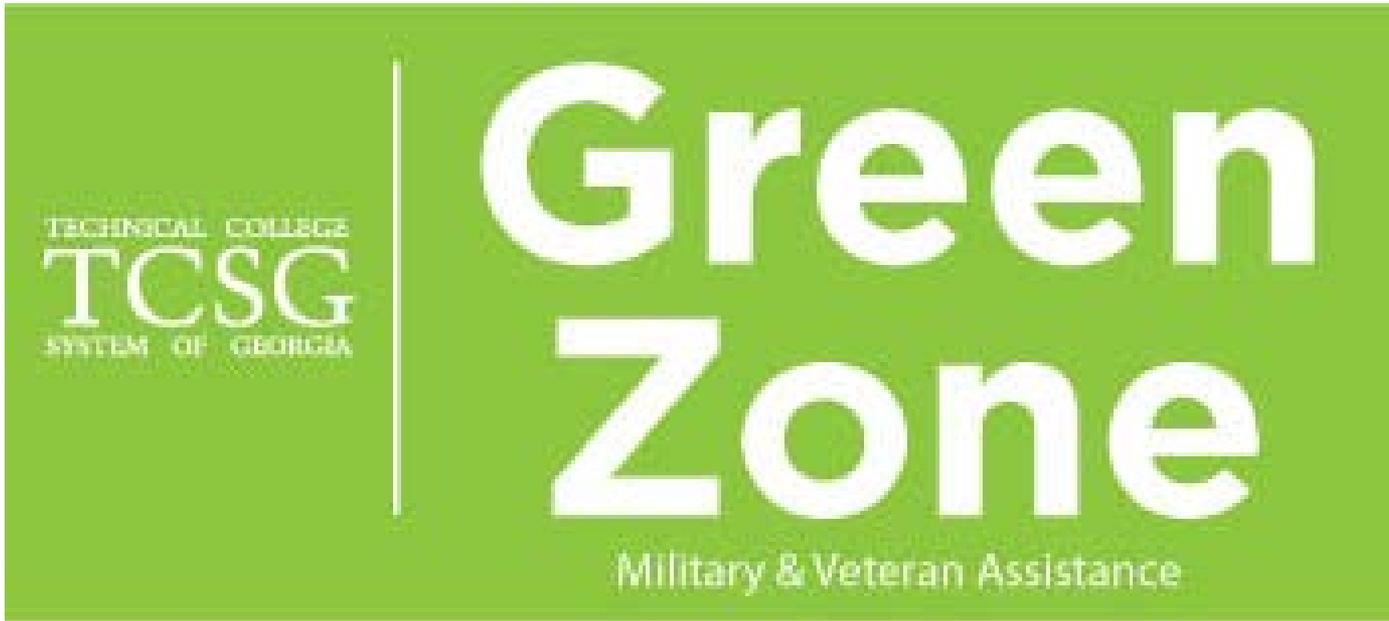


# Scenario 2

A Student Veteran comes to you because he feels very alone on campus. He was used to being constantly surrounded by individuals who share his goals and values. Since he has come to campus, he has not met anyone like that. He feels isolated and alone.

**How do you help this student?**

# Questions?



**Thank you for serving those  
who have served us so well!**