Regional Directors of this national organization were elected. As a newly elected Regional Director of the South Central Region, I oversee ten states, including Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Wyoming, Colorado, Louisiana, and New Mexico. Our purpose of this Washington conference was best stated by Derek Blumke, President of SVA and a University of Michigan student. “The student-veterans who came to Washington didn’t care about partisan politics. They came to unite and work toward making a better life for themselves and their families through education.”

What is Student Veterans of America (SVA)? SVA is an organization initiated in January 2008 to assist veterans in the development of student veteran organizations at their respective institutions, provide resources for veterans, and serve as an advocacy organization for student veteran issues at the state and national levels. On June 11-13 in Washington DC, student-veterans from more than 50 campuses gathered to attend the first annual Student Veterans of America national conference which I attended to represent the University of Houston. Honored guests included Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE), Congressman Harry Mitchell (D-AZ), and Congresswoman Ginny Brown White (R-FL). They spoke at the conference in support of a bill which has since passed in the legislature and is now law, the 21st century GI Bill known as the “Post 9/11 New GI Bill.” At this meeting, elections were held and five Regional Directors of this national organization were elected. As a newly elected Regional Director of the South Central Region, I oversee ten states, including Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Wyoming, Colorado, Louisiana, and New Mexico. Our purpose of this Washington conference was best stated by Derek Blumke, President of SVA and a University of Michigan student. “The student-veterans who came to Washington didn’t care about partisan politics. They came to unite and work toward making a better life for themselves and their families through education.”

On June 5 and 6, the American Council on Education (ACE) hosted a conference on higher education and veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces, titled “Serving Those Who Served.” This event helped to show administrators of colleges and universities the importance of acknowledging their student veteran populations in the different facets of education: financial aid, psychological services and others. In attendance were many administrators as well as student-veterans. Representing the University of Houston were Allen Grundy, program manager of the Veterans’ Services Office; Amariëe Collins, biology major and student-veteran; and Chris Webb, political science major and student-veteran.

During the two-day conference, there was a wealth of information given on a wide variety of topics by professionals in the fields of education and veterans’ affairs. The keynote speaker for June 5 was Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel. An Army veteran himself, Senator Hagel stressed the need for the passage of the S22, or G.I. Bill for the 21st Century. He also praised those veterans who do take advantage of their educational benefits and encouraged schools to realize the importance and value of their student veteran populations.

Later in the day, a panel discussion including Derek Blumke, president of Student Veterans of America, and three other student-veterans, talked about the importance of support from school administrators...
The goal is to help provide the veterans with “suitable employment that is consistent with their aptitudes and interests,” while achieving independence in their daily living.

**POST - 9/11 GI BILL**

When will the Post-9/11 GI Bill become effective? The new benefits are payable for training pursued on or after August 1, 2009.

How can I apply for the Post-9/11 GI Bill? The Dept. of Veterans Affairs is currently NOT accepting applications for the new bill. Information will be posted on its website as it becomes available.

Can I transfer benefits to my dependents? If you are a member of the Armed Forces on August 1, 2009, the Dept. of Defense (DoD) may offer you the opportunity to transfer benefits to your spouse or dependent children. DoD and the military services will issue policy on use of transferability in the coming months.

I did not contribute $1200 to the GI Bill. Can I still get the Post-9/11 GI Bill? Yes, you will be eligible if you meet the service requirements for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, even if you did not contribute to the Montgomery GI Bill.

What should service-connected disabled use, the Post-9/11 GI Bill or Vocational Rehabilitation? If you are eligible for both the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Chapter 31), you should speak with your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to determine which benefit is most beneficial to your situation.

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program is authorized by Congress under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 31. The primary benefit program for VR&E is vocational rehabilitation service for veterans who have a service-connected disability. According to the program’s website, in order to use these services a veteran must be found to be both eligible and entitled. The Veterans Administration makes this determination through a veterans counselor. The goal is to help provide the veterans with “suitable employment that is consistent with their aptitudes and interests,” while achieving independence in their daily living.

VR&E also provides educational and vocational counseling to assist veterans with selection of a career goal or the selection of an educational institution consistent with a career goal. In specific circumstances, the program also provides educational and vocational counseling benefits for eligible dependent children who were born with certain birth defects.

If you would like more detailed information about your eligibility for Chapter 31, the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program, go to http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/index.htm or call a Veterans Administration Regional Office.

1-800-827-1000 Houston
1-888-GI-BILL-1 or 1-888-442-4551

**WHAT IS CHAPTER 31?**
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is eager to help veterans. We offer free individual counseling for up to 10 sessions as well as couples and group counseling. We also can consult with organizations or departments, do testing for Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and can be reached for crisis intervention twenty-four hours a day. We also do career testing and counseling.

Typical concerns of our students, including veterans, are anxiety, depression, and interpersonal relationships. Returning veterans may also be dealing with trauma for which CAPS is prepared. In severe cases, we may make referrals to the Houston Veterans Administration Hospital.

There is no stigma in seeking services. Everyone has problems from time to time, and it is always a good idea to have a good listener with expertise in human relationships to help with your concerns. We can be reached at (713) 743-5454 and are located in Room 226 Student Services Center I.

By Ken Waldman, Ph.D.
Director, CAPS
University of Houston
Houston, TX 77204-3026

Events Calendar

September 13
Free Veterans Resource Fair and Housing Seminar
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
UH University Center
Room: Cougar Den

September 16
Primed for Success - Supplier Performance Workshop for Veterans
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
UH SBDC, 2302 Fannin, Ste.200
Houston, Texas 77002

November 5
Fourth Annual Veterans' Business Seminar
"Entrepreneurship and the 21st Century Veteran"
8:00 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Details to be announced
We'd like to help you celebrate this milestone in your life. If you're graduating this semester, let us know so that we can recognize you in the next issue of *The Reveille*. In addition, do you have words of wisdom that you'd like to pass on to the student-veterans you are leaving behind? If so, let us know in 300 words or less. Suggested topics:
- If I Knew Then What I Know Now
- What I Learned in the Military That Has Helped in College or Civilian Life
- How the UH Veterans’ Services Office Has Assisted Me

Keep in touch with the VSO after graduation. We’d like to know how you’re progressing with your career so that we can spotlight your successes and use them to encourage others.

To be considered for inclusion in the next issue, submit article at least three weeks prior to the first day of the scheduled publication month. Article should be in MS Word format and sent to the Veterans’ Services Office e-mail address.

*Congratulations Graduates*

Timothy Binion
Sam Anderson