



2011 LEGISLATIVE REPORT
MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT VETERANS AFFAIRS
HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS PROGRAM DIVISION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary	Page 3
Program Background and Growth	Page 3
2010 Highlights	Page 4
2010 Program Data	
Veterans Resource Center Usage	Page 5
Presentation and Outreach	Page 7
Online Support Center Usage	Page 7
Student Veterans in Minnesota	Page 8
Attachment 1: Online Support	Page 10
Attachment 2: Regional Offices and Veterans Resource Centers	Page 11-14
Point of Contact for this Document	Page 15

Legislative Charge

Minn. Stat. 197.585, Subd. 4 (2006)

Beginning January 15, 2007, and each year thereafter, the steering committee established in subdivision 2 shall report to the chairs of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over Veterans affairs policy and finance and higher education policy and finance regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the program established in this section.

Estimated Cost of Preparing this Report (*as required by Minn. Stat. §3.197*)

Staff time:	\$281.00
Copies:	\$9.00
TOTAL:	\$300.00

SUMMARY

The following progress report, submitted to the Minnesota Legislature and prepared by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, provides a status update on the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program for the period of January 1 to December 31, 2010. The report reflects the program's continued growth and increasing demand, due largely to increasing complexity of federal benefits as well as continued deployments of Minnesota based military units.

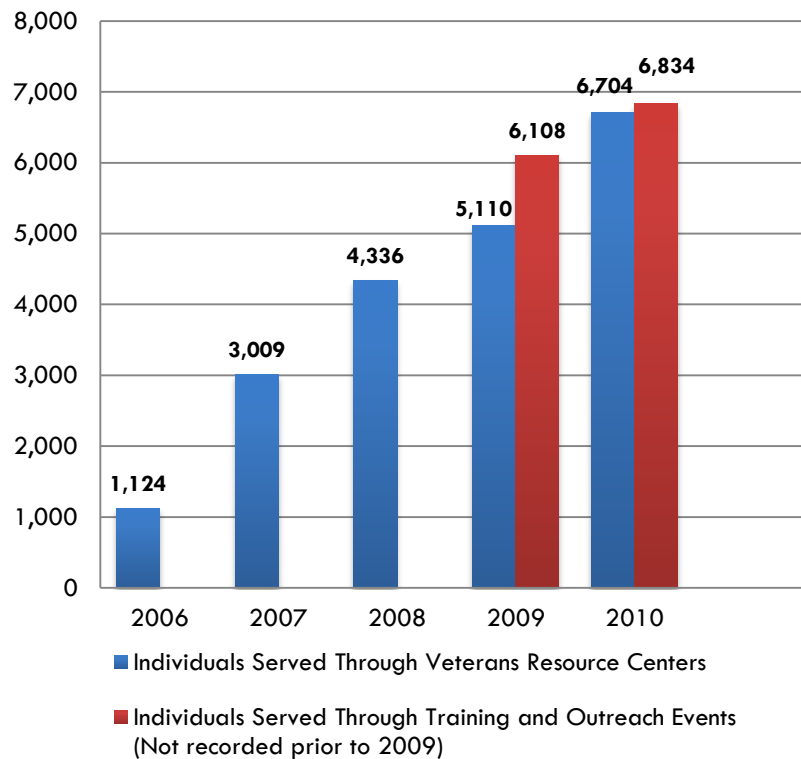
PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND GROWTH

The 2006 Minnesota Legislature allocated funding through June 30, 2011 to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs for the creation of the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program (commonly referred to as the "Higher Education Veterans Program"). The program is uniquely designed to serve the needs of Minnesota's students and prospective students that are impacted by military service, including Veterans, military members, and their dependents.

One statewide director and twelve regional coordinators serve colleges and students throughout Minnesota. Based out of a "host campus", coordinators work with colleges and universities throughout their defined region, providing one-on-one, comprehensive education assistance to Veterans, military members, and their dependents. Coordinators also work closely with campus administration officials to create and manage Veterans Resource Centers as well as to address the campus-level needs of student Veterans.

A novel concept when launched in July 2006, the Higher Education Veterans Program remains the only program of its kind in the country and has helped thousands of returning Minnesota Veterans transition to college. The complex nature of Veteran and military education benefits demand the services of subject matter experts who can assist Minnesota's Veteran community throughout the state. The Higher Education Veterans Program has proven to be effective, flexible, and efficient, enabling countless Veterans, military members, and their dependents access to federal and state benefits as well as other resources available to them.

GROWTH OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS PROGRAM



The program has grown steadily since its inception in late 2006. It is important to note that each individual is only counted once, even though a student may return for help multiple times. Due to this, the impact of the Higher Education Veterans Program is actually higher than reflected in the graph.

2010 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2010, the impact and importance of the Higher Education Veterans Program was especially evident as confusion and difficulty accessing federal benefits led thousands of Minnesotans to seek assistance through the program. As rules change and budgets decrease for certain benefit programs, benefits are becoming increasingly interconnected and Veterans must often make choices between complex sets of benefit packages. At times, these decisions are irrevocable and mistakes can cost Veterans tens of thousands of dollars. As such, not only those who are entitled to these benefits, but also by the colleges and universities, they attend and other Veteran service providers increasingly rely upon coordinators with the Higher Education Veterans Program. The following information highlights this increased demand as well as some of the most notable achievements in 2010.

1. The Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) is a federal education benefit that began in 2009. Although this new benefit offers a more generous education financing option for many, it also adds a new layer of complexity to benefits already known to be very difficult to understand and to access. The Higher Education Veterans Program was able to assist thousands of Veterans determine their eligibility for the Post 9/11 GI Bill and enroll in the VA education program best suited to their needs.
2. Coordinators assisted campuses in establishing three new campus Veterans Resource Centers, bringing the total number of centers in operation to sixty-two. Coordinators also

assisted an additional six campuses to increase the size and/or programming of existing centers.

3. Coordinators served 6,704 *new* individuals in 2010, and thousands of other individuals who returned for continued assistance. Overall, the program had a total of 57,627 contacts in 2010, a 31 % increase over 2009.
4. Coordinators continued to provide advice, information, and support of campus efforts aimed at creating Veterans-friendly institutions. Included are issues such as streamlined and flexible policies and procedures for students facing deployments and creating seamless transition for returning Veterans.
5. The director and coordinators provided a tremendous amount of training and outreach at campuses, community events, Veteran organizations and service providers, and most notably, reintegration events coordinated by the Minnesota National Guard.

2010 VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER USAGE DATA

The following numbers represent the usage of campus Veterans Resource Centers, the main route through which coordinators serve Veterans. Through these centers, coordinators provide comprehensive information and assistance regarding education benefits and resources, as well as assist students navigate through campus processes. As the following sections will show, the Higher Education Veterans Program serves thousands of additional Veterans through training and outreach efforts as well as its innovative partnership with Minnesota Online.

Establishment of Veterans Resource Centers

59	Previously established Veterans Resource Centers (as of Dec 31, 2009)
3	Newly established Veterans Resource Centers (Jan 1 to Dec 31, 2010)
62	Total Veterans Resource Centers (see attachment #2 for a listing of locations by region)
6	Existing Veterans Resource Centers increasing space or programming

Utilization of Veterans Resource Centers

6,704	Total first time visitors
57,627	Total annual contacts
31%	Increase over 2009

Veteran Status of Visitors

62%	Veteran (180 or more days of active duty)
16%	Current Military Member
8%	Family/Dependent of Military Member/Veteran
1%	Former Military Member (less than 180 days of active duty)
13%	Other or did not declare status

Student Status of Visitors

71%	Current Student
17%	Prospective Student
1%	Former Student
11%	Other or did not declare status

Top Purposes for Visits

Veterans education funding/assistance from coordinator
Peer support/connecting with other Veterans
Utilize other Veterans Resource Center services and resources

Referrals to Other Service Providers

Serving as a comprehensive information hub for Veterans, military members, and their dependents on campus, coordinators have developed well-defined referral networks to link Veterans on campus with the appropriate campus staff or service providers in the community. The numbers below reflect these referrals to other service providers.

2,506	Internal campus resource
683	External community resource
1,745	County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO)
896	Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED Vet Reps)
316	Other

Veterans Resource Center Staffing

Coordinators cover wide regions and manage many campus Veterans Resource Centers. To effectively staff these centers, coordinators have developed supplemental staffing with various campus and community resources. This additional staffing not only helps to maintain consistent hours of operation, but also provides additional outreach and programming by campus and community service providers. The figures below show the total annual statewide hours worked in Veterans Resource Centers. Through these efforts, the investment in regional coordinators is multiplied to better serve Veterans in colleges and universities.

Annual Hours	Staffing Categories
5,680	Regional coordinator
7,226	VA work-study
1,631	Campus work-study
932	Campus-paid employee
165	Campus volunteers
120	Community service providers/volunteers

2010 PRESENTATION AND OUTREACH DATA

Throughout the year, the staff of the Higher Education Veterans Program is heavily relied upon to provide training on their area of expertise: Veteran/military education benefits and creating Veterans-friendly campuses. Training is conducted in a variety of formats and locations – from drill floor presentations at armories throughout the state and post-deployment education briefings upon the very return of National Guard and Reserve units, to faculty and staff in-service days on campuses and professional higher education associations on a national scale. The figures below highlight the variety and scale of the program’s outreach and training efforts.

Number of Events	Number of Individuals Trained	Type of Training
28	4,608	Reintegration activities
23	1,176	College and university
5	165	Service providers and Veterans service organizations
9	885	Community events
65	6,834	Total

2010 MyMILITARYEDUCATION ONLINE SUPPORT CENTER USAGE DATA

MyMilitaryEducation (www.mymilitaryeducation.org), an online support center, continues to be an important part of the Higher Education Veterans Program. Highlighting the program’s efforts to collaborate with other agencies and service providers, MyMilitaryEducation is a collaborative effort by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and Minnesota Online. By providing an added dimension to the program’s services and an important outreach component, the online support center is a gateway to the services of the Higher Education Veterans Program and is contacted by Veterans, military members, and dependents stationed around the globe. More details are provided in attachment #1.

Types of Online Support Center Contacts

70,731	Self service
1,220	Advisor/counselor help
71,347	Total contacts in 2010

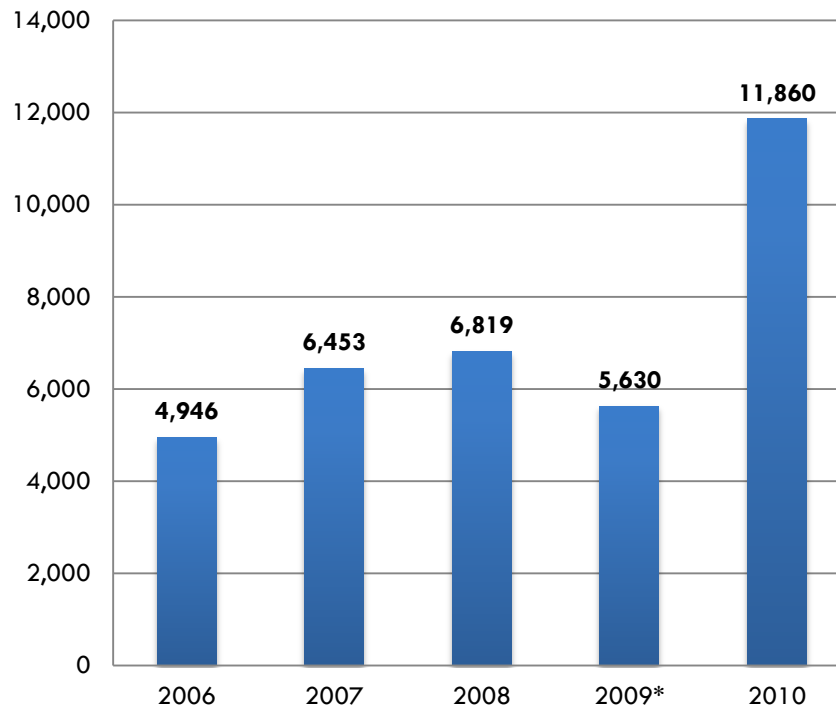
Top Purposes for Online Support Center Contacts

Military education benefits/finances
Career information and resources
Getting ready for college
Information about the Higher Education Veterans Program

STUDENT VETERANS IN MINNESOTA

New education benefits, the economic recession, and sustained deployments have dramatically increased the number of Veterans and military members attending college in recent years. In addition, new federal benefits have increased the number of dependents eligible for aid. The following graph shows the number of students using USVA educational benefits. While there are a number of reasons why a Veteran may not have access to USVA educational benefits, this is currently the only comprehensive source of data for student Veteran enrollment in Minnesota.

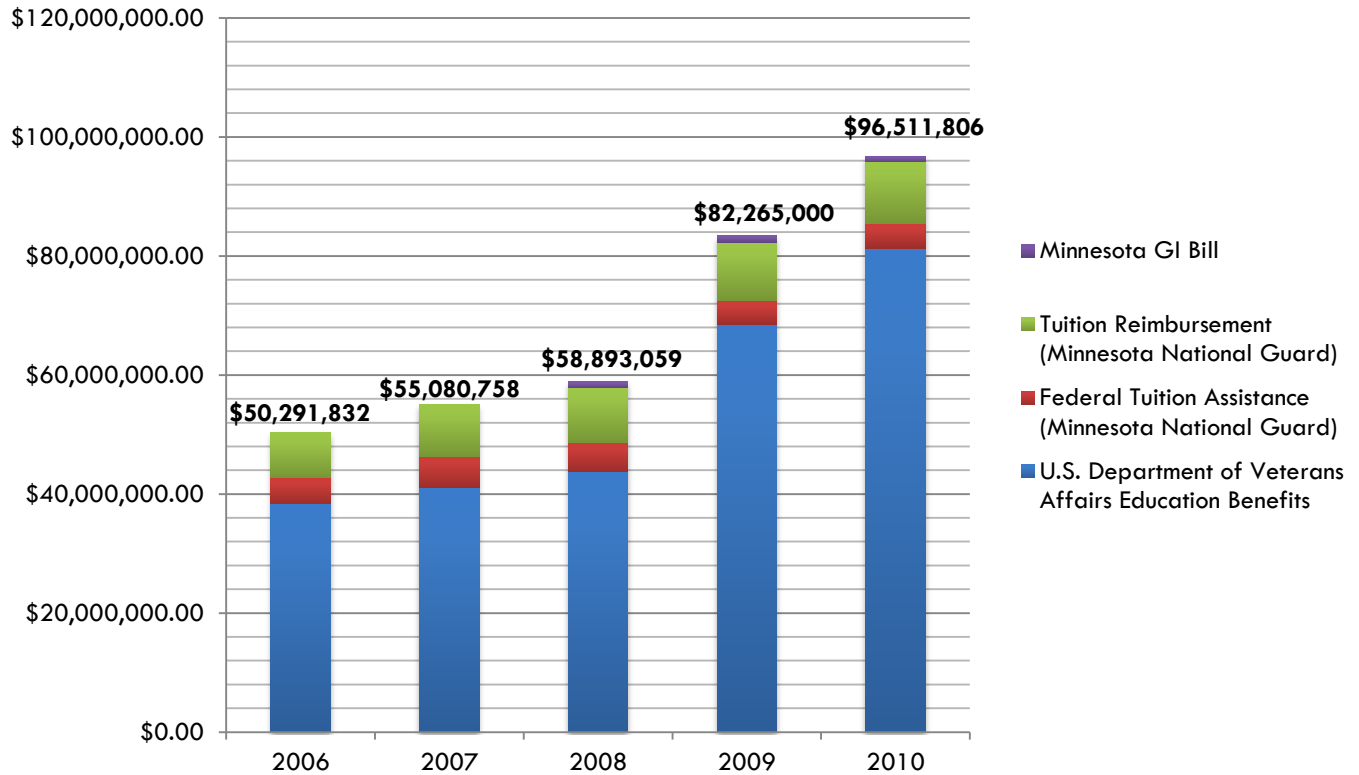
MINNESOTA STUDENTS USING VA EDUCATION BENEFITS



*The 2009 data from the USVA does not include individuals using Chapter 33 (also known as the Post 9/11 GI Bill), which began in August 2009. The actual number of Veterans attending college in 2009 is therefore much larger than reported.

Increasing numbers of Veterans attending college in Minnesota has led to an equally dramatic increase in education benefit dollars spent in Minnesota. A combination of state and federal funds make higher education possible for thousands of Minnesota Veterans, military members, and dependents each year. These benefits also make an important contribution to Minnesota's economy. The amount of federal education benefits spent in Minnesota has nearly doubled, up \$42.7 million, during the existence of the Higher Education Veterans Program. This trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. The following graph illustrates the expenditures of Veterans' education benefits in Minnesota.

COMBINED EXPENDITURES FROM STATE AND FEDERAL VETERANS EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT PROGRAMS IN MINNESOTA¹



While education benefits are available to most Veterans and military members, as well as some dependents, assistance is often needed to untangle the various eligibility requirements and enrollment processes unique to each package of benefits that these students are entitled to. Coordinators with the Higher Education Veterans Program provide this much-needed assistance as well as serve as an initial point of contact for Veterans interested in higher education. The program is therefore in a unique position to encourage and facilitate the use of these benefits.

¹ The Minnesota GI Bill began in the 2007-2008 academic year. Data reported is from Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

Federal Tuition Assistance is a program available to most reserve components in addition to the Army National Guard. The numbers Reported are for the Minnesota Army National Guard, the only data available. Both Federal Tuition Assistance and State Tuition Reimbursement data reported from Minnesota National Guard Education Office.

USVA education data not yet available for 2010. The amount listed is an estimate based on the number of individuals using VA education Benefits in 2010 at an average rate of \$6,853/student (the average rate per person for 2006 to 2008). U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits data accessed from http://www1.va.gov/VETDATA/GDX/Geographical_data.asp.

ATTACHMENT 1: ONLINE SUPPORT



Higher Education Veterans Programs MyMilitaryEducation.org

Summary of Services: January 1 – December 15, 2010

Open 7 days a week

Online Support Services

Phone: 888.LINK.VET (546.5838)
International: +1.651.556.0596
TTY: 1.800.627.3529

Telephone Assistance

7AM to 9 PM, CST Monday-Friday
10 AM to 4 PM, CST Saturday
9:30 AM to 3:30 PM, CST Sunday
Closed Holidays

Highpoints

71,951 contacts in year.

Month at a Glance:

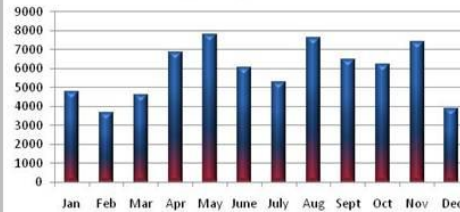
7,361 new visitors and
858 returning visitors in
November.

Channel:

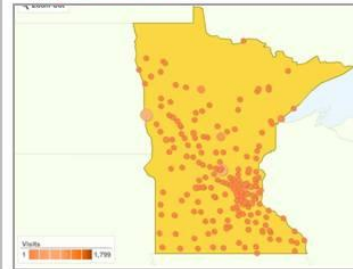
65% seeking personal
assistance called the toll free
number.



Self-Service Usage MyMilitaryEducation



Contacts from Minnesota, across the USA and Worldwide



State sent 10,803 visits from 241 cities

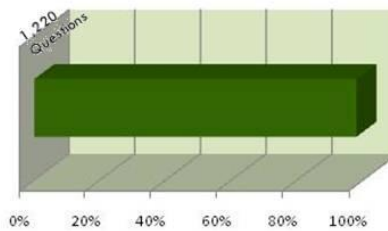


Country sent 31,552 visits from 3,569 cities



33,006 visits from 3,990 cities

My Military Education Solve Rate resolved within 24 hours



98% of the 1,220 questions to advisors were resolved within 24 hours.



Top Answers viewed on Website

1. Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) Application and information
2. Comprehensive List of Military Scholarships for Servicemembers, Spouses and Dependents
3. Check and Verify my USDVA Benefits Status Through W.A.V.E.
4. Montgomery GI Bill Status: Withdrawing from or Failing a Class
5. Higher Education Veterans Programs Regional Coordinators Map
6. Obtaining Military Transcripts and Transfer Credits
7. Interactive Educational Benefits Flowchart
8. County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO)
9. Eligibility for the Montgomery GI Bill - Active Duty - Chapter 30
10. Minnesota Service C.O.R.E (CORE)

Most Personal Assistance

- 56% Military Education Benefits and Finances
- 22% Career Information & Resources
- 8% Getting Ready for College
- <5% MNDVA Higher Education
- <5% Veteran' Program
- <5% Policies
- <5% Websites
- <5% Learning/Disability Services
- <5% Military Family Resources
- <5% Readjustment and Personal Resources

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is an Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity employer.



ATTACHMENT 2: REGIONAL OFFICES AND VETERANS RESOURCE CENTERS

Director's Office:

Host Campus: Central Lakes College
501 West College Drive
Brainerd, MN 56401

Donald Pfeffer, State Director

dpfeffer@clcmn.edu
218-855-8148 Office

Tyra Osvold, Administrative Assistant

Central Lakes College
tosvold@clcmn.edu
218-855-8278 Office

Northwest Region:

Dave Bellefeuille, Regional Coordinator

belldave@mnstate.edu
218-477-2080 Office
Host Campus: Minnesota State University, Moorhead
1104 7th Ave South - Box 27
Moorhead, MN 56563

Anthony Tengwall, Regional Coordinator

tony.tengwall@northlandcollege.edu
218-683-8550
Host Campus: Northland Community and Technical College
1101 Hwy One East
Thief River Falls, MN 56701

Northwest Region Campus Veterans Centers

- University of Minnesota - Crookston
- Bemidji State University, Bemidji
- Minnesota State University, Moorhead
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Moorhead
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Detroit Lakes
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Fergus Falls
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Wadena
- Northland Community and Technical College, Thief River Falls
- Northland Community and Technical College, East Grand Forks
- Northwest Technical College, Bemidji

Northeast Region:

Jodi Kiminski, Regional Coordinator

j.kiminski@lsc.edu

218-733-7604 Office

Host Campus: Lake Superior College

2101 Trinity Road

Duluth, MN 55811

Wesley Judkins, Regional Coordinator

wesleyjudkins@hibbing.edu

218-262-6739

Host Campus: Hibbing Community College

1515 E. 25th Street

Hibbing, MN 55746

Northeast Region Campus Veterans Centers

- University of Minnesota, Duluth
- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Cloquet
- Hibbing Community College, Hibbing
- Itasca Community College, Grand Rapids
- Lake Superior College, Duluth
- Mesabi Range Community and Technical College, Eveleth
- Rainy River Community College, International Falls
- Vermillion Community College, Ely
- College of St. Scholastica, Duluth and other locations

Central Region:

Laura Boden, Regional Coordinator

mnva@stcloudstate.edu

320-308-2185 Office

Host Campus: St. Cloud State University

720 4th Ave South

St. Cloud, MN 56301

Charles Egerstrom, Regional Coordinator

mnva@alextech.edu

320-762-4467 Office

Host Campus: Alexandria Technical and Community College

1601 Jefferson St

Alexandria, MN 56308

Central Region Campus Veterans Centers

- University of Minnesota – Morris
- St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud
- Alexandria Technical and Community College, Alexandria
- Central Lakes College, Brainerd

- Central Lakes College, Staples
- Ridgewater College, Willmar
- Ridgewater College, Hutchinson
- St. Cloud Technical and Community College, St. Cloud

Metro Region:

Katherine Bachman, Regional Coordinator

Katherine.Bachman@dctc.edu

651-423-8274 Office

Host Campus: Dakota County Technical College

1300 145th Street East

Rosemount, MN 55068

Duane Bauer II, Regional Coordinator

bauer333@umn.edu

612-625-7620 Office

Host Campus: University of Minnesota

One Stop Student Services, Veteran Services

320 Science Teaching and Student Services Bldg.

222 Pleasant Str. SE

Minneapolis, MN 55455-0422

Raymond Bohn, Regional Coordinator

ray.bohn@anokaramsey.edu

763-433-1415 Office

Host Campus: Anoka Ramsey Community College

11200 Mississippi Blvd NW

Coon Rapids, MN 55433

Metro Region Campus Veterans Centers

- University of Minnesota, Veterans Transition Center, Minneapolis
- University of Minnesota, One Stop Service Center, Minneapolis
- St Paul College, St Paul
- Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis
- Dunwoody College of Technology, Minneapolis
- Anoka Technical College, Anoka
- Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Cambridge
- Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Coon Rapids
- Century Community College, White Bear Lake
- Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount
- Inver Hills Community College, Inver Hills
- Hennepin Technical College, Brooklyn Park
- Hennepin Technical College, Eden Prairie
- Minneapolis Community and Technical College
- Normandale Community College, Bloomington
- North Hennepin Community College, Brooklyn Park

- Pine Technical College, Pine City
- University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis
- University of St. Thomas, St. Paul
- Concordia University, St Paul

Southwest Region:

Patricia Ebner, Regional Coordinator

patricia.ebner@smsu.edu

507-537-7213 Office

Host Campus: SW Minnesota State University, Marshall

1501 State Street-Room SS132

Marshall, MN 56258

Southwest Region Campus Veterans Centers

- Southwest Minnesota State University, Marshall
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Canby
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Granite Falls
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Jackson
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Pipestone
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Worthington

Southeast Region:

David Schrader, Regional Coordinator

david.schrader@mnsu.edu

507-389-5726 Office

Host Campus: Minnesota State University, Mankato

168 Centennial Student Union

Mankato, MN 56001

Joshua Howe, Regional Coordinator

joshua.howe@roch.edu

507-529-6142 Office

Host Campus: Rochester Community and Technical College

851 30th Ave. SE - Box 47

Rochester, MN 55904

Southeast Region Campus Veterans Centers

- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Winona State University, Winona
- South Central College, North Mankato
- South Central College, Faribault
- Southeast Technical College, Red Wing
- Southeast Technical College, Winona
- Rochester Community and Technical College, Rochester
- Riverland Community College, Austin

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